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*MURAKAMI-EGO*: COLLECTIVE CULPABILITY AND SELECTIVE RETENTION

By  
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B.A. JeonJu University, 1997  
M.Div. Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008

A Thesis  
Submitted to the Faculty of the  
College of Arts and Sciences of the University of Louisville  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

Master of Arts  
in Art (c) and Art History

Department of Fine Arts  
University of Louisville  
Louisville, Kentucky

August 2016

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A Thesis Approved on

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DEDICATION

To my wife

Myung Kim

for supporting me

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I really appreciate my mentor and thesis advisor Dr. Chris Reitz for his intellectual guidance, warm encouragement, and quite patience during the slow process of my thesis due to my difficulty with English. When I have emailed him late at night or in the early morning, he has always replied to me. My thesis would not be possible without him. I also express my thanks to my committee members, Dr. Yuxin Ma and Dr. Jongwoo Jeremy Kim. Their warm and critical comments will help me survive in the field.

I give my gratitude to University of Louisville's Hite Art Institute for providing quality education. My career as an Art Historian starts here. My time at the University of Louisville has been a valuable and unforgettable opportunity.

Finally, I thank my family: my parents; my in-laws; my wife, Myung, for her love and consolation; and my two sons, Joseph and Joshua. I could not have done my thesis without them.

## ABSTRACT

### *MURAKAMI-EGO: COLLECTIVE CULPABILITY AND SELECTIVE RETENTION*

Yun Kweon Jeong

August 8, 2016

The purpose of this thesis is to argue that Murakami's art expresses the Japanese's psychological suffering by showing their struggle between remembering themselves as victims but forgetting themselves as aggressors. I apply the Mitscherlich's psychoanalysis of the Germans's psyche to the Japanese because their people have had similar experiences. The first section examines the history of Japan surrounding WWII in order to demonstrate its effects on the Japanese people's psyche. The second section introduces Otaku to better understand Murakami's art. The third section examines how selective retention works on the Japanese's psyche. The fourth section analyzes how Murakami's art represents depersonalization and derealization to demonstrate selective retention. After a discussion of Buddhism related to Murakami's art, I draw conclusion.



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## INTRODUCTION

Takashi Murakami<sup>1</sup> had an exhibition, *Murakami-Ego*,<sup>2</sup> at Al Riwaq Doha, Qatar in June of 2012, one year after the Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami, which made the Japanese feel helpless in the face of the enormous natural disaster. Murakami, a Japanese Pop artist, who combines fine art and pop culture by modifying already existing artwork, is often referred to as Japan's Andy Warhol. I will read some of his works that were displayed in *Murakami-Ego* alongside some of his other well-known works from 1997 to 2013.

Art as a visual language is usually non-verbal communication, which gets out of the bounds of verbal communication and can represent a much wider and deeper spectrum of human feelings and thoughts. Thus, interpreting Murakami's artwork provides us with a richer understanding of the experiences and minds of postwar Japan than any written historical account might offer. We can see the psyche of the Japanese through Murakami's artwork. Because, before and after WWII, the Germans and the Japanese had similar experiences, applying Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich's seminal analysis of the postwar German psyche to Japan is helpful for understanding postwar Japanese psychic experience. Most books and articles about Murakami's artwork regard the Japanese as the victims of WWII, but in this thesis, the Japanese will be

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<sup>1</sup> He was born in Tokyo in 1962. He bases in Tokyo and New York.

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.perrotin.com/artists/Takashi\\_Murakami/12/view-of-the-exhibition-murakami-ego-at-al-riwaq-doha-qatar-2012/1000003933](https://www.perrotin.com/artists/Takashi_Murakami/12/view-of-the-exhibition-murakami-ego-at-al-riwaq-doha-qatar-2012/1000003933). 9 Jul. 2016.

regarded as both victims and aggressors of the war. How Japan's collective behavior of the postwar period is represented in Murakami's artwork will be explained. Through his artwork, we can understand the realm of the unconscious of the Japanese. Masao Maruyama argued the Japanese should realize their consciousness, which is acquired by accepting the painful past. Maruyama quotes Ferdinand Lasalle's words that "The opening of new era finds itself in the acquisition of the consciousness of what has been the reality of existence."<sup>3</sup> Such an acknowledgement is necessary after any national trauma. General Douglas MacArthur's comment that "the Japanese people were like a boy of twelve when measured by the standards of modern civilization," might have been applied to not only the Japanese but also all groups or individuals that deny their painful past.<sup>4</sup> I want this thesis to be iron, which sharpens other iron. This thesis is challenging, but I hope such a challenge will prove helpful for understanding Japan's psychological suffering.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Masao Maruyama 丸山眞男. *Thought and behavior in modern Japanese politics*. edited by Ivan Morris, (London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1969). p. 2; Masaaki Noda. 野田正彰, *War, Crime, and Responsibility 戦争と罪責* trans. Hyeyoung Seo, (Seoul: Ghil, 2000), p. 43. Noda's argument is also applied here: the evasion of responsibility is represented as irresponsibility hidden within the collective.

<sup>4</sup> Arthur Lubow. "The Murakami Method." p. 54: After MacArthur had been a Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers for more than five years in Japan, he gave the testimony to the Senate committee in 1951; <https://www.common sense media.org/about-us/our-mission/about-our-ratings/12>. 14 April 2016. Twelve-year-old boys, who are in early adolescent period, can be susceptible to naïve opinions and one-sided arguments.

<sup>5</sup> As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend (Proverbs 27:17 in the Bible).

## HISTORY OF JAPAN SURROUNDING WW II

I would like to apply Mitscherlich's analysis to the Japanese because Japan and Germany had very similar situations surrounding World War II. In *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior*, Mitscherlich and Mitscherlich psychoanalyzed the postwar Germans: they argued that Hitler was the German people's ego-ideal and the German people lost this ego-ideal when Hitler lost the war. This book shows how Hitler and the German people were related during WWII and how the relationship between Hitler and the acts of the German soldiers influenced the psychology of the German people.<sup>6</sup> It is significant to recall the history of Japan before and after World War II from the perspective of the Mitscherlichs because their analysis connects well to the Japanese and their relationship to Emperor Hirohito.<sup>7</sup> By recalling the history of Japan before and after World War II, we can recognize the motives behind the Japanese infatuation with the emperor Hirohito, for whom Japanese soldiers did unjustifiable acts during the war such as the Nanjing Massacre, biological warfare laboratories, state-sanctioned forced prostitution, etc.<sup>8</sup> Although, historians argue whether Hirohito was fully committed to the

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<sup>6</sup> Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich. *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior*. (NYC: Grove Press, 1984).

<sup>7</sup> Mitscherlich. *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior*. p. 56-62.

<sup>8</sup> Noda. *War, Crime, and Responsibility*. p. 386; In the Nanjing Massacre or the Rape of Nanjing, about 20,000 to 80,000 women were sexually assaulted and about 200,000 to 300,000 people were killed. Hundreds of thousands of young women from the Japanese occupied countries were involved in state-sanctioned forced prostitution.

war,<sup>9</sup> Hirohito had absolute cultural power after the Meiji Revolution in Japan. For a Confucian culture and a militaristic nation,<sup>10</sup> Hirohito was a spiritual authority and the commander in chief.<sup>11</sup> The Japanese thought of Hirohito as a mass leader representing the ideal Japanese citizen or as Japanese citizens' personal ego-ideal.<sup>12</sup> The Japanese, who came after and venerated Hirohito, fantasized about the idealized self-image as the German did.<sup>13</sup> There are few differences between Hirohito, who was considered equally as the nation of Japan itself, and the Japanese. For each Japanese person, the deified emperor became his/her ego-ideal. After the Meiji Revolution, in order to protect Japan from Western countries and rule Asian countries, the Japanese were unified under one leader, the emperor. In this way, within a society united, the internal conflicts were rapidly reduced and belligerence, which had been internal in a fragmented Japan, turned toward other Asian countries.<sup>14</sup>

Most citizens of Japan participated in Hirohito's plans, and Hirohito was almost synonymous with the Japanese people. For example, the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity

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<sup>9</sup> After the war, though Hirohito was a commander in chief during the war, he was not referred to the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal Japan, was not prosecuted for any involvement in war crimes, and was not even charged with any moral responsibility for the war.

<sup>10</sup> Maruyama. *Thought and behavior in modern Japanese politics*. p. 5. 君師父一體 The king, teacher, and father should be treated the same in the Confucian culture. Thus, the Japanese had "loyalty and filial piety" to the Emperor.

<sup>11</sup> Maruyama. *Thought and behavior in modern Japanese politics*. p. 4. After the Meiji Restoration in 1868, the Meiji Constitution was enacted and the emperor became an absolute ruler as a constitutional monarch and had unitary power. The Meiji Restoration was aimed to strengthen Japan like Western countries.

<sup>12</sup> Maruyama. *Thought and behavior in modern Japanese politics*. p. 4, 5. There is no "clear line of demarcation between the public and the private domains."; Kimigayo (translated as His Imperial Majesty's Reign) was the national anthem of the Empire of Japan from 1888 to 1945.

<sup>13</sup> Maruyama. *Thought and behavior in modern Japanese politics*. p. 4, 5; Mitscherlich. *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior*. p. 57.

