‘Not All Wounds Gush Blood’: A Feminist Analysis of the Representation of Sex, Violence, and Gender in *1Q84*

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Abstract

Since the early 2000s, there has been an exponential growth in the consumption of Japanese fiction in translation in the Western literary world. It has been noted that this increase of interest in Japanese literature in translation may be attributed to author Haruki Murakami, beginning with his novel *Norwegian Wood*. Across his literary oeuvre, Murakami has faced a multitude of criticisms over his characterisation and objectification of women. This thesis explores how the male gaze operates within the novel *1Q84* by Haruki Murakami and its effect on the representation of sex, violence against women and gender. It will do so by performing an active reading of the three volumes of *1Q84* to examine how the patriarchal influence of the author governs the perception of the male and female characters in the novel. This thesis aims to study the depiction of masculinity and patriarchal expectations of female sexuality, as well as to explore to what extent the women in the novel are sexualised and objectified by expressions of male fantasy coming from the author. It will conclude by arguing that the influence of the author's male gaze directly impacts the understanding of both the women and men in the novel and that the objectification of women in literature remains a significant issue to the present day.

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Introduction

"Male fantasies, male fantasies, is everything run by male fantasies? Up on a pedestal or down on your knees, it's all a male fantasy: that you're strong enough to take what they dish out, or else too weak to do anything about it. Even pretending you aren't catering to male fantasies is a male fantasy: pretending you're unseen, pretending you have a life of your own, that you can wash your feet and comb your hair unconscious of the ever-present watcher peering through the keyhole, peering through the keyhole in your own head, if nowhere else. You are a woman with a man inside watching a woman. You are your own voyeur".

-Margaret Atwood, *The Robber Bride*

In the last decade, East Asian literature has burst onto the Western literary scene in a manner that has never been seen before. The rapid growth in Western fascination with East Asian (predominantly Korean and Japanese) culture since the early 2000s has led to a notable increase in the consumption of translated fiction. Since Han Kang's *The Vegetarian* became the first winner of the International Booker Prize in 2016, Western literary circles have paid greater attention to Japanese and Korean novels (often referred to under the umbrella term of 'East Asian Literature') with an East Asian novel making the shortlist each year since 2022. Japanese fiction in translation, especially, has gained rapid popularity amongst Western readers. According to data compiled by Nielsen on behalf of the Booker Prize Foundation, over a quarter of the two million works of translated fiction sold in the UK in 2023, and fourteen out of thirty bestsellers, were Japanese. Amongst critics, there exists a consensus that Japanese fiction contains elements of "introspection and interest in emotional landscapes" that differ from typical Western literature, providing "comforting stories about ordinary lives" with the ability to transform the ordinary into the fantastical (Shaffi). Lawson further argues that this

appetite for Japanese literature has been pioneered by author Haruki Murakami, beginning with his first best-selling novel, *Norwegian Wood*.

As with any literary classification, Japanese fiction has been scrutinised by theoretical perspectives such as feminism. However, as the analysis of Japanese fiction from a Western perspective is still relatively new, there is still insufficient literature on feminist analysis of Japanese novels. This thesis aims to address and expand upon existing research into the portrayal of sex, violence, and gender in Japanese fiction, focusing on how the male gaze operates in Haruki Murakami's novel *1Q84*.

Amongst critics and authors, Murakami is both revered and condemned for his works, viewed as a pioneer of the 'slice-of-life' sub-genre with his sprinkling of magical realism, but simultaneously critiqued for his characterisation. Despite the significant problems with his characterisation, particularly of women, Murakami's novels have enjoyed overwhelming success - though some may argue that his success is in part attributable to aspects of his characterisation. Some may consider Murakami's portrayal of women in almost all of his novels problematic and, in many cases, unreservedly misogynistic. Throughout his many novels, Murakami's women prove time and time again to be objects of male desire. Even for long-standing fans of Murakami, his sexualisation and objectification of women can be a challenge in the effort to enjoy his works.

> There's a general consensus that Murakami's depiction of women and their relationship to the male protagonist retains a similar sort of formula throughout all of his works, that formula being