

Postmodernism in “A Wild Sheep Chase”, the Novel by Haruki Murakami (Haruki Murakami'nin “Yaban Koyunun İzinde” romanında postmodernizm)

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ABSTRACT: *The eminent representative of the modern Japanese literature, writer and translator, famous face of postmodernism, Haruki Murakami has started to play an important role in the national literature with his works since the begging of 1990s. The works of Haruki Murakami reflects a large period of Japanese way of thinking in the age of globalization. With his own specific direction of writing, he is one of the writers who have directly contributed to the development of the world postmodern literature, along with the Japanese literature. Introduced to the readers in 1982, the novel of “A Wild Sheep Chase” has laid the foundation of the postmodern style of Murakami. Combining the main characteristics of postmodernism such as chaos, synthesis, montage, collage, meta-story and etc., the novel links the alienation of an individual in the Japanese society to the nature of consumer culture and authoritarian-totalitarian regimes. Alienation, which is a characteristic for political ideology regimes aims at alienating individuals from the society, nature and from even themselves, their own true essence. The author has written down the process of a human turning into a post-human as a result of not tolerating to the pressures aiming to fit them into standardizing molds and depriving them from their differentiating characteristics. The unnamed hero of the novel, Boku looks for the meaning of the existence in his world that is full of questions. This search takes him back to the times before his birth. In order to find an answer, Boku looks for something to help him to leave the reality behind. As a result, he falls into a chaos, where people move in the directions that they have not chosen and do things that they do not desire, as well where the free will does not have any meaning.*

KEYWORDS: “A Wild Sheep Chase”; Haruki Murakami; novel; postmodernism; Boku; capitalism; identity search.

ÖZET: Modern Japon edebiyatında önemli bir figür, yazar ve çevirmen, postmodernizmin önemli isimlerinden olan Haruki Murakami, 1980'lerin başlarından itibaren sanatsal çalışmaları ile ülke edebiyatında önemli bir rol oynamaya başlamıştır. Murakami'nin çalışmaları, küreselleşme öncesinde Japonca düşünce tarzının önemli bir dönemini yansıtmaktadır. Murakami, Japon edebiyatının yanı sıra, dünyadaki postmodern edebiyatın gelişimini doğrudan etkileyen yazarlardandır. 1982 yılında okuyuculara sunulan “Yaban Koyunun İzinde” romanı, Murakami'nin postmodern tarzının başlangıcı olmuştur. Postmodernizmin kaos, karışıklık, sentez, montaj, kolaj, büyük hikaye gibi ana özelliklerini birleştiren romanda, modern Japon toplumunda insanın yabancılaşması, otoriter-totaliter rejimlerin ve tüketim kültürünün doğasıyla ilişkilendirilmektedir. Tüm politik ve ideolojik rejimlerin doğasında bulunan yabancılaştırma özelliği, insanı toplumdaki, doğadan ve kendinden koparmayı amaçlamaktadır. Yazar, çalışmalarında insanları standart kalıplara sokarak, ayırt edici özelliklerinden mahrum etme baskılarına dayanamayan insanın yeni insana dönüşümünü kaleme almıştır. Romanın isimsiz kahramanı Boku, sorularla dolu bir dünyada varlığının anlamını aramakta ve bu arayış, onu doğumundan önceki döneme geri götürmektedir. Boku, yeni insanı mutsuzlaştıran bu durumun sebeplerini araştırmaya ve sorgulamaya koyuluyor. Sonuç olarak, insanlar kendilerinin seçmediği yönler ile ilerlemekte, hiç arzu etmedikleri işleri yapmakta ve her zaman hissettiği gibi özgür iradenin hiçbir anlamının olmadığı bir kaosun içine yuvarlanmaktadır.

ANAHTAR KELİMELER: “Yaban Koyunun İzinde”; Haruki Murakami; roman; postmodernizm; Boku, kapitalizm; kimlik arayışı.