<sup>14</sup> In the Edo period, Shogun (a chief military commander and a feudal lord) and Samurai (a member of a powerful class of fighters) were ruling classes in Japanese society. After the Meiji Revolution, belligerence of Shogun and Samurai shifted from inside of Japan to other Asian countries.; Japan provoked several wars: Sino-Japanese War in 1894, Russo-Japanese War in 1904, Japan's colonization of Korea in 1910, the second Sino-Japanese War in 1937, the Pacific War (by attacking Pearl Harbor) in 1941, Japan allied with Germany and Italy during WWII.

Sphere,<sup>15</sup> which was the Japanese imperial plan, became Japan's national vision. This project originated when America embargoed oil to Japan, and Western countries did not treat Japan equally to themselves in an international society. Japan wanted to drive Western countries, which occupied Asia, from Asia for political and economic reasons. The Japanese were urged that the old standard be sacrificed to new objectives after the fall of Edo in 1868.<sup>16</sup> After the Meiji Revolution, when the Japanese worked for their nation and the emperor, the moral sense of the Japanese was defeated by their elated ideal ego. Under the emperor Hirohito, Japanese nationalism tried to control the Japanese's internal values ("thought, belief and morality") by centralizing all of Japan's authorities on the emperor.<sup>17</sup> Illegal acts were interpreted as brave expressions.<sup>18</sup>

The uneasy moral sense of the Japanese was resolved by worshiping and relying on the emperor, and so the Japanese fervently worshiped the emperor more.<sup>19</sup> Thus, allegiance to the emperor was great because the Japanese could do considerable enterprises such as the Nanjing Massacre and state-sanctioned forced prostitution, etc. by depending on the emperor, who settled their uneasiness.<sup>20</sup> However, when Emperor Hirohito's surrender of Japan to the Allies was announced, the Japanese awakened as if from a spell that had lasted since the Meiji revolution and had distorted reality. How did

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<sup>15</sup> Japan wanted to build socio political economic block lead by Japan in Asian countries around 1940.

<sup>16</sup> Gabriel Ritter. "Takashi Murakami: Artist of Contemporary Japanese Subculture" *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs*, Vol. 4, No. 1, Winter (2004). P. 42. Before 1868, the emperor was not center of the nation in the Edo period but after 1868, the emperor became the supreme ruler of Japan in the Meiji period.

<sup>17</sup> Maruyama. *Thought and behavior in modern Japanese politics*. p. 4, 5.

<sup>18</sup> Maruyama. *Thought and behavior in modern Japanese politics*. p. 4, 5. As compared to a western view of the citizen, which has both duty and right, the citizen of an imperial history view (the Japanese emperor is the center of the world) only have a duty but not right by replacing the individual rights with national rights.; Before the Meiji Revolution, Japan's authorities were shared by Shogun and the Emperor.; Mitscherlich. *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior*. p. 27. "the monstrous crimes had been undertaken in the service of an insane inflation of self-esteem, ... a complete deflation of the sense of worth,"

<sup>19</sup> Mitscherlich. *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior*. p. 58.

<sup>20</sup> Maruyama. *Thought and behavior in modern Japanese politics*. p. 4, 5. "the individual's conscience" was not considered significantly and was "submerged by national rights".



the Japanese view the situation when they watched Hirohito go out of his palace to come to visit MacArthur in the Allies headquarters on September 27 1945 after Japan officially surrendered on September 2<sup>nd</sup> 1945? Emperor Hirohito usually did not come out of his palace to receive visitors but he had to come out of his palace to receive MacArthur because MacArthur was the commander of the occupiers of Japan and Hirohito was the leader of the lost country. This scene would have been the sense of defeat to the Japanese. The Japanese' fascination with Hirohito faltered because Hirohito embodied the Japanese's ego-ideal.<sup>21</sup> General MacArthur as a supreme commander in occupied Japan helped to reconstruct Japan after the war. In effect, that supreme being shifted from emperor Hirohito to General MacArthur.

After World WarII, US troops were stationed in West Germany and Japan. In the 1960s, the White House economically supported West Germany and Japan, and wanted to make them consumer industry nations for Europe and Asia in order to defend against the rising tide of communism because many poor countries had communized.<sup>22</sup> As a result, these three countries rapidly reconstructed and developed economically, and became capitalist countries. At the same time Pop Art quickly rose to prominence. In the Cold War age, in the former Soviet Union, ballets, plays, puppet plays and classical music spread, but in America, pop culture such as movies, television, and animation, which are typical simulacrum,<sup>23</sup> flourished. In a capitalistic consumer society, most

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<sup>21</sup> After atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, Emperor Hirohito's surrender speech was broadcasted over the radio. Then Japan had been occupied by Allies for seven years. In 1946, Emperor Hirohito issued 'Humanity Declaration' by the request of General Douglas MacArthur (the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers): Hirohito was turned from the living god, that the Japanese worshipped and an absolute ruler, into just human and the symbol of the state. However, General MacArthur had the absolute power in postwar Japan.

<sup>22</sup> Herbert C. Mayer. *German Recovery and the Marshall Plan, 1948-1952* (New York: Edition Atlantic Forum 1969), p. 13-16.

<sup>23</sup> In brief, simulacrum does not differentiate a copy from the real.

people are surrounded by advertisements through mass media such as television, movies, and newspapers. Thus, the capitalistic consumerism of America influenced occupied countries in the postwar age, including West Germany and Japan, which were defeated nations that had been put under US military administration.<sup>24</sup> Masaaki Noda argues, “the Japanese have repressed shame from their war crimes as an aggressor country in WWII” and “the Japanese have felt humiliated by the defeat in the War,” both of which can be seen in Murakami’s artwork.<sup>25</sup> In the 1980s, Japan became the second largest economy in the world, and the Japanese were very proud of their country. Because of that pride, as Murakami’s art demonstrates, the Japanese do not consciously or unconsciously accept their history as an aggressive nation to other Asian countries, but rather understand themselves as victims—victims of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.<sup>26</sup> For example, Japan’s government requested the American President, Barack Obama, visit Hiroshima in order to emphasize their victimization rather than their aggression.<sup>27</sup> To better understand Murakami’s representation of the Japanese’s psychology, we need to understand Otaku.

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<sup>24</sup> Ronald Inglehart. *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 51-67. Inglehart argues that the postmodernism and the post industrialization age may have been produced for humans to overcome the problems of the modern age. Characteristics of Postmodernism include mixed styles (photography and a painting), pluralism (multi-polarization), no sequential narrative, deconstruction, post-structuralism, consumerism with flooding advertisements and fashion, the popular culture, post-ideology, feminism, mass media.

<sup>25</sup> <http://hubpages.com/art/Takashi-Murakami-Superflat>. 13. May 2016; Noda. *War, Crime, and Responsibility*. p. 23.

<sup>26</sup> Noda. *War, Crime, and Responsibility*. p. 11, 16; <http://www.cnn.com/2016/04/23/opinions/obama-should-visit-hiroshima-sherman/>. 8 May 2016. In April 2016, Secretary of State John Kerry made the first official as US delegate visit to Hiroshima and paid his respects to the victims by request of the Japanese government. President Obama visited Hiroshima in May 2016. From 2001 until now, though surrounding nations have strongly opposed their visit, Japanese prime ministers and cabinet members have visited the Yasukuni Shrine constantly.

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.cnn.com/2016/04/23/opinions/obama-should-visit-hiroshima-sherman/>. 8 May 2016. In April 2016, Secretary of State, John Kerry, made a first official visit to Hiroshima and paid his respect to the victims by request of the Japanese government. President Obama also visited Hiroshima in May 2016.

## OTAKU

It is meaningful to analyze Otaku from the perspective of the Mitscherlichs because Otaku is a good example of Japanese collective behavior after the war.<sup>28</sup> In general, people of Otaku are young Japanese males who are addicted to manga (cartoon books) and anime (animation movies). They spend their lives reading a lot of manga and watching a lot of anime alone in their homes. Murakami had been a member of Otaku and has based much of his art on Otaku culture.<sup>29</sup> Murakami argues, “Otakus have a memory for detail like a kind of historian.”<sup>30</sup> However, some Otaku adopt historical icons or symbols with little connection to history itself. When Cheryl Kaplan asked Murakami why Otaku people “are fond of wearing Nazi clothing,” Murakami answered, “Maybe these people do not link with the Nazi concept, they just wear the clothing,” then Kaplan replied, “For them there’s no history and no physical reality to actual events.”<sup>31</sup> In order to explain how the Japanese think about the political circumstance of the postwar era, Arthur Low introduced Sawaragi, who said “War or history have come to be sealed

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<sup>28</sup> Cheryl Kaplan. “Takashi Murakami: lite happiness + the super flat” *Flash Art (Italy)* Vol. 34, 219, (2001): 95. Murakami argues, “Otaku culture is linked with a deep feeling in Japanese.”

<sup>29</sup> Takashi Murakami. "A theory of super flat Japanese art." *Takashi Murakami, Super Flat, organized by Paul Schimmel (Tokyo: Madra, 200)* (2000): p. 8-25, and Murakami in Takashi Murakami, Dick Hebdige, Midori Matsui, and Scott Rothkopf, ©Murakami, ed. Mika Yoshitake, Paul Schimmel, and Lisa Gabrielle Mark, catalog for the exhibition of 3 April-13 July 2008, Brooklyn Museum of Art (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art and Takashi Murakami/Kaikai Kiki, 2007), and Thomas Lamarre. *The anime machine: A media theory of animation*. (U of Minnesota Press, 2009); quoted in Nina Cornyetz. "Murakami Takashi and the Hell of Others: Sexual (In) Difference, the Eye, and the Gaze in © Murakami." *Criticism* 54, no. 2 (2012), p. 181.

