



The Wandering Soul: Myth in Murakami's Kafka on the Shore

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Abstract

This study investigates the transformation of mythological motifs in Haruki Murakami's novel, Kafka on the Shore (2005), focusing on the themes of the wandering soul, shifting selves, and psychic fluidity. Utilizing Julia Kristeva's theory of intertextuality, the study explores how ancient narratives, such as the transmigration of a soul, is repurposed into a postmodern setting. It argues that Murakami's use of the wandering soul motif is transformed from the traditional purpose, which is for cosmological order and spiritual redemption to the reflection of the fragmented and unstable self. Furthermore, Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity serves as a framework for the exploration of identity. The analysis of the character Kafka Tamura reveals an unstable identity, where his alter ego, Crow, serves as a guide through what Bhabha describes as a "Third Space" of enunciation, i.e. a liminal, interstitial site where fixed identities collapse. Similarly, the character of Satoru Nakata is examined as an empty vessel whose psychic fluidity allows him to act as a metaphysical medium through which the boundaries between dream and reality collapse. Ultimately, this study concludes that Kafka on the Shore reimagines myth, transforming it from a fixed divine decree to a postmodern exploration of the self.

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المخلص

هذه الدراسة تبحث عن تغيرات زخارف الموتيفات الاسطورية في رواية هاروكي موراكامي، (كافكا على الشاطئ) (2005)، تتمركز على ثيمات الروح الهائمة، و الذوات المتحولة (متغيرة)، و اليونة النفسية. و بناء على نظرية التناص ل جوليا كريستيفا، و فيها يتم استكشاف كيفية اعادة توظيف السرديات القديمة مثل تناسخ الأرواح في سياق ما بعد حداثي. و أيضا تتجادل الدراسة حول ان موراكامي استخدم الروح الهائمة لتحويل من غايته التقليدية التي تتمثل في النظام الكوني و الخلاص الروحي ليصبح انعكاسا للذات المتشظية و غير المستقرة. و على الرغم من ذلك، فأن مفهوم الهجانة ل هومي بهابها يشكل اطارا ل نظريا لاستكشاف الهوية. تحليل شخصية (كافكا تامورا) يكشف عن هوية غير مستقرة، حيث ان ذاته تعمل كبديلة الانا الاخرى، (كرو)، يعمل ك دليل خلال ما يصفه بها ب *الفضاء الثالث* للتلفظ، الا وهو موقع برزخي و فجوة ظاهرة تنهار فيها الهويات الثابتة.

و بالمثل، تتعرض شخصية (ساتورو ناكاتا) للفحص ك وعاء خالي تتيح له سيولته النفسية للتمثيل ك وسيط ميتافيزيقي حيث تنهار من خلاله الحدود بين الحلم و الواقع. وفي اخر المطاف تلخص هذه الدراسة على ان رواية (كافكا على الشاطئ) تعيد تخیل الاسطورة، و تحويلها من مرسوم الهي مستقر الى بحث ما بعد حداثي الذات.

2. Introduction

Myths have long served as a fundamental part of narratives through which societies interpret complex concepts, such as life and death. The persistent nature of myths permits their continual reinterpretation across different cultural and historical contexts. One mythological motif that reappears and is reshaped in literature is the concept of soul migration. The soul is the human essence and core that connects the physical body to the mind. Soul migration, also known as transmigration, is the movement of the soul between forms of existence. The notion of soul migration is connected to reincarnation, which occurs when the soul of a person does not die along the physical body but leaves the body and is reborn in a new one. This new body is not necessarily a human body, it can also be an animal or even a plant, depending on the tradition and belief system. Reincarnation and transmigration differ to certain extent and yet are used interchangeably in general discourses. With transmigration, it does not necessarily have to be the soul that moves, but it can be other concepts, such as the consciousness passing from one being to another. These potent concepts date back to the early stages of human civilization, where they served to provide answers for fundamental questions regarding the origin of mankind, sin, morality, and life and death. Especially anchored in religion, different systems are constructed to comprehend the intricate connections between life, death, and rebirth.