Introduction

Recognized by his first novel “Hear the Wind Sing” (1979), Haruki Murakami has later on continued his creativity with “Pinball 1973” novel, which he finalized in 1980. Being the samples of his first works, they reflect the still incomplete style of Murakami in themselves. In his first two books, the writer has deconstructed the traditional Japanese novels and has kept the empty frame. The characteristics of the Western literature or cosmopolitanism that is observed in the writer's works are more visible in his first novels. The main characteristic that unites the both novels is the presence of the hero in the knot of the events, whose name is not mentioned anywhere, yet recognized with his nickname “Rat”. In 1982, Hurakami introduced his third novel to the readers, 「羊

をめぐる冒険」—“A Wild Sheep Chase” that completed the trilogy of “Rat”. In this work, the writer has placed a new and an original content to the frame that he preserved from the traditional Japanese novel. This novel was the start of the specific postmodern style of Haruki Murakami. In 1974, together with his wife, Murakami has opened a jazz-club - bar. Even though the first novels of the writer has been written during the breaks while he was working, readers have accepted them with huge sympathy. Thus, the desire of the young writer for writing novels has been strengthened and as of 1981, he has dedicated his life to writing by finishing his career as an entrepreneur: 「1981年のことだ。やれるだけのことはやってみよう。腰を据えて長編小説の執筆にかかり、その年の秋には小説の取材のために一週間ほど北海道を旅行した。そして翌年の4月までに長編小説「羊をめぐる冒険」を書きあげた。なにしろあとがないから、持てる力をありったけ注ぎ込んで書いた。持っていない力まで総動員したような気さえする。「風の歌を聴け」と「1973年のピンボール」よりずっと長く、外郭も大きく、物語性の強い作品だ」(Murakami 2010, 55).

“It was 1981. I decided to do everything I could do. After dedicating myself to writing like I have been chained to the desk, I left for Hokkaido for a week in the autumn of the same year in order to gather materials for writing a novel. Later, until April of the next year I completed my novel, “A Wild Sheep Chase”. With the thought of “I might not have another chance”, I wrote giving all my power to this work. Maybe I even addressed to the powers that I did not even carry in myself. A novel that was longer, had larger frame and stronger story than “Hear the Wind Sing” and “Pinball 1973” came into existence”.

Turning into a target for many literature critics in the year it was published, the novel was awarded with “Noma Literature Award” the same year.

In his first large literary work “A Wild Sheep Chase”, Murakami has returned to his early experiences of writing, “Hear the Wind Sing” and “Pinball 1973”. The central figures, Boku (I), Rat and Chinese barmen J are the heroes of the mentioned novels. The narrator of the stories in all three novels of the trilogy is “I”. “I” in Japanese language is translated as 僕-boku unofficially. The first person narrates all three novels included

in the trilogy, which strengthen the relationship between the readers and the heroes. This mentioned style is based on the Japanese literary traditions. The narrative style of the novel follows the “autobiographic realism’s Japanese traditional main directions” (Rubin 1999, 177). The narrators have been introduced without names, which cause the readers to feel closer to them. These characters invite the readers to their sincerity and give them opportunity to have a look from a personal point of view, by using the term of “boku”, unofficial way of communication while mentioning to one’s himself/herself. “The consistent usage of friendly and approachable “Boku” of Murakami is positioned in the centre of his creativity” (Rubin 1999, 181). Thus, the writer chooses the way of speaking among sincere and trusted friends and creates opportunity for achieving the communication between the readers and himself. Appearing as a prototype of the writer, Boku has taken a step for self-treatment and written down his thoughts. Rat is the friend of Boku, or the second “I” within him. Rat, whom we meet in the novel of “Hear the Wind Sing”, sends articles within the letters to Boku every year on December 24, on his birthday. The content of these letters is not disclosed. In the end of “Pinball 1973”, Rat disappears and for a long time no information is provided about him. Finally, after year in the December of 1977, he sends a next letter and a new article to Boku: 「もうずいぶん長く君に会っていないような気がするな。いったい何年になるかな？何年だろう？年月の感覚がだんだん鈍くなってきている。僕が書いた小説を同封した。僕にとってはもう意味のないものだから適当に処分してくれ。この手紙は十二月二十四日にそちらに着くように速達で出す。うまく着いてくれるといいけれどね」 (Murakami 2016, 107; 111).