<sup>30</sup> Kaplan. “Takashi Murakami: lite happiness + the super flat” p. 95.

<sup>31</sup> Kaplan. “Takashi Murakami: lite happiness + the super flat” p. 97.

inside the anime or manga world,” and “It is sterilized innocent, purified experience, defined by putting everything war-related inside a capsule.”<sup>32</sup> Just as the Mitscherlichs wrote of the German people, the Japanese do not have objective self-awareness because they do not accept their painful history,<sup>33</sup> which is perhaps best exemplified in Otaku, who do not accept their whole history but only parts of their past. When MacArthur observed that the Japanese people appeared like a twelve-year-old boy, I understand his words as the Japanese only accept the half-truth.<sup>34</sup> A similar phenomenon can be seen in Otaku culture. Otaku do not look correctly at the reality of the past and the present but rather maintain fantasies about the past and the present. They also have selective retention<sup>35</sup>, choosing to remember positive and negative fantasies about the past. Nina Cornyetz cites Tamaki Saito who said “Otaku are stimulated by these genres because of their erotic orientation toward fantasy rather than reality.”<sup>36</sup> This is because Otaku people do not want to remember the history of Japan as an aggressive country during WWII.

Murakami, like the Otaku, borrows from the history of Japan selectively: he remembers the glory of Kano school, Rinpa and Ukiyo-e (classical Japanese paintings), which influenced western painting in the nineteenth century, but he does not want to

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<sup>32</sup> Lubow. "The Murakami Method." p. 79; This idea is well represented in Japanese anime, such as Isao Takahata's *Grave of the Fireflies* (1993).

<sup>33</sup> Maruyama. *Thought and behavior in modern Japanese politics*. p. 2. Maruyama argued, the Japanese should realize their “the reality of existence”.

<sup>34</sup> Lubow. "The Murakami Method." p. 54.

<sup>35</sup> Selective retention: the human tendency that people more often remember messages that are consistent with the individual's existing interests and beliefs rather than those that are in contrast with their interests and beliefs, choosing what to keep in the memory.

<sup>36</sup> Tamaki Saito, *Beautiful fighting girl*, trans. J. Keith Vincent and Dawn Lawson (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 2011), and Tamaki Saito, "Otaku Sexuality," in *Robert Ghosts and Wired Dreams*, ed. Christopher Bolton, Istvan Csicsery Jr., and Takayuki Tatsumi (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 2007), 222-49; quoted in Cornyetz. "Murakami Takashi and the Hell of Others: Sexual (In) Difference, the Eye, and the Gaze in ©Murakami." p. 181.

remember the history of Japan as an aggressor because it is not a glory.<sup>37</sup> We can see the painting tradition of Japan in Murakami's artwork. Murakami says, "The Japanese arrived earlier at an ahistorical worldview,"<sup>38</sup> meaning that Japanese culture wants to only accept a part of history but not the whole. In *War, Crime and Responsibility*, a Japanese psychiatrist, Noda argues that the Japanese do not want to accept humiliation as an aggressor.<sup>39</sup> However, in their analysis, the Mitscherlichs argue that when the Germans denied their painful past, they "did prevent an outbreak of melancholia," but "could only imperfectly ward off tremendous impoverishment of the ego."<sup>40</sup> Similarly, Noda also argues the Japanese have had "ego effect" from the war until now.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> <http://www.metmuseum.org/blogs/now-at-the-met/2014/debussy-la-mer>. 11 May 2016. Japonisme was popular in the circle of the western art in the Edo period. For example, Japanese art influenced Vincent van Gogh, Claude Monet, James McNeill Whistler, and Claude Debussy, whose *La Mer* was influenced by Hokusai's *The Great Wave*.

<sup>38</sup> Lubow. "The Murakami Method." p. 79.

<sup>39</sup> Noda. *War, Crime, and Responsibility*. p. 20, 391-392.

<sup>40</sup> Mitscherlich. *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior*. p. 63.

<sup>41</sup> Noda. *War, Crime, and Responsibility*. p. 391.

## SELECTIVE RETENTION: REMEMBRING A VICTIM BUT TRYING TO FORGET AN AGGRESSOR

Because of the recovery of Japan's international influence and economic power in the 1980s, and with Hirohito's exemption from the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal Japan after the war in 1945, the Japanese have not consciously or unconsciously accepted their history as an aggressor during WWII.<sup>42</sup> Thus, like the Otaku, the Japanese do not accept reality and maintain a fantasy about their history. The Germans' psychic energy was consumed and exhausted by separating the memorable and unmemorable past, in defending their actions, and then they view their present unrealistically.<sup>43</sup> As the Germans had done, the Japanese exhausted their psychic energy by separating memorable from unmemorable for defending their actions, and therefore the Japanese could not view their present realistically.<sup>44</sup> This idea can be interpreted like Kaplan's argument, "Remove the obligations of history and what's left is Super Flat as cultural criticism."<sup>45</sup> Therefore, most of Murakami's artwork looks like fantasy but not reality. In this regard, Murakami argues that "Japanese society suffered damaging trauma to the collective psyche after the war and in an attempt to deal with the shame of defeat, began to deny its own past. In so doing Japan lost its identity."<sup>46</sup> The Japanese want to deal with their history as victims

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<sup>42</sup> Noda. *War, Crime, and Responsibility*. p. 11.

<sup>43</sup> Mitscherlich. *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior*. p.16.

<sup>44</sup> Noda. *War, Crime, and Responsibility*. p. 20, 391-392.

<sup>45</sup> Kaplan. "Takashi Murakami: lite happiness + the super flat" p. 97.

<sup>46</sup> <http://hubpages.com/art/Takashi-Murakami-Superflat>. 13. May 2016.

but not as aggressors. Japan also attempted to press the victorious country, America, to deal with Japan as not an aggressor but a victim, a lingering psychic need that can be seen as recently as US President Barack Obama's visit to Hiroshima on May 27, 2016, which came at the request of Japan and was focused on their victimhood. Despite this insistence on a victim narrative, the Japanese nevertheless recognize historical facts about the Nanjing Massacre and state-sanctioned forced prostitution through of books, mass media, etc.<sup>47</sup> Although they consciously or unconsciously do not want to remember the painful past, do they not acknowledge unconsciously their aggressive role? Often the Japanese, exaggerate their victimization but understate their aggressions.<sup>48</sup> This exaggeration causes the un-realization of history and of the present. They should accept their actions realistically, although such an acknowledgement represents a monumental task. As the Mitscherlich's argue "we are dealing here with ulterior thoughts and their far from negligible influence on our objective behavior, though such influence is never easily demonstrable."<sup>49</sup> Murakami's artwork consciously demonstrates that the Japanese people were suffering during the war and subordinated to America after the war, but unconsciously want to avoid being humiliated by their past aggressions.

Although it is difficult to interpret unconscious desire in artwork, some examples from Murakami's oeuvre help to make this clear. *Mr. DOB* (1998), for example, a recurring character for the artist (the figure is called "DOB" because his left ear has a letter of D, his right ear has a letter of B, and his face shape is O), *Second Mission Project*

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<sup>47</sup> *The Nanjing massacre: a Japanese journalist confronts Japan's national shame* (Routledge, 2015) by Honda, Katsuichi, Frank Gibney, and Karen Sandness, *Nanking* (2007 film), which was inspired by Iris Chang's *The Rape of Nanking*, directed by Bill Guttentag and Dan Sturman, and *Spirits' Homecoming* (2015 film) directed by Cho Jung-rae.

<sup>48</sup> Japan's request of president Obama's visit to Hiroshima can be regarded as to concentrate on the Japanese's historical trauma rather than aggression.

<sup>49</sup> Mitscherlich. *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior*. p. 5-6.

*Ko<sup>2</sup>* (1997), *Hiropon* (1997), *My Lonesome Cowboy* (1998), and *Tan Tan Bo Puking* (2001) are all prime examples of fantasy and escapism.<sup>50</sup> Murakami's artworks prefer fantasy or imagination to reality, exaggeration to normality, cuteness to maturity. Though Cornyetz describes these characteristics as Japanese postmodernism,<sup>51</sup> these characteristics can be read through the Mitscherlich's analysis as well: Murakami's artwork portrays the Japanese's psychological suffering by purposefully representing victims and avoiding representing aggressors. As a psychological defense mechanism, when the Japanese face feelings of misconduct and compunction over Japanese militarism during WWII, they only accept the fond memories, which are portions of the past.<sup>52</sup> In Murakami's works, the characteristics of Shogun and Samurai, Kano school 狩野派 and Rinpa 琳派, and manga and anime, which were developed before WWII, are used to show the Japanese's wish to return to Japan's glorious prewar state. As the Mitscherlich's argue, this amounts to an "attempt to reach back to uncompromised authorities and a withdrawal of affect from an immediate past discredited by defeat."<sup>53</sup> Murakami also mentions that in order for "Japanese society to regain its childlike innocence, a collective identity associated with pre-war innocence" must be created.<sup>54</sup> This pre-war "innocence" perhaps refers to the Edo period, a time before the Meiji Revolution, which gives rise to Japanese militarism and, ultimately, defeat. Thus, Murakami's *My Lonesome Cowboy* is reminiscent of the spirit of Shogun and Samurai, which was developed in the period prior to the Meiji Revolution, an era in which Shogun

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<sup>50</sup> I will read these works psychoanalytically, art historically, and formally later.