The notion of a soul migrating from one solid figure to another exists in numerous religions and philosophical traditions. Hinduism, for instance, believes in reincarnation, in which life is a cycle of birth, death, and rebirth determined by karma. The goal in Hinduism is to liberate oneself from the cycle by worshipping God and living a life with no worldly desires. Similarly, the Indian religions of Jainism and Sikhism emphasize reincarnation through countless

lifetimes, where the liberation is reached by shedding oneself off of all the karma and living a pure, moral life. In Buddhism, instead of a soul being reborn, there is a stream of consciousness that continues in a new body and mingles the previous personality with the new personality of the current body, i.e., believing in transmigration. According to Buddhism, the goal is Nirvana, to free oneself from the cycle of rebirth (Kumar, 2024). In Japan, Buddhism is influenced by the Shinto beliefs and they coexist. Shinto is the indigenous religion of Japan, where kami (spirits and deities) is worshipped (Bocking, 1997). The Japanese people have accepted both religions and a hybrid view, in which ancestral spirits could be reborn, while also continuing to worship them as kami. Across these diverse details in religions, reincarnation serves as both a spiritual explanation for the circle of life and death and a moral framework in which one's present actions shape future existence.

Reincarnation has long functioned as a religious doctrine and later on adapted into literature as a powerful literary framework. In Chinese classical literature, for instance, this framework is employed in the novel *Journey to the West* (2012) by Wu Ch'êng-ên, where reincarnation and karmic retributions provide structure to both character and plot. This distinguished novel, composed during the 16th century Ming dynasty, blends myth, folklore, religious philosophy, and adventure narratives. It incorporates the three different beliefs practiced in China - Buddhism, Taoism (Daoism), and Confucianism - and emphasizes a peaceful coexistence within Chinese religious and cultural traditions. The novel fictionalizes the historical pilgrimage of a monk, traveling from China to India to obtain a Buddhist scripture. Accompanying the monk are three supernatural disciples, who attempt to atone for their transgressions from their previous lives, since they are incarnations. The plot follows the pilgrims through trials, involving demons, illusions, and moral challenges, which function not just as adventures but rather karmic tests, reflecting the Buddhist ideas of reincarnation, retribution, and spiritual enlightenment. In the allegory, reincarnation serves a didactic function, illustrating that the actions of this lifetime impact the coming one, clarifying the cyclical nature of life, yet refers to rebirth without a fixed soul. Ultimately, the novel highlights the journey as a spiritual cleansing and purification to rid oneself of previous karma and reach salvation (Bantly, 1989).

In modern contemporary works, metaphysical journeys are repurposed, shifting from religious structures to inner awareness and the subconscious. In *Kafka on the Shore* (2005), which is one of the major novels explored in this study, metaphysical journeys play a significant role in the transformation of characters. The novel is structured into two parallel narratives that intertwine at certain points. The first plotline focuses on Kafka Tamura, a fifteen-year-old runaway who tries to escape his father's house in Tokyo and the Oedipal prophesy. His journey leads him to the Komura Memorial Library in Takamatsu where he stays at. The second storyline revolves around Nakata, an elderly man that is left mentally impaired after an incident during the war. The accident revokes his memory and literacy but grants him certain metaphysical abilities, such as communicating with cats. Also embarking on a journey, Nakata follows his instincts to find and open the entrance stone, a passage to the spirit realm. Even though Kafka's journey starts out as a deliberate escape, it later transforms into a metaphysical journey of his subconscious. His experiences and knowledge are shaped through a fragmented self, as seen in his conversations with his alter ego named "a boy called Crow". Crow functions as an abstract shield for Kafka, but also a guide in his journey. He handles the parts of Kafka's life that he is unable to migrate through alone. Throughout Kafka's journey, one cannot distinguish between his dreams, visions, and real occurrences, which blurs existing boundaries between reality and imagination and encourages transmigration. The transmigration of Kafka's soul offers less towards rebirth and karmic retribution and more towards the movement between the conscious and the subconscious. Certain spaces Kafka stays at, such as the library and the woods, function

as transitional zones between the reality and the spirit realm, encouraging soul migration. His journey is structured by fate, related to mythic destiny, yet it is not for the purpose of religious enlightenment. Rather, the journey serves as a confrontation of memories and identity formation.