“I feel as if long time has passed since the last time I have seen you. Really, how many years have it been? Which year was it? Seems like I have lost the sense of time. I am sending you an article that I have written. It does not make any sense to me anymore, so you can do as you want. I am giving this special letter to the post, so that it can reach to you on the 24th of December. I hope you will receive it on time”. Received after a year, this letter and the search of Boku for identity forms the

content of "A Wild Sheep Chase", valued as the postmodern novel of Murakami.

The main characteristics of Japanese postmodernism in the novel of "A Wild Sheep Chase".

The novel is a story of adventure, where the main hero is searching for a mythical, strong sheep. The search of Boku for a sheep, is surely symbolic. The sheep serves as a key word in the novel, as the main object of search if Rat himself. Whether Rat is a real friend of Boku, or is "I" of him in his metaphysical world is not clarified and has been left to be identified by the postmodern readers. The problem of the synthesis of fact and imagination forms the basis of the game in the postmodern literature. By mentioning the importance of "game understanding" in postmodernism, Ismat Amra writes: "The writer hides something that he knows or thinks somewhere in the article: the readers try to find this throughout the article. As they do not find it, they look for it again, but when they find it, they feel the relationship between them and the reader. This game style is at the same time means imposing the feeling to the readers that they have written the novel themselves, by creating a large movement sphere for them. The readers will start to fill in the gaps left by the writer with their own imagination and this will contribute to the productivity of the content, which is very important for postmodernism" (Emre 2006, 116).

Two different descriptions of one journey in the novel symbolize metaphysical world. The first description is the history of Junitaki town, the settlement of the villagers in the 19th century who ran from creditors, while the second one is Boku and his journey with the ear model that first leads to Sapporo, then Junitaki and finally, to the mountain house of Rat. Both of these journeys were full of fear and difficulties. In the 19th century, when 18 poor villagers from Tsugaru pass from Ainu village near Sapporo, they take one young man from the village as their guide. Even though the guide shows them areas with more productive soil, the villagers who run from the creditors prefer to settle in far places away from civilizations and passing mountains, tundras with the guidance of the young man, they reach Junitaki, where they are not afraid to settle in,

despite all the difficulties they had faced. As the years pass, more families join these villagers, number of people increase nonstop, governmental officials arrive to collect taxes and to take young men for the army. The writer describes the journey as follows: “This journey can be end of the world that “well suited” the fugitives” (Murakami 1990, 126). The difficult and dangerous parts of the journey of Boku and the model girl is described by professor M.C.Strecher with the following words: “for theirs is both real and symbolic, a journey of passage from the world of the living to that of the dead” (Strecher 2014, 82). This is described in Japanese literature with the term of 道行—michiyuki. This passage that was an important part of classical Japanese theatre, especially of the plays with the subject of love and suicide was realized to prepare the travelers for death. Boku and his lover have a travel with the uphill and downhill roads, winds that make terrible moans and fear that the ground will split open to swallow them: 「不吉なところがあった。まず体が漠然とした不吉さを感じ取り、その漠然とした不吉さが頭のどこかを叩いて警告を発していた。川を渡っている時に急に温度の違う淀みに足をつっこんでしまったような感じだった」 (Murakami 2016, 312-313).

“This place was really scary. First with my body, then with my brain I felt that a catastrophe will happen... It is the same feeling that takes over your heart when your feet touch mud with different temperature while passing the river”.