<sup>51</sup> Cornyetz. "Murakami Takashi and the Hell of Others: Sexual (In) Difference, the Eye, and the Gaze in ©Murakami." p. 181.

<sup>52</sup> Mitscherlich. *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior*. p. 16.

<sup>53</sup> Mitscherlich. *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior*. p. 23; Ritter. "Takashi Murakami: Artist of Contemporary Japanese Subculture," p. 42; Lubow. "The Murakami Method." p. 79.

<sup>54</sup> <http://hubpages.com/art/Takashi-Murakami-Superflat>. 13. May 2016.



Tokugawa Ieyasu's political power was devolved into emperor Meiji.<sup>55</sup> The tradition of Samurai is one of the most important factors of Japanese thought. The subject of *My Lonesome Cowboy*'s pose is commanding and his body is well-built like a Samurai or Shogun. Kitagawa Utamaro, an Edo period painter, might also be a fond memory of the previous age of WWII. *My Lonesome Cowboy* is reminiscent of Utamaro's shunga paintings (Erotic print) (Fig. 3-3).<sup>56</sup> Their similarities include an idealized long and slim body; an enlarged huge male erect penis and female breasts, which look like a fully blown ball; a naked body (in the nineteenth century painting, a woman could not be represented in the nude but in the twentieth century, she could); and simple and clear body contour. The subjects of *My Lonesome Cowboy* (Fig. 3) and *Hiropon* (Fig. 2-1) are the twentieth century's three-dimensional version in shunga, which is a polychrome woodblock print-making that influenced postwar mass production as well as manga and anime.

Other positive Japanese cultural memories may include the characteristics of Yamato-e, Kano school, Tosa school, Rinpa, and Ukiyo-e, which can all be seen in *Mr. DOB*, *Tan Tan Bo Puking*, *Me and Double-DOB*, and *Chaos*. In this respect, Murakami is a successor of Japanese traditional painting (Nihonga 日本画), which lasted for a thousand years. Otaku culture, which influenced Murakami, also follows the tradition of pre-modern Japanese paintings, especially the printings of the Edo period.<sup>57</sup> Ernest Francisco Fenollosa describes the five characteristics of Nihonga: 1. Nihonga does not

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<sup>55</sup> Ritter. "Takashi Murakami: Artist of Contemporary Japanese Subculture," p. 42.

<sup>56</sup> <http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections/artwork/artist/Kitagawa+Utamaro>. 9. June 2016. Kitagawa Utamaro 喜多川 歌麿 (1756-1806, the Edo period), who has influenced western art (the Impressionism), was an Ukiyo-e painter of a color woodblock print, which has influenced manga or anime, and was famous for a portrait of woman (Bijin-ga 美人画).

<sup>57</sup> Azuma, Hiroki (2001) 'Superflat Japanese postmodernity'. Lecture at the MOCA gallery at the Pacific design Center, West Hollywood, 5 April, [http://www.hirokiazuma.com/en/texts/superflat\\_en1.html](http://www.hirokiazuma.com/en/texts/superflat_en1.html). 23 June 20016.

seek realism of photographs. 2. It does not have shadows. 3. It has clear outlines. 4. It does not have rich color tone but pale colors. 5. It has simple expression.<sup>58</sup> These features, which came from pre-modern Japanese paintings, are transmitted and developed into Murakami's artwork and anime and manga, which Otaku indulge in. At first, the use of bright color of Yamato-e, which is a blue and gold painting but not an ink wash painting, transmitted and developed into non-natural color, which is not a rich color tone, of Kano, Tosa, Rinpa, Ukiyo-e, etc.<sup>59</sup> In the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Murakami uses bright and pure, almost primary colors<sup>60</sup> such as cyan, magenta, and yellow. His colors are also applied in stark contrast, engendering a non-natural, layered appearance. Ogata Korin's *Iris* (early 18<sup>th</sup> century) (Fig. 12) with a blue flower (by blending cyan and magenta), a green stem (by blending cyan and yellow), and the yellow background is a good example in comparison with *Me and Double-DOB* (Fig. 5), in which Murakami composes sharp color contrast with bright colors such as cyan, magenta, yellow, green, blue, etc. engendering in non-natural colors.

Second, as can be seen in Kano Sansetsu's *Old Plum* (1646) (Fig. 10) of Kano school and Korin's *Red and White Plums* (early 18<sup>th</sup> century) (Fig. 11) of Rinpa, Kano and Rinpa are huge decorative paintings on the big walls in a shogun's castle that represent his ruling ideology. These works use highly decorative repeating patterns to render simple themes of nature and the seasons. Kano and Rinpa also are multi-chrome

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<sup>58</sup> [http://nomurakakejiku.com/lesson\\_lineup/nihonga-art-history](http://nomurakakejiku.com/lesson_lineup/nihonga-art-history). 22 June 2016. Murakami has a Ph.D. degree of Nihonga 日本画, which was developed by Fenollosa to make unique Japanese painting style compared to Yohga 洋画 (a western style painting) in the Meiji period.

<sup>59</sup> [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/yama/hd\\_yama.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/yama/hd_yama.htm). 16 June 2016. Yamato-e (a classical Japanese style) 大和絵 or 倭絵 is an indigenous Japanese artistic expression and was developed in the late Heian period (794-1185) and is compared to the Kara-e 唐絵 painting (Tang paintings) style, which is an ink wash style.

<sup>60</sup> <http://vanseodesign.com/web-design/aspects-of-color/>. June 10 2016. Bright and purest colors are an undiluted form of a given hue, which is not blended with black, white, or grey.

paintings of vibrant and showy colors with a refined, simplified and bold design and with deep color pigments. These features are also transmitted to Murakami's artwork. For example, as can be seen in *Mr. DOB* (Fig. 1 and 1-1), simple and bold design with vivid colors is expressed by the shape of Dob, whose face is composed of a big circle with D and B for ears and large spherical eyes. In *Me and Double-DOB* (Fig. 5), the same form of a flower, which has one disk and twelve petals, repeats. The contour of objects is easily recognized because it has simple and bold design of eye, nose, ear, and mouth. The objects in these artworks stand out in bold because of the thick and simple outlines used to accentuate them.

Third, vigorous and powerful expression in *Hiropon* (Fig. 2-1), *My Lonesome Cowboy* (Fig. 3), *Tan Tan Bo Puking* (Fig. 4) and *Chaos* (Fig. 6) is inherited from Sansetsu's *Old Plum* (Fig. 10) of Kano school, Korin's *Red and White Plums* (Fig. 11) of Rinpa, and Katsushika Hokusai's *The Breaking Wave Off Kanagawa (The Great Wave)* of Ukiyo-e.<sup>61</sup> For example, the windy sperm of *My Lonesome Cowboy* and the rhythmic breast milk of *Hiropon* are reminiscent of the bent and vigorous tree trunks of Sansetsu's *Old Plum*, the undulating river of Korin's *Red and White Plums*, and the turbulent waves of Hokusai's *The Great Wave*.<sup>62</sup> Thoroughly embellished and repeating patterns with simple and clear contours using loud colors with bright and thick pigments of pre-modern paintings, which had an impact on anime and manga, are also seen in Murakami's artwork.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Rosanna Albertini. "Superflat" *Art Press (France)* 268, (May 2001), p. 12.

<sup>62</sup> Christine Guth. *Art of Edo Japan: the artist and the city 1615-1868*, (HN Abrams, 1996). p. 254-257; Penelope E. Mason. *History of Japanese art*, (Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005). p. 55-65.

<sup>63</sup> [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/rinp/hd\\_rinp.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/rinp/hd_rinp.htm). 14 May 2016, [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/kano/hd\\_kano.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/kano/hd_kano.htm). 16 June 2016, [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/ukiy/hd\\_ukiy.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/ukiy/hd_ukiy.htm). 22 June 2016, Guth. *Art of Edo Japan: the artist and the city 1615-1868*, p. 254-257, Mason. *History of Japanese art*, p. 55-65. Kano school 狩野派 (the 15<sup>th</sup>

Fourth, a main painter's great dependence on assistant painters for repeating patterns in his large studio, the art production system as a type of enterprise, and "unitary quality," in which a painter uses a similar style and theme to paint different objects, are all legible in Murakami's art.<sup>64</sup> Unitary quality, for example, can be seen in Dobs' style and theme, which are repeated in different paintings though in different forms.

Fifth, in Kano and Rinpa, no realism like photographs and no shadows are represented, which results in a depthless planarity in Murakami's artwork. A flatness in Kano and Rinpa of the previous period of WWII is remembered as Japan's glory for the Japanese people because Kano and Rinpa influenced Western paintings, which the Japanese regard as advanced art. On the other hand, *flatness* can be understood as a representation of the ego-depletion of the Japanese people. The Japanese's psychic energy is exhausted while they separate the memorable and unmemorable past in order to emphasize Japan's defeat and victimhood, but avoid their responsibility of aggression and defend their collective guilt.<sup>65</sup> Murakami claims that "in embracing Superflat (his own

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century to the 19<sup>th</sup> century) combining Yamato-e and Chinese's ink-wash painting, is a decorative "Painting of Room Partitions" (which are large panels) 障壁畫 using bold and vigorous styles with thick pigments of vivid and dominant colors, thick black outlines surrounding the objects in order to accentuate objects as themes of landscapes, and composition of a completely flat picture. Rinpa 琳派 combined the Yamato-e painting and the Chinese's ink-wash painting in the Edo period (1603-1863). The above characteristics of Kano can be also seen in Rinpa, which has more showy colors and patterns than Kano. Ukiyo-e 浮世繪 (The Edo period, 1603-1867) is a polychrome (nishiki-e) woodblock print with a great quantity creating the clear color arrangement and vivid outlines. Ukiyo-e is mercantile based lead by the publisher, who teamed up with the designer, the carver, and the printer.