Nakata's journey, on the other hand, is characterized by his supernatural abilities and instincts. After a traumatic incident in his childhood, Nakata experiences a change in his being, losing his ability to understand abstract concepts, only being present in the moment, with no inner conflict nor guilt, albeit his newfound ability to communicate with cats demonstrate his increase of metaphysical sensibility. Nakata progresses purely based on his instincts and the power of nature that surrounds him, one that even he himself cannot comprehend rationally. His journey is not meant for identity formation; rather, it serves to fulfill a predetermined cosmic order that restores the harmony between the human and supernatural realms. This places Nakata's journey in contrast to Kafka's one. Additionally, Nakata becomes a figure with an empty soul after the incident, which allows him to become a medium or entryway to the spirit realm. This emptiness within Nakata makes him susceptible to other mediums infiltrating his body, for instance a different soul. Without the awareness of Kafka, his soul inhabits Nakata's body to fulfill a prophesy. Furthermore, Nakata symbolically opens and closes the entryway to the spirit realm, becoming a medium between the realms. Therefore, Nakata's journey is grounded on necessity rather than self-reflection. This contrasts with more traditional journey narratives, in which the journey is directed toward a clear spiritual or moral objective.

A journey is usually anchored to a specific purpose that the individual attempts to achieve. In *Journey to the West*, the characters need to resolve their karma and attain a spiritual cleansing. The purpose here is didactic, aimed at the reader to follow the righteous path and live a moral life. Moving from the 16th century towards the 21st century, the purpose of said notions has evidently changed, parallel to a changed new world. In a postcolonial era the truth is fragmented and unstable. A world where eat or be eaten is a motto, uncertainty lingers in the air. Religion is questioned and disregarded from being a coherent worldview. The self is fragmented and unstable, identity is shaped by colonial trauma, war, and cultural dominance. All these points reflect the purpose of the journeys in *Kafka on the Shore* and contrast *Journey to the West*. Nakata embodies the damage left behind wartime violence and Kafka reflects a postmodern fragmented self, marked by instability and inner turmoil. Correspondingly, myths are reworked in a postmodern setting, where the function shifts from cosmological certainty to postcolonial fragmentation.

To examine these changes, this study employs Julia Kristeva's theory of intertextuality and Homi Bhabha's theory of hybridity. Kristeva's theory of intertextuality states that every text is a "mosaic of quotations" and represents the "absorption and transformation of another" (Kristeva, 1986, p.35, 37). This means no text is original, but is always influenced by texts that preceded it. This framework allows for the investigation of ancient narratives, such as the Oedipal myth or the pilgrimage to the West, to be reimagined into a contemporary setting. Through Bhabha's theory of hybridity, especially the "Third Space of enunciation", (Bhabha, 2004, p. 54) a framework for understanding identity as a site of constant negotiation is provided. This is particularly relevant to the analysis of "shifting selves" in *Kafka on the Shore*, where characters embody the collapse of traditional boundaries, such as dreams and reality. Bhabha argues that cultural identity is produced within liminal spaces, where different cultures, histories, and subjectivities interact to produce hybrid forms of identity. By employing Bhabha's concept of hybridity, Kristeva's theory of intertextuality, and qualitative literary analysis grounded in the close reading of the primary text, *Kafka on the Shore*, this study demonstrates how Murakami repurposes traditional myths to help characters navigate their world.