The feelings of Boku were real and every step was taking him to the center of his inner feelings, to the forbidden land of the world full of dreams, memories and death.

「平な街で育って、平凡な学校を出た。小さな時は無口な子供で、成長すると退屈な子供になった。平凡な女の子と知りあって、平凡な初恋をした。十八の年に大学に入って東京に出てきた。大学を出てから友だちと二人で小さな翻訳事務所を始めて、なんとかそれで食べてきた。三年ほど前から PR 誌や広告関係の仕事にも手を広げて、そちらの方も順調に伸びている。会社で働いていた女の子と知りあって四年前に結婚して、二ヵ月前に離婚した。理由はひとくちじゃ言えない」 (Murakami 2016, 57).

"I grew up in an ordinary town, went to an ordinary school. I was a silent child, but I grew into a sad young boy. I met that ordinary girl, I loved with an ordinary love. I came to Tokyo to study in a university when I was 18 years old. After finishing the university, we opened a small translation center with my friend and somehow made living. 3 years ago, we created an advertisement company and our business is in very good state. I had a relationship with one of the women working in the company. We got married four years ago and divorced two months back. I cannot say there was a special reason".

These words of Boku describe the postmodern youth of the period. At the age of 29, Boku separates his road from his wife. With the thought of 「世界に対して文句があるんなら子供なんて作るな」 – "if you want to go against the world, you should not have children" (Murakami 2016, 201), Boku selected silent life without kids. The strings that connected them in the world of destroyed ideals were broken, woman left without leaving any evidence that this marriage ever happened and Boku fell into the whirlpool of loneliness: 「まるで生まれた時一人で、ずっと一人ぼっちで、これから先も一人というような気がした」 (Murakami 2016, 35).

"As if I was alone since I was born, I have always been alone and I will continue my way alone as of now".

In the novel, Boku appears as a completely exhausted person: 「僕は街を失くし、十代を失くし、友だちを失くし、妻を失くし、あと三ヵ月ばかりで二十代を失くそうとしていた。六十になった時僕はいったいどうなっているんだろう、としばらく考えてみた。考えるだけ無駄だった。一ヵ月先のことさえわからないのだ」 (Murakami 2016, 202).

"I lost the city I was born in, I lost my early youth years, I lost my wife, and after three months, I would lose the 20s of my age. I could not think of what would be left from me when I reach my 60s. It was impossible to think of such stuff. Nobody knows what will happen after a month".

Left alone in a deep gap, Boku meets one girl, who grabs his attention with her ears. There are two types of women that can be observed in Murakami's novels. As John Wray mentioned, even though the heroes of Murakami's novels are in active sexual relationship with woman, they act

passively in other human relationships with influence of their fears and dreams (Wray 2004). The person who shows Boku the way in the gap where he was stuck was the girl who worked as an ear model. This nameless model girl connects her whole existence to her ears: 「それは本当の私じゃないのよ。耳は私であり、私は耳であるのよ」 (Murakami 2016, 44).

“You know that it is not real me. The meaning of me is my ears, the meaning of my ears is me”.

In the creativity of Murakami women are presented as a kind of seer. They play an important role in the realization of many issues. The interesting point is, being the herald of the future, these women come to find the main hero before he finds them. Sex forms the foundation of establishing metaphysical relationship among the main heroes and the seer women. “If the sex is good, your injury will be healed, your imagination will be invigorated. It’s a kind of passage to the upper area, to the better place” (Wray 2004).

Even though Boku did not consider himself as a person of special characteristics, model girl treated him as a special person. The model girl valued Boku’s complicated thoughts as follows: 「それはあなたが自分自身の半分でしか生きてないからよ。あとの半分はまだどこかに手つかずで残っているの」 (Murakami 2016, 64).

“You are just living a half-life. The other half of you is still underground, unsealed”. After that, the model girl becomes the guide of Boku in his search for his other half, according to the mission that the writer give to her.