<sup>64</sup> Guth. *Art of Edo Japan: the artist and the city 1615-1868*, p. 254-257. Kano Eitoku (1543-90) of Kano school hired many assistant painters and his painting themes are Buddhism, Confucianism, and Landscapes. This means that Murakami is a successor of Kano and a follower of Andy Warhol in an art production system as a type of enterprise, and inherits a theme of Buddhism from Kano. His studio, called a factory, is titled Kaikai Kiki, which are located in Japan and America and hired many assistant painters. Kano Mitsunobu used "unitary quality." In this case, Murakami also follows Kano school and Warhol because each Dob in each painting is similar but not same from other Dob paintings as "unitary quality." Murakami also follows the mass production system of Ukiyo-e's woodblock paints for sale (mercantile basis) and Warhol, the bright multi-colors of Ukiyo-e's woodblock paints culminating in manga and anime style, and a team system of four people.

<sup>65</sup> Mitscherlich. *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior*. p. 16; Kaplan. "Takashi Murakami: lite happiness + the super flat" p. 97; Noda. *War, Crime, and Responsibility*. p. 20, 391-392.

term) Japanese society became more and more superficial starting from the end of World War II on.”<sup>66</sup>

Although production techniques and some subjects have American origins, Murakami’s works are rendered in the traditional Japanese style, which came down from Yamato-e, Kano school and Rinpa. The enterprise or entrepreneurial production method is indebted to Andy Warhol; the contour of Dob comes from the face of Mickey Mouse; the title cowboy refers to figures from the American west. The appropriation of American culture can be understood in terms of family dynamics – Murakami’s words, “We know the U.S. is our father. We thought we were children, but we are handicapped people. We need help.”<sup>67</sup>

American General MacArthur became a national hero to the Japanese after the war because he, as a chief commander of the occupation forces, helped the Japanese reconstruct Japan after their defeat. After Japan lost the war, MacArthur and Hirohito took a photo. This photo looks shameful for the Japanese and symbolizes their idol’s descent from god to human. The iconic photo shows contrast between MacArthur’s very casual clothing and pose and Hirohito’s formal attire and stiff posture. This photo is reminiscent of Murakami’s words—America is Japan’s father, the Japanese were

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<sup>66</sup> <http://hubpages.com/art/Takashi-Murakami-Superflat>. 13. May 2016.

<sup>67</sup> Lubow. "The Murakami Method." p. 54; [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/matthew-israel/takashi-murakami-after-to\\_b\\_6022070.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/matthew-israel/takashi-murakami-after-to_b_6022070.html). 30 June 2016. At this point, I am wondering how Murakami uses the culture of the father as the form, but the culture of children and the disabled people as content. The appropriation of traditional pre-modern Japanese art as the content indicates Murakami’s intention to return to an era prior to WWII. However, the art technique, which is appropriation of readymade imagery and combining high art and low art, is in the line of western art history. Murakami should be more regarded in connection with Japanese artists, who are affiliated with Japanese art history rather than Warhol, who is affiliated with western art history in order to better understand his work.

Murakami looks conservative, but Warhol, like most western artists, is liberal because Warhol is more critical of this epoch of ours. Murakami has an eye to the past rather than having an eye to the future.

children, and they need help from America.<sup>68</sup> After Japan's idol, Emperor Hirohito, had fallen, the Japanese's weak ego hears their inner voices—they had submitted to an enormous power (Emperor Hirohito) though they denied their responsibility for the war crime like a weak child.<sup>69</sup> This phenomenon symbolizes why most of Murakami's artwork seem childish or childlike though his works embody history, social consensus, and the psychology of the Japanese. The object of *My Lonesome Cowboy* is remembered both as a little boy and an American cowboy. The little boy represents Japan, which is a defeated, victimized nation, and the cowboy represents America, a victorious country. "Little boy" was a nickname of the atomic bomb, which was dropped on the city of Hiroshima by America bringing about termination of the war. Murakami's treatment of the little boy's childish features emphasizes Japan's loss of the war and victimization, denying any aggressive characteristics. The title, cowboy, is also used to emphasize Japan's loss because it insinuates that Japan is defeated by America.

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<sup>68</sup> Lubow. "The Murakami Method." p. 54.

<sup>69</sup> Mitscherlich. *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior*. p. 23.

## DISCURSIVE PATTERNS: DEPERSONALIZATION AND DEREALIZATION

An example of selective retention is represented as discursive patterns in Murakami's works. "Bewilderment and disorientation reigned" for the Japanese because the Japanese's commonly shared ego-ideal, which was developed by Hirohito, switched from security to anxiety as a result of Hirohito's surrender to America and his "Humanity Declaration."<sup>70</sup> The psychology of the Japanese can be well explained by the Mitscherlich's words because both experiences were similar. The Mitscherlich explain how "bewilderment and disorientation" reigned over the Germans:

The inability to mourn the loss of the Führer is the result of an intensive defense against guilt, shame, and anxiety, a defense which was achieved by the withdrawal of previously powerful libidinal cathexes. The Nazi past was de-realized, i.e., emptied of reality. The occasion for mourning was not only the death of Adolf Hitler as a real person, but above all his disappearance as the representation of the collective ego-ideal. He was an object on which Germans depended, to which they transferred responsibility, and he was thus an internal object. ... his death, and his devaluation by the victors, also implied the loss of a narcissistic object and, accordingly, an ego- or self-impoverishment and devaluation.<sup>71</sup>

For the Japanese, depersonalization and derealization have been also realized after Hirohito descended from god to human and MacArthur became Japan's hero. Murakami reflects on the emotional conflict of the Japanese between wanting to remember their victimization and not remembering their errors during the war by describing the psychology of "his country's militaristic past and what he sees as its acquiescent

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<sup>70</sup> Mitscherlich. *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior*. p. 23.

<sup>71</sup> Mitscherlich. *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior*. p. 23.

present.”<sup>72</sup> When the Führer of Germany is replaced by Emperor Hirohito of Japan, one can easily understand the feeling of the Japanese people. Because Hirohito’s descent was the result of Japan’s aggression and defeat, the Japanese people unconsciously do not want to accept their aggression, which is accompanied by feelings of shame and guilt, but do want to accept their victimization. The Japanese people want the war to be derealized. They unconsciously do not want to accept Hirohito’s descent, which caused the plummet of the Japanese collective ego-ideal (which is synonymous with Hirohito). Because Hirohito was the internal object for the Japanese people, his humanization caused the loss of narcissistic object or ego-ideal of the Japanese people by withdrawal of cathexes from the war and Hirohito, leading to depersonalization and derealization.

For example, discursive patterns, which represent bewilderment and disorientation, are seen in many of Murakami’s works such as *Mr. DOB* (Fig. 1) and *Tan Tan Bo Puking* (Fig. 4). In some versions of *Mr. DOB* and *Tan Tan Bo Puking*, irregular sizes, positions, shapes, and colors are seen. In contrast, Jackson Pollock’s works also have discursive patterns and unlimited repetition but are different.<sup>73</sup> Murakami patterns are figurative, and are mass produced by hired assistants. Pollock’s patterns are abstract, and are extemporaneously produced by dripping paints using automatic drawing. In Dob’s face, there are different sizes, shapes, and forms of eyes. As defeated in WW II and occupied by America, Japan’s culture has been strongly influenced by American culture such as the American cartoon Mickey Mouse.<sup>74</sup> *Mr. DOB* is different from *Doraemon* (1969) and Mickey Mouse (1928) which inspired *Mr. DOB* because

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<sup>72</sup> Lubow. "The Murakami Method." p. 54.

<sup>73</sup> They have a similar feature; both of them are flat.

<sup>74</sup> Paul Schimmel, "Making Murakami," in Murakami et al., ©Murakami, p. 65-66. DOB is abbreviation of *Dobozite, dobozite, oshamanbe*, mentioning manga. quoted in Cornyetz. "Murakami Takashi and the Hell of Others: Sexual (In) Difference, the Eye, and the Gaze in ©Murakami." p. 181.



Doraemon or Mickey Mouse looks like a comforting and familiar cat or mouse, which have symmetrical two eyes, one nose, etc. Doraemon and Mickey Mouse have one pupil in one eye but Dob has several pupils in one eye. As a result of this, the former both look fun and familiar but the latter looks confusing and disturbing.

Extended discursive patterns are found in *Me and Double-DOB* (2009, Fig. 5) and *Chaos* (2013, Fig. 6). In *Me and Double-DOB*, there are three Dobs, one of which looks like Murakami while the other two are modified and unmodified Dob (*Tan Tan Bo Puking*). In the background of the painting, there are countless numbers of similar flowers. In *Chaos*, there are many different styles of Dobs and flames in the background of cross stripes, which make numerous circles and squares. These discursive patterns show the process of ‘derealization,’ embodying a transition from reality or verisimilitude to fantasy or imagination. Of this transition, Murakami said, “a reality that the larger culture preferred to ignore” and “We have to realize we are handicapped and we do not want to realize it.”<sup>75</sup> Depersonalization is withdrawal of cathexis from self-representation and derealization is withdrawal of cathexis from object-representation during a mental conflict in order to avoid anxiety by considering the present as unreality.<sup>76</sup> Withdrawal of cathexis is realized while the Japanese people are simultaneously struggling between trying to remember their victimhood or glory, and trying to forget their aggression during

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<sup>75</sup> Lubow. "The Murakami Method." p. 54.