Taken together, the myth of soul migration has persisted as a significant framework in religious and literary traditions. In religions that belief in reincarnation, a migrating soul functions for moral purification and spiritual liberation. In classical works such as *Journey to the West*, the journey causes the characters to transformation and reach spiritual enlightenment. However, in contemporary literature, this traditional framework is reinterpreted to explore fragmented identity, as seen in Kafka's journey. Whether a metaphysical journey of the soul or a physical journey to recover scriptures, the journey signifies a process of transformation.

3. Shifting selves and psychic fluidity

Soul migration guides the subjects toward the pathway of enlightenment in traditional narratives, while Murakami employs soul migration for other reasons. Rather than striving for karmic redemption, the wandering soul in *Kafka on the Shore* becomes a tool for exploring fluid identity. This shift is particularly evident in the experiences of Kafka and Nakata. Their metaphysical journeys challenge the notion of a stable identity. Bhabha's concept of hybridity suggests that different cultural, social, and personal influences affect and shape identity, separating it from a stable or singular origin. Kafka serves as a prime example of being in the process of rediscovering, which gradually unfolds over the course of the novel. The identity of Kafka is marked by instability, which can be explored through his childhood. He grows up alone with a father who is mostly absent. The absence of parental guidance forces him to be self-reliant, which causes him to reach maturity by abandonment rather than choice. As a form of defense mechanism, Kafka develops Crow, a split-off aspect of his psyche, to compensate for the missing parental authority and reassurance. This tendency to safeguard is theorized by Alfred Adler by stating that the alternative identity, in this case Crow, may function as a compensatory strategy that protects the individual from feeling inferior (Adler, 1923/1955). Crow articulates Kafka's impulses and desires that he is unable to consciously acknowledge, acting as a mediator between repression and action. The following excerpt is a conversation between Kafka and Crow, demonstrating the nature of their relationship:

"But let's face it - you're only 15," Crow goes on. "Your life's just begun and there's a ton of things out in the world you've never laid eyes on. Things you never could imagine."

As always, we're sitting beside each other on the old sofa in my father's study. Crow loves the study and all the little objects scattered around there. Now he's toying with a bee-shaped glass paperweight. If my father was at home, you can bet Crow would never go anywhere near it. "But I have to get out of here," I tell him. "No two ways about it." (Murakami, 2005, p. 3)

Crow's tone resembles that of a parent, warning but also supporting their child, it combines realism and encouragement. Unlike Kafka's father who constrains Kafka's future to a prophetic curse, Crow emphasizes openness and becoming by pointing to the vast possibilities that lie for Kafka to experience. Through the acknowledgement of Kafka's youth, identity is framed as an open-ended concept, indicating the coming journey Kafka takes to find his self. The way Crow freely moves about in the place shows comfort and power. The study is a place that represents authority, control, and power. What Kafka is unable to touch because of fear, Crow approaches confidently, reclaiming symbolic authority and neutralizing the oppressive atmosphere of the study. This highlights Crow's function as a protective presence, enabling Kafka to confront internal traumas indirectly. Here, identity is negotiated within Kafka himself, through a dialogue with the self. Crow warns Kafka of the dangers he might face, yet does not stop him when he insists he must leave. Unfolding inwardly, Kafka's journey of self-discovery begins.

Sigmund Freud's reflection on the concept of the double provides insight on the psychoanalytical aspect of Kafka's split ego. Doubling originally stems from primitive narcissism but later changed to men's ability to self-criticize. After the stage of primitive

narcissism, an authority is developed inside the ego that is capable of confronting the rest of the ego. This authority helps in the observation and criticism of the self, what is presently known as the conscience. In certain cases, the authority inside the ego “becomes isolated, split off from the ego” (Freud, 1919/2003, p.142), and views the ego as an object. This process occurs in response to regression, guilt, fear, or unresolved trauma, where it presumes the function of a protector. In this case, Crow’s purpose is psychologically necessary for Kafka. Crow articulates what Kafka cannot, while simultaneously reminding him of danger, fear, and responsibility, encouraging survival. Therefore, Crow is a psychological defense mechanism, formed through a split ego, which is a sign of Kafka’s unstable identity formation.