One of the most important characteristics of postmodernism in the novel is the unity of historical events and today. According to the French theorist J. Baudrillard (1929-2007) “And that is also part of the postmodern: restoration of a past culture, to bring back all past cultures, to bring back everything that one has destroyed, all that one has destroyed in joy and which one is reconstructing in sadness in order to try to live, to survive” (Baudrillard 1993, 94). The calendar of the novel shows July 1978. Nevertheless, the part of the work that we can call an introduction narrates November 25th, 1970. This date is remembered with Japanese writer Mishima Yukio’s attempt to military coup. As a strong nationalist Mishima was rebelling against the lost of Japanese

national values in his literary works, as well as in his real life. The time period when all these events happen coincides with the student years of Boku, narrator of "A Wild Sheep Chase" novel: 「我々は林を抜けて ICU のキャンパスまで歩き、いつものようにラウンジに座ってホットドッグをかじった。午後の二時で、ラウンジのテレビには三島由紀夫の姿が何度も何度も繰り返し映し出されていた。ヴォリュームが故障していたせいで、音声は殆んど聞きとれなかったが、どちらにしてもそれは我々にとってはどうでもいいことだった」 (Murakami 2016, 20).

"We stepped towards the university dormitory located in a forest. We sat down in the canteen and ate sandwich. It was 2 o'clock and the picture of Yukio Mishima was attracting our attention as it was appearing and disappearing in the TV that was going static very often. We could not hear what was said because of the problems in the audio system. Whatever happens, it does not matter for us".

The issue of national identity that appeared in Japan in 1930-1940, was strengthened and in 1980-1990 seriously influenced Japanese literature. During the period after the World War II, Japan was always fighting for its domestic and international reputation. Getting stuck between these two directions during the period of postmodernism, it could be observed that Japan was losing in the trend of globalization in some cases. Austrian orientalist researcher G. McCormack believed that for creating a new identity this duplication needed to be unified: "From the 1980's two phenomena have proceeded on parallel tracks with no sign of converging: internationalisation and the clarification of Japanese identity" (McCormack 2001). 1970 resulted in the suicide of Mishima and the defiance of all student movements, which was directed to the search for identity of the postmodern youth of 1970-1980.

The heroes of the novel of "A Wild Sheep Chase" saw the escape from their existentialist crisis in getting alienated from the society and searching for main personal identity to flee from the hegemonic system. In order to survive from the dystopia of the the 20th century, Murakami considered individualism a main key. He believed that in the world of materialism and corruption, the basis of the moral reputation in hidden in the individual himself. As in other fantastic works of Murakami, in "A Wild Sheep Chase" novel as well the main goal is to open the events

around the individuals in the society established purposefully to fit them in the society. The writer does not aim at eliminating the materialistic problems of the individual yet aims at directing the attention to the existing characteristics resulted from the materialistic world. The dominant theme in the novel is the fight over an individual, and the struggle between the individual and the existing structure of the society trying to apply a hegemonic identity. After receiving a literary award in 2009 in Jerusalem, Murakami described the fight that an individual in a postmodern society had to get involved in his speech: "Each of us is, more or less, an egg. Each of us is a unique, irreplaceable soul enclosed in a fragile shell. This is true of me, and it is true of each of you. And each of us, to a greater or lesser degree, is confronting a high, solid wall. The wall has a name: it is "The System." The System is supposed to protect us, but sometimes it takes on a life of its own, and then it begins to kill us and cause us to kill others-coldly, efficiently, systematically. We must not allow the System to exploit us. We must now allow the System to take on a life of its own. The System did not make us: we made the System" (Murakami 2009). Formed in 1980, wealth was considered priority to be a part of this Japanese society, and this was called "the system" by Murakami. For Murakami, the system is a dangerous machine that tries to control society by controlling education, mass media and industrial production. According to the writer, the only way of surviving against this system is looking for a new identity, separate from it. For this purpose, individual identity must be protected and achieving this is an issue of realizing one's own free will.