<sup>76</sup> Burness E. Moore and Bernard D. Fine. *Psychoanalytic terms and concepts* (Yale University Press, 1990), p. 55, 36-37, 166, 129-131, 12. Depersonalization is that people experience unreality of the sense of self (or self-representation) subjectively. Derealization is that people experience unreality of the sense of the world (or object) subjectively. Cathexis (the libido’s charge of energy) is the concentration of mental or emotional energy (libido as the producer of energy) on self-representation or an object-representation. Withdrawal of cathexis from self-representation and from object-representation are realized during a mental conflict (I argue that a mental conflict of the Japanese is created from a struggle between trying to remember a victim and trying to lose the memory of an aggressor after the war). Self-representation is to define oneself how to think, feel, and behave in relation to others and ultimately result in constructing of identity. Object is a person or an object, which are distinguished from a subject or self, and is mental image of a person or an object, which exists outside of self.

the war. In order to represent withdrawal of cathexis, Murakami's artwork looks uncanny; that is, it makes its viewers feel both familiar and unfamiliar simultaneously. In Murakami's artwork, elements from manga, anime, Yamato-e, Kano, and Rinpa, which were classical Japanese's art for a thousand years, provide the effect of familiarity. Murakami's modification of American culture, which was imported after the war, gives the effect of unfamiliarity.<sup>77</sup>

In *Mr. DOB* (Fig. 1), withdrawal of cathexis as depersonalization is realized with many different kinds of unreal eyes, which have different kinds of unreal pupils, and with too many unreal teeth in one mouth. Moreover, the abnormal shapes of Dob's eyes and pupils make the eyes look as if they are not stagnant and that they are somehow changing. These features make Dob, who I describe as the self, look unreal and unfamiliar, and the viewer feels that the self is separating from the perception of the self (self-consciousness) in the process of depersonalization.<sup>78</sup> As a result of depersonalization, Dob does not represent reality, does not look like a real animal, and looks strange. Though Mickey Mouse and Doraemon are also manga characters like Dob, they represent agreeability and familiarity because they have pleasing traits, and therefore, do not cause depersonalization. In another *Mr. DOB* (Fig. 1-1), by putting many different colors of pupils, which look like they are changing, the effect of fantasy is given and depersonalization is also realized. *Mr. DOB* (Fig. 1) has discursive eyes and another *Mr. DOB* (Fig. 1-1) has discursive pupils, which cause dizziness and then make the viewers feel fictitious. In *Tan Tan Bo Puking* (Fig. 4), utter unreality and unfamiliarity resulting in depersonalization are achieved by depicting an unreal subject,

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<sup>77</sup> The contour of Mickey Mouse, art production system, appropriation of readymade imagery, etc.

<sup>78</sup> Moore and Fine. *Psychoanalytic terms and concepts*, p. 52.

which looks like an extraterrestrial in a science fiction film and gives an unpleasant feeling.<sup>79</sup> In *Tan Tan Bo Puking* (Fig. 4), irregular, asymmetrical, and bizarre shapes, forms, and colors give the effect of dizziness and an unpleasant feeling, which leads to depersonalization. Tan tan bo has an extraterrestrial appearance, which does not have human eyes, pupils and nose, changing of its tentacle's length and circle's diameter, and moving mush or pulp. This appearance makes Tan tan bo unfamiliar and odd, which make the viewer feel unreal causing depersonalization.

Unlike *Mr. DOB* (Fig. 1, 1-1), which has one Dob (the self), *Me and Double-DOB* (Fig. 5) and *Chaos* (Fig. 6) feature multiple Dobs. These multiple Dobs, which might be understood to represent the multiple selves, make the viewer feel as if the self is separate from the perception of the self (self-consciousness), resulting in depersonalization. In *Me and Double-DOB* (Fig. 5), depersonalization, which divides the perception of one self between the self as an observer and the self as a participant, is evident because Murakami (as an observer or a painter outside of the painting) puts his face in the painting as a participant or an experiencer. In this way, these multiple Dobs make the viewer feel as if the self is an observer (the viewer outside of the painting) separate from the experiencing self (Dobs in the painting).<sup>80</sup> In *Chaos* (Fig. 6), for derealization, the background of discursive patterns makes the viewers feel that the object is frightening, strange or unfamiliar.<sup>81</sup> In *Chaos* (Fig. 6), depersonalization makes the viewers feel frightening, strange or unusual because multiple Dobs' extraterrestrial appearances, which cause unsettled feelings, different colored multiple pupils, and the multiple flames of different shapes, colors, lengths, and sizes are constantly changing. As derealization, in *Me and*

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<sup>79</sup> Moore and Fine. *Psychoanalytic terms and concepts*, p. 52, 55.

<sup>80</sup> Moore and Fine. *Psychoanalytic terms and concepts*, p. 52.

<sup>81</sup> Moore and Fine. *Psychoanalytic terms and concepts*, p. 55.

*Double- DOB* (Fig. 5), the face of Murakami separates Murakami himself from two other Dobs, who represent the perception of Murakami.<sup>82</sup> *Chaos* (Fig. 6) also has multiple flames, which produce discursive patterns making the self and object unusual and abnormal causing depersonalization and derealization.

*Me and Double- DOB* (Fig. 5) and *Chaos* (Fig. 6) are more diffuse than *Mr. DOB* and *Tan Tan Bo Puking* because of the discursive background, which contributes to derealization by making the viewers feel the object unusual or abnormal. In *Me and Double-DOB* (Fig. 5), the unreality (Dob, which does not look real) and the reality (the face of Murakami) are mixed, and unlimited repetition of similar flowers creates the elements of fantasy. In *Chaos* (Fig. 6), unlimited repetition of circles and squares, numerous Dobs, and diffuse and distracting colorful flames likewise create the elements of fantasy. In *Me and Double-DOB* (Fig. 5) and *Chaos* (Fig. 6), the Dob's surrounding makes the viewers feel unreal and unusual causing derealization, which makes the self feel unreal and unusual. The Dob's surroundings, which comprise the background of the painting, appears flat and two dimensional.<sup>83</sup> This depersonalization is involved in altered ego (one more self separating from the ordinary personality) states, in which the self, the parts of the self, or objects are distorted resulting in the derealization in order to protect the self.<sup>84</sup>

The altered ego states also can be seen in Murakami's works that depict foggy objects in different in sizes and luminosity. Altered ego states are defined like this:

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<sup>82</sup> Moore and Fine. *Psychoanalytic terms and concepts*, p. 55.

<sup>83</sup> Moore and Fine. *Psychoanalytic terms and concepts*, p. 55.

<sup>84</sup> Moore and Fine. *Psychoanalytic terms and concepts*, p. 12. Altered Ego is another self, which is distinguished from normal and original personality. Altered Ego States is a state of derealization coming from distortion of perception of self and object such as macropsia, micropsia, déjà vu, derealization, or depersonalization.

“vision may be foggy; images may appear larger or smaller, lights dimmer and brighter, ... touch and taste may be modified.”<sup>85</sup> The viewers can see fogginess, for example, in *Tan Tan Bo Puking* (Fig. 4), where there is a big Dob and scores of small Dobs. The image of the big Dob is not clear—eye, nose, and teeth are not distinguishable, and the faces of small Dobs are not clear. In *Me and Double-DOB* (Fig. 5), the colors of the flowers seem to become dimmer or brighter, and numerous approximately but not exactly equal flowers seem to become larger or smaller. In *Chaos* (Fig. 6), the background appears foggy, the colors of the flames appear dimmer or brighter, and the sizes of the flames appear smaller or bigger.<sup>86</sup> Altered ego states also involve macropsia and micropsia, elements of depersonalization and derealization, that occur on different levels of scale severity as a psychological pathological phenomenon.<sup>87</sup>

An additional source of Japanese pride can be seen in Murakami’s standing figures. The Japanese’s dignity and imposingness, which were developed by Japan’s remarkable economic growth after its devastation in WWII through vast American investment in the 1980s, are also applied to *Second Mission Project Ko<sup>2</sup>* (Fig. 2), *Hiropon* (Fig. 2-1), and *My Lonesome Cowboy* (Fig. 3). As Murakami has said, America is the father and Japan is the child. Thus, most objects which Murakami practice represent boys or girls. In his artwork, both immaturity of child and maturity of adult can be seen simultaneously.

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<sup>85</sup> Moore and Fine. *Psychoanalytic terms and concepts*, p. 12.

<sup>86</sup> Moore and Fine. *Psychoanalytic terms and concepts*, p. 12.

<sup>87</sup> <http://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/psychpedia/macropsia>. May 8 2016. Macropsia causes a person to see things as larger than normal and they actually are. Micropsia causes a person to see things as smaller than normal and they actually are. Macropsia and micropsia are involved in Alice in Wonderland Syndrome which most of children have.