Aside from the psychoanalytical perspective, Crow can be analyzed through mythic doubling. As discussed by Dorfman in *Double Trouble: The doppelgänger from romanticism to postmodernism* (2020), the double is not simply a mirror image of the original but a foundational element in identity formation that bridges the gap between the self and the other. For Dorfman, identity is unstable and a continuous process, which is formed through the encounter of the other, mirroring, and difference. Accordingly, Crow exists not only as an alter ego, but a shadow in relation to Kafka, who is present alongside, within, and against Kafka. This internal presence is reinforced when Kafka describes Crow’s words as being carved “in a deep blue tattoo on my heart,” (Murakami, 2005, p.4) becoming the psychological force Kafka needs. He articulates what Kafka cannot, he embodies strength and control, and he contrasts against Kafka’s fears and insecurities. This demonstrates that Crow is not a part of Kafka and clarifies that Kafka does not possess a complete self and is still in the process of identity formation. Furthermore, Dorfman stresses that the double dissolves the boundaries between dimensions making identity transcend between spaces. Similarly, Crow shifts between these realms, blurring the lines between reality and imagination, and thus highlights the instability and fragmented nature of Kafka’s identity.

Apart from Kafka’s inner fragmentation, he struggles with external forces imposed on his identity. Bestowed by his father, Kafka is destined to commit patricide and incest, repeating the Oedipal myth. This prophesy imposes an identity onto Kafka, placing him inside a box with a path already chosen. With the myth and its destiny looming over Kafka, he internalizes it and absorbs it, which causes him anxiety and guilt even in the absence of concrete actions. When reflecting his presence, Kafka states “Oshima told me people can’t be in two places at once, but I think it’s possible. In fact, I’m sure of it. While they’re still alive, people can become ghosts” (Murakami, 2005, p.294). This statement portrays a definitive rejection of spatial and physical boundaries, highlighting the psychic fluidity that defines Kafka’s journey. The idea of a living ghost connects to the motif of the wandering soul and transmigration. When his father is murdered Kafka is lost in self-doubt, despite being towns away from the crime scene, he feels involved in the murder. Kafka experiences a total loss of consciousness for several hours and wakes up with his shirt covered in fresh blood, yet he is not physically wounded. Simultaneously, Nakata kills a gruesome cat-killer named Johnny Walker in Tokyo, who is later identified as Kafka’s father. Although the novel does not clarify Kafka’s involvement, it highly suggests that Kafka’s soul inhabited Nakata’s body during the time he was unconscious. When Nakata states “I took the place of the fifteen-year-old boy who should’ve been there,” (Murakami, 2005, p. 512) he destabilizes the boundary between himself and Kafka, as well as the geographical boundaries to fulfill the prophesy. Through this act of transmigration, Kafka’s fate and Nakata’s actions become increasingly distorted. Although Kafka is physically distant from the crime scene, his symbolic involvement complicate the distinction between guilt and innocence. This uncertainty in involvement intensifies Kafka’s fractured self, since the guilt arises from internalized destiny rather than experiences. Unlike classical works, where the

Oedipal myth offers resolution or catharsis, the novel only uses it for an increase in existential tension.

In Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* (1982) the prophesy causes tension, but that tension leads to a clear purpose. Oedipus discovers his origin and the truth, which establishes the connection between prophesy, actions, and the proceeding consequences. When it is revealed that the city of Thebes suffers because Oedipus, the murderer of the king, is unpunished, he exiles himself. Regardless of the tragic outcome in the classical tale, the cosmological order is restored. Contrastingly, Murakami leaves crucial questions unanswered, the prophesy and the consequences of actions are incomplete and ambiguous. The oedipal myth is therefore trans-contextualized to generate existential tension rather than closure.