Being the business card of postmodernism period, the association of Japan with capitalism has been turned into an ideal condition for identifying the postmodern characteristics of Japan.

Professor Gorkhmaz Guliyev was rightfully mentioning: "postmodernism appeared in the period of history when people lived with the desire of reconstructing the destructions after the war and living finally comfortable lives that they deserved" (Guliyev 2019, 244). In the Japanese society that entered the globalizing world, the process of turning into slaves of the consumption goods was accelerated and the feeling of the individuals to be members of the society was gradually weakened. Even though consumption culture created the illusion of

technological and economical development, it could not give comfort to people in reality. On the contrary, it led to very serious problems both materialistically and emotionally: manias and dependencies increased, pollution and exhaustion of the natural resources gained unprecedented speed, social differences sharpened and humans forgot their identities. Many problems such as not fitting into the society, alienation, identity to a certain group, marginality and introversion appeared. In the novel, the characteristics that belonged to the Japanese postmodernism were openly described. 「一人の人間が習慣的に大量の酒を飲むようになるには様々な理由がある。理由は様々だが、結果は大抵同じだ」 (Murakami 2016, 71).

“There are many reasons that lead an individual to adopting the excessive usage of alcohol, yet in the end all these reasons end in the same result”. With these words, Murakami lets the readers to openly observe the desperateness and alienation of the individual in the trap of capitalism. The partner of Boku in the advertisement company called the capitalism trap an exploitation which did not change only their lives, yet also their way of thinking. The longing of his partner for life and thinking openly found its reflection in the following sentences: “At least, in the past we were doing in what we believed and we were proud of it. Now even it does not exist” (Murakami 2016, 77).

The cosmopolitan heroes of Murakami from the first two novels of the trilogy turned into postmodern types in the third work. The social prosperity that modern capitalism presented to the world brought the collapse of the modern human as well. “The collapsed nature of the modern human cannot be considered separately from the social prosperity. From one side, economic development is one of the main conditions of the fair world, yet on the other hand this situation has created the superiority of the organizations and groups that controlled this economic development over the rest of the population. All values of the individual were lost in front of the economic powers that took the control of a society on an individual to the highest point” [Steven&Douglas, 1998: 262]. The picture of fish with wings is very important in this sense: 「見たことのない新しい石販画で、羽根のはえた魚の絵だった。魚は自分の背中に羽根がはえていることに

あまり満足しているようには見えなかった。たぶん使い方がうまくわからないのだろう」(Murakami 2016, 76).

“A new picture. A fish with wings that I never saw before. The fish does not look that happy for its wings. Most probably, because it does not know how to use them”. As individuals they are consumers and for consuming there should be a job; but the love for this work is not important and the relationships are bought and sold without thinking much.

Conclusion

In the novel, the search for identity and truth, problematic relationship with the parents, historical events and the present time, trap of capitalism, marginal characters, surreal and musical relationships are creating a chaos by mixing with each other. The fragmented worlds created by Murakami are full of questions and as described by Jameson and Baudrillard, the author uses magic realism, humor, alienation and fight against the society in order to recognize the postmodern situation and closeness to it. The main character of the novel, Boku tries to find what he has lost in this chaos. He is searching for something that is very crucial, critical and missing. Even though he found what he was looking for in the end, with disappointment he again falls into chaos with an unhappy ending.

While analyzing the novel, the different style of the writer, way of expression, writing skills, worldview and postmodern views must be considered. As in many works of Murakami, in “A Wild Sheep Chase” novel a very strong logical consistency between the events can be observed as well. Following this consistency is not that easy, as the secrets of the writer does not end with only one novel and he gives the hints of many issues in his previous works. As mentioned above, the secrets of “A Wild Sheep Chase” are hidden in the early works of Murakami, “Hear the Wind Sing” and “Pinball 1973” novels.

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