Derealization and depersonalization will be also seen in Murakami's standing figures. Unlike *Astro Boy (Mighty Atom, 1952)* and *Mickey Mouse*, which look fun and familiar, *Hiropon* (Fig. 2-1) and *My Lonesome Cowboy* (Fig. 3) are not familiar and make the beholders feel uncomfortable due to their disproportioned structure and the sharp distinction. The stark contrast between their childlike or pure faces, which look familiar, and their huge genitals, sperm and breast milk, which look unfamiliar, sensual, and voluptuous, makes the beholders feel uncomfortable or strange. In *Second Mission Project Ko<sup>2</sup>* (Fig. 2), the stark contrast or incongruity between the human flesh torso and faces, which look natural, and the leg and arms, which look artificial like a robot,<sup>88</sup> creates an unsettled feeling of the familiar and unfamiliar. Similarly, childlike or pure faces and warrior's clothes also make the beholders feel strange as both familiar and unfamiliar, childish and adult exist simultaneously.

*Doraemon*, (the height is around 110 cm or 43.3 in.) and Mickey Mouse (an agreeable size) are little and cute. Compared to those characters, most of Murakami's artwork is huge (the height is around 3 m or 118.1 in) even though they look little as a child, leading to derealization and depersonalization in the form of macropsia and micropsia. The Japanese's mindset is reflected in artwork as macropsia and micropsia, which most children have. The Japanese people, as Murakami said, "attempt to return to childhood," and as Sawaragi said, the Japanese people want their history of war to be converted into the "innocent and purified experiences" of childhood.<sup>89</sup> The faces of *Second Mission Project Ko<sup>2</sup>* (Fig. 2), *Hiropon* (Fig. 2-1), and *My Lonesome Cowboy* (Fig. 3) make the viewers feel the figures are small, but they are huge when the viewers stand

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<sup>88</sup> *Astro Boy* (fig. 3-1) also has robotic legs.

<sup>89</sup> <http://hubpages.com/art/Takashi-Murakami-Superflat>. 13. May 2016; Lubow. "The Murakami Method." p. 79.

before them because their height is over 2.7 m or 106.2 in. In *Hiropon*, the parts of the body are disproportioned to produce the effects of macropsia and micropsia, which make the beholders perceive the sizes of parts of their own body or external objects as larger or smaller than what they actually are. In addition, the face of *Hiropon* looks like a little girl, and is too small in proportion to her body. Her hair is too big, her breasts are huge, and her breast milk is depicted in an enormous amount. The faces of *Hiropon* and the cowboy are much smaller than their genitals, sperm, and breast milk.

In *My Lonesome Cowboy*, the parts of the body are disproportioned as a result of macropsia and micropsia: while the face of cowboy looks like a little boy, his face is too small in proportion to his body, his hair is too big, his hands are too big, his penis is huge, and his sperm is an enormous amount. When viewers see *Second Mission Project Ko<sup>2</sup>* (Fig. 2), *Hiropon* (Fig. 2-1), and *My Lonesome Cowboy* (Fig. 3) at a distance, they are likely so assume that they are larger than the artworks. When standing immediately in front of the objects, however, the viewer is quick to realize that they are smaller than the work, the height of which is over 106.2 inches. And then when viewers recognize the enormous genitals and male vitality of the art works compared to those of the viewers, which are normal sized and normal male vitality, they think they are even smaller than the art works as the levels of scale intensifies.

When I analyze *Me and Double-DOB* (Fig. 5) through the lenses of macropsia or micropsia, the composition jam-packed with flowers confuses the viewers, making it difficult to judge the scale. The analogous shapes and colors of countless flowers of different sizes make the viewers feel certain flowers are smaller rather than real-sized because any flower is surrounded by the bigger ones and therefore any individual flower

is smaller than the whole set. Likewise, certain flowers seem larger than real-sized because each is surrounded by smaller ones. The viewers cannot stop their gaze at a certain flower to measure size because their gaze automatically flows from one to another. *Chaos* (Fig. 6) can be also analyzed through the lenses of macropsia or micropsia. Numerous flames, which appear to be moving, also make it difficult to judge the scale. The analogous shapes of numerous flames of different colors and sizes make the viewers feel certain the flames are smaller than real-sized because any flame is smaller than the whole set of flames. In addition, certain flames, which appear to be moving, seem smaller or larger than real-sized because the viewers cannot stop their gaze at a certain flame to measure scale as their gazes automatically flow from one to another smaller or larger one.



## BUDDHISM

Religion is also a way to turn away from the present psychological conflicts by looking forward to an unrealistic world. *My Lonesome Cowboy* (Fig. 3), which looks like a shogun or samurai, embodies traces of Japanese Buddhist art. When compared to one of *The Twelve General Divine Standing Sculptures* 十二神将立像 (1185-1333), (Fig. 3-2),<sup>90</sup> there are similarities: a spiky or punk rock hair style (hair heading for the sky),<sup>91</sup> which represents man's strength, toughness, agility, and keenness; the martial art posture of a soldier, which represents shogun or samurai's toughness; a well-built body in great state, which represents samurai spirit; and self-confidence in their faces. Likewise, *Second Mission Project Ko*<sup>2</sup> (Fig. 2) and *Hiropon* (Fig. 2-1) are female extended versions of *My Lonesome Cowboy* as they have similar hairstyles and postures. Compared to *One of the twelve general divine standing sculptures* in armor, *Second Mission Project Ko*<sup>2</sup>, which looks like a robotic amazon, wears the twenty-first century version of armor as she has mechanical arms, a mechanical lower body and wings to fly. The flames in *Chaos* (Fig. 6) are similar to those of the Buddhist *The Hell of Liquid Fire Painting* 火湯地獄圖 (Fig. 6-

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<sup>90</sup> *One of the twelve general divine standing sculptures* of Kamakura period (1185-1333) is in Muro-ji temple 室生寺. The golden age of Buddhism had been during the Kamakura period, which had been governed by Kamakura shogunate by the first shogun, Minamoto no Yoritomo. As I earlier argued (p.10), the influence of shogun or samurai and Buddhism can be seen in Murakami's artwork to focus on the previous periods of WW II because most characteristics of Nihonga were developed before the Meiji period. And traditional pre-modern Japanese paintings had been patronized by shogun and embody the philosophy of Buddhism.

<sup>91</sup> a spiky or punk rock hair style is also seen in *Astro Boy* (fig. 3-1).

1)<sup>92</sup>: the shape of each flame is similar, the shape of the whole flame set is also similar as a circle, the flames in the foreground are large, the flames in the background are small as the parts of the flames. Naturally the face of Dob in the middle shows a disconcerted and unsettled expression because he is in the hell of liquid fire. Numerous sad Dobs are clustered, which look like a skull, and are fallen into the bottom as clustered sad humans and are fallen into the pot of the hell of liquid fire.

While *Mr. DOB* (Fig. 1, 1-1), *Tan Tan Bo Puking* (Fig. 4), *Me and Double-DOB* (Fig.5), and *Chaos* (Fig. 6) only intimate the characters of Buddhism as the discursive patterns of unlimited repetition, *The 500 Arhats*<sup>93</sup> (2012) (Fig. 8) directly represents a religion through which people might try to overcome their present psychological suffering with imaginary or unrealistic objects, which are also seen also in Murakami's other artworks. In the late Edo period, Kano Kazunobu had already painted *Five Hundred Arhats* (1854-63) (Fig. 13) with vigorous colors and densely jammed illustration, which were transmitted and developed into the colors and composition of Murakami's *The 500 Arhats*. The extended or advanced versions of the discursive patterns of unlimited repetition can be seen in *The 500 Arhats* (Fig. 8), which is a direct representation of Buddhist characters as countless discursive Buddhist monks are seen. In *The 500 Arhats*,<sup>94</sup> Murakami converts the conflicts of the present into the religion in order to protect the Japanese people; in the same way, Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami of the real world converted Murakami's concern into Buddhism, which provides the fantastic world.

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<sup>92</sup> Most paintings of the hell of liquid fire have a similar composition: a big pot, in which a band of people were put, and sulfur fire boiling the pot.

<sup>93</sup> Arhat is defined as one who reached to nirvana, which is the completeness of achievement of Buddhist training and the ultimate state of higher enlightenment. In *The 500 Arhats*, I think that depersonalization and derealization also can be seen because through familiarity and unfamiliarity, abnormal atmosphere and strangeness are seen, though I will not analyze *The 500 Arhats* in this thesis.

<sup>94</sup> In *The 500 Arhats*, arhat is another version of Dob.

Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami<sup>95</sup> (2011) inspired Murakami to make *The 500 Arhats* because a feeling of helplessness and finitude in front of natural disaster reminded him of a transfinite religion.<sup>96</sup> In Buddhism, to repeat countless recitation of sutra (a Buddhist scripture, many of which are written with repetition of same words or phrases) or to repeat countless kow-tow, which is a traditional Buddhist bow, is the way of undergoing Buddhist discipline. The countless repetition of same design can be seen in some Buddhist art. For example, in *A flower basket* (Fig. 9), the unlimited repetition of flowers is seen.

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<sup>95</sup> Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami was the most powerful earthquake ever recorded to have hit Japan and the four most powerful earthquakes in the world since 1900: 15,894 died, 6,152 are injured, and 2,562 are missing.

<sup>96</sup> Takashi Murakami. *Murakami: ego*. (New York: Skira Rizzoli, 2012), p. 115-125.

## CONCLUSION

Scholars have considered how Japan became one of the most advanced countries in terms of its economy and its citizen's ideals and morals but not in its politics.<sup>97</sup> Japan is the only Asian country that is included in the Group of Seven (an informal block of industrialized democracies).<sup>98</sup> Some researchers argue that Japan is not the typical Asian country. When I started to analyze Murakami's artwork with the Mitscherlich's theory developed for Germany, I subconsciously considered Japan collinearly with Germany in Western Europe. Now I understand that Japan is an Eastern culture but not Western culture, though Japan is the most economically advanced country in Asia. Thus, while I was researching this topic, I came to appreciate the Japanese' psychological suffering and understand their selective retention about their history. However, the Japanese people should remember the Mitscherlich's words that the German's suffering has been caused by themselves, but other's suffering was caused by the Germans.<sup>99</sup> Childish or childlike, psychologically handicapped Dob reminds us of the childish or childlike, physically disabled boy, Oscar, who stopped growing. Oscar in *The Tin Drum* (Günter Grass) is the self-portrait of postwar Germany, which did not conclude the Nazi past and was not

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<sup>97</sup> By Mitscherlich's explanation why Germany has leaned toward the political conservative strongly and does not have diverse opinions politically, one can hypothesize why Japan has been stagnant politically: only the conservative party has ruled after the war until now, with the exception a four year period, in which the conservative-centrist party had ruled.

<sup>98</sup> The members of G7 are Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

<sup>99</sup> Mitscherlich. *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior*. p. 65-67.

responsible for WWII.<sup>100</sup> Oscar faces Germany's painful history, which the German people want to look away from, and subsequently, recuperates from a physical disability. Dob, meanwhile, does not face Japan's painful history, which the Japanese people also want to look away from, and is still psychologically handicapped.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Lubow. "The Murakami Method." p. 54; Günter Grass. *The Tin Drum*. trans. R. Manheim. (New York: Pantheon, 1961).

<sup>101</sup> Lubow. "The Murakami Method." p. 54; Christine Cayol and Wu Hongmiao. *What do the Chinese think while watching Mona Lisa?* trans. Hyeyoung Jeon (Seoul: Esse, 2016). p. 155. In Western culture, the individual's identity is put before the sense of community but in East Asian culture, the individual is identified by communality, which the individual is affiliated with. In this context, in contrast with Murakami, relatively, Grass can easily express his own unique thought and argument, which are even opposite to the sense of community. On the other hand, in the society, in which the sense of community is put before the individual's identity, relatively, the unique individual thought and argument, which are opposite to the sense of community, cannot be easily even created and expressed.

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Figures



Figure 1. Takashi Murakami, *Mr. DOB*, 1998, Synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 280 x 300 x 7.5 cm.



Figure 1-1. Takashi Murakami, *Mr. DOB*, 1998, Synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 280 x 300 x 7.5 cm.





Figure 2. Takashi Murakami, *Second Mission Project Ko<sup>2</sup>*, 1997, 9 foot (2.7 m), oil paint, acrylic, iron, fiberglass and synthetic resin figure.

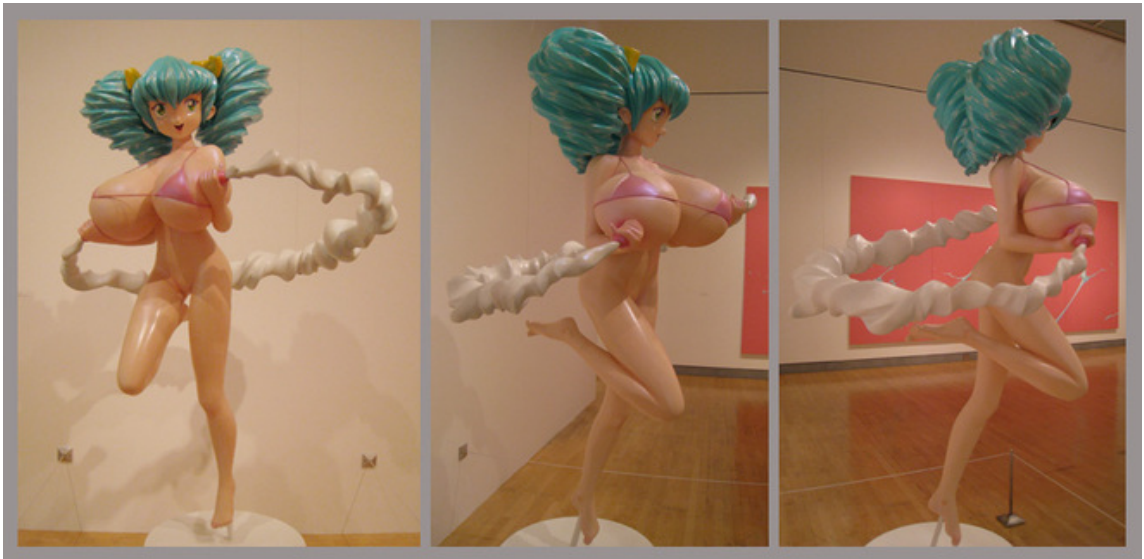


Figure 2-1 Takashi Murakami, *Hiropon*, 1997, 9 foot (2.7 m), oil paint, acrylic, iron, fiberglass and synthetic resin figure.



Figure 3. Takashi Murakami, *My Lonesome Cowboy*, 1998, 8ft. 4 1/8 in x 3ft. (254 x 117 x 91.5 cm) oil paint, acrylic, iron, fiberglass and synthetic resin figure.



Figure 3-1. *Astro Boy* (or *Mighty Atom*), 1952.



Figure 3-2, One of *The twelve general divine standing sculptures* 十二神将立像, Muro-ji temple 室生寺 Kamakura period (1185-1333).



Figure 3-3. Kitagawa Utamaro, *Shunga* (Erotic print), Edo period (1615-1868), Polychrome woodblock print, ink and color on paper, Mat 15 1/2 × 22 3/4 in. (39.4 × 57.8 cm).



Figure 4. Takashi Murakami, *Tan Tan Bo Puking*, 2001, acrylic on canvas mounted on board, 141 3/4 x 212 5/8 in (3.6 x 5.4 m).



Figure 5. Takashi Murakami, *Me and Double-DOB*, 2009, 300 x 300 cm (9.80 x 9.80 feet).



Figure 6. Takashi Murakami, *Chaos*, 2013, 300 x 300 cm, (9.80 x 9.80 feet).



Figure 6-1, *The hell of liquid fire painting* 火湯地獄圖, Ssangbong temple.



Figure 7. *Doraemon*, 1969.



Figure 8. Takashi Murakami, *The 500 Arhats*, 2012, Acrylic on canvas mounted on board, 302 x 10,000 cm.



Figure 9. *Openwork keko (A flower basket)*, the 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century, Jinsyoji Temple, Japanese national treasure.



Figure 10. Kano Sansetsu, *Old Plum* 老梅図襖, 1646, Four sliding-door panels (fusuma); ink, color, gold, and gold leaf on paper, 68 3/4 x 191 1/8 in. (174.6 x 485.5 cm).





Figure 11. Ogata Korin, *Red and White Plums*, early 18<sup>th</sup> century, pair of two-panel folding screens, ink, colors and gold on paper, each screen 5.2 x 5.8 in. (1.6 x 1.7 m). MOA Museum of Art, Atami.

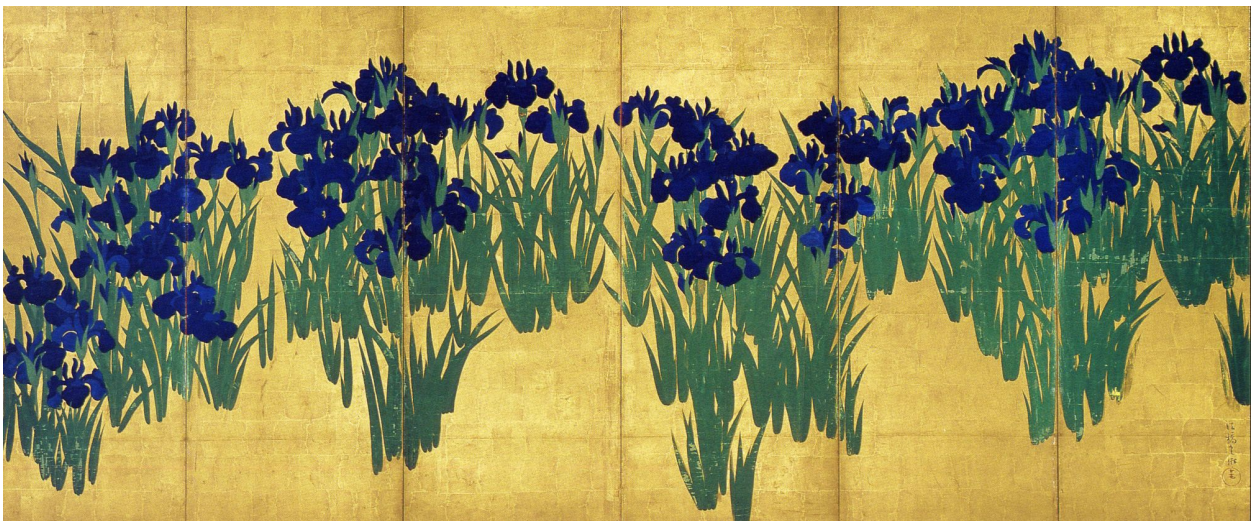


Figure 12. Ogata Korin, *Iris*, early 18<sup>th</sup> century, double six-fold screen, colors and gold foil on paper.



Figure 13. Kano Kazunobu (1816-63), *The Six Realms: Hell*, from *Five Hundred Arhats*, 1854-63, Scroll 23 from a set of 100, Hanging scroll, ink and color on ink, 172.3 x 85.3 cm, Collection of Zojoji, Tokyo, Japan.

## CURRICULUM VITAE

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