A counterforce to the prophesy is the inner voice or alter ego, Crow, who embodies possibility rather than predestination. Crow's guidance helps Kafka to navigate through difficult moments that evoke fear and uncertainty. This encourages Kafka to see himself as an active figure rather than a sacrifice in a myth. Hence, Crow protects Kafka's psychological state by rationally separating guilt and existing actions. Dissolving the father's authority, Crow establishes his own authority for Kafka, providing support for the process of identity formation and separating Kafka from the myth. This way, Kafka is not blindly following the myth, but skeptically reflects it.

Kafka takes action when intervening directly in the prophesy by the decision of leaving home. The escape is not about a mere spatial movement, but rather a first step towards conscious, self-empowered choices. Through the self-identification of "the world's toughest 15-year-old" (Murakami, 2005, p.4), Kafka begins to take control of the narrative. As fragile as this self-definition is, it signals the transition from passive bystander to an active participant in the process of identity formation. In certain spaces, his identity is further developed. The spaces are neither fully social nor fully mythical, they are in-between spaces, such as the library, the forest, and the isolated cabin. These places are where Kafka is separated from social structures, allowing him to experiment with himself and who he can be. In the library, he is a reader, a thinker, a listener, rather than a son, a student, or a criminal. This shifting perspective assist in the process of identity formation.

Other cornerstones in Kafka's identity formation include his intimate encounters as well as his father's death. The desire Kafka feels towards woman obscures the clarity of his self. Acting as a destabilizing force, the intimate encounters raise ethical questions of responsibility and guilt, without providing clear answers. Since Kafka does not recognize his sister, because they lost contact from a young age, any encounter with a female makes him second guess whether it is his sister, confusing Kafka further. Similarly, the uncertainty revolving around the father's death forces Kafka into a doubtful state. Regardless of his physical absence at the crime scene, Kafka senses guilt because of the influence the Oedipal myth has on him. Both factors present a postmodern truth to identity, in which identity is not shaped by knowledge and certainty, but the ongoing negotiations and reflection of the self. This aligns with Bhabha's theory of hybridity, which states that a hybrid identity is formed in a "Third Space" where opposing forces influence the production of a fluid and unstable self. Kafka exists between a mythical figure (Oedipus) and his individual self, where he doesn't fully become either. Kafka's character is split between roles and through this tension his hybrid identity emerges, as fragmented and unstable as it is.

Towards the end of the novel, identity does not emerge as a unified or resolved notion, but as an open-ended process. With Kafka's decision to return "living in the real world" (Murakami, 2005, p.363), he embraces the ambiguity and tries to define himself through his decisions rather than a prophesy. His issues may be far from resolved, but this highlights the continuous process of rediscovering the self rather than closure and stability.

Having examined Kafka's shifting identity, the focus transfers to Nakata's identity defined through loss and absence. His fragmented identity is shaped by the traumatic childhood incident. After the incident, Nakata lost his memory, ability to read and understand concepts, which makes him unable to form a coherent self that normally connects the body and the identity of a person. Without an egocentric self, Nakata loses all personal intentions and functions as a medium for external forces. With his changed existence, Nakata lives in a constant liminal space between child and adult, between mental confinement and metaphysical insight. His ability to converse with cats makes him a mediator between the real and the spiritual world. This makes Nakata embody an identity that was not chosen but imposed through the incident. The journey Nakata takes on is not exactly a search of identity, but rather to achieve a certain goal. Towards the end of the novel, Nakata's identity has reached a final form of functionality, not defined by personal development but by his ability to fulfill a role.

Nakata's role shifts from the mundane cat finder to the metaphysical bridge between states of existence. Having the ability to talk to cats, he was known for being the master cat finder. This leads him towards the confrontation of Johnny Walker, a metaphysical being, while looking for a cat. Their interaction reveal that Nakata does not have much control over himself, as his "body wouldn't listen" and "it did what it wanted" (Murakami, 2005, p.219). This empty shell of Nakata is easily infiltrated and manipulated. Yet, Nakata's primary metaphysical mission is to find and handle the entrance stone, which is the passage way to the spirit realm. His function is to restore balance, what is not meant in the living world must return to its place.

While both Kafka and Nakata go through a journey, their aims and realizations differ vastly. Kafka experiences a fragmented identity that constantly shifts and is shaped by inner conflicts, doubt, guilt, and is haunted by the past. His self is strengthened with memory, dreams, and interwoven with an inner voice (Crow), yet it stays open and incomplete in a continuous process until the end. Nakata, on the other hand, has lost his self and remains as a physically and mentally empty vessel, only living in the present, and functioning as a medium for the spiritual world. Whereas Kafka is in an active negotiation with his identity, Nakata's identity becomes pragmatic and functional, oriented towards the fulfillment of a task. Nevertheless, both characters portray a postmodern view on identity: one that is not a stable, complete essence, but a dynamic process formed through experience, encounters, and metaphysical influence.

According to Julia Kristeva's framework of intertextuality, *Kafka on the Shore* reinterprets the motif of the wandering soul that is found in the ancient epic *Journey to the West*. This intertextual dialogue reveals a fundamental shift from cosmological certainty of the classic epic to the postmodern fragmentation of the contemporary novel. In *Journey to the West*, the characters' identities are fixed within a cosmic hierarchy governed by karma and rebirth. Characters like Sun Wukong have identities that are fixed within a cosmological hierarchy and the wandering is to redeem past crimes. In contrast, identity in *Kafka on the Shore* is inherently fluid and hybrid, reflecting Homi Bhabha's "Third Space" where binaries collapse. Kafka and Nakata's journeys dissolve the little stability they had rather than consolidate it. Kafka remains uncertain and Nakata exists entirely outside of social constructs of identity. What traditionally assisted in identity formation has turned to Murakami's postmodern perspective, where identity remains in a fluid state. Here, the wandering souls and the journeys the characters take are not religious quests for enlightenment but a reflection of a fragmented postmodern self. This contrasts with the traditional use of soul migration which is to cleanse oneself from previous karma. Ultimately, Murakami demonstrates how traditional myths can be reinterpreted and reimaged to function as a tool for exploring the fragmented self.

4 Conclusion

The enduring power of myth lies in its endurance, as seen in Murakami's reinterpretation in his contemporary novel *Kafka on the Shore*. Transmigration, or a wandering soul, has undergone a transition from its classical function of didacticism to its postmodern reinterpretation of fragmentation. In traditional works, such as *Journey to the West*, the wandering soul is a didactic tool used to illustrate the laws of karma and rebirth. The characters' identities, while physically transformative, remain rooted in a divine register, fixed and stable. On the contrary, Murakami utilizes Kristeva's intertextuality to repurpose these motifs into a world of psychic fluidity. Kafka and Nakata do not wander to rid themselves of karma from a previous life, but to navigate an internal "metaphysical, symbolic storm" (Murakami, 2005, p. 5). Their journey is not toward external religious salvation but toward an internal reconciliation.

Furthermore, through Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity this study highlights how Murakami replaces the fixed moral hierarchy of the classical epic with a "Third Space" of identity. Nakata is an empty vessel, which allows him to function as a medium through which external forces act, embodying a hybrid state between the human and the mythic. Kafka's wandering occurs through a transmigration which causes the boundaries of the self to dissolve. Murakami recontextualizes the ancient concept of the soul leaving the body, turning it into a tool for exploring subconscious responsibility and identity formation. Ultimately, the novel provides a modern reinterpretation of a classical myths not to provide answers, but to map the labyrinthine nature of the human heart.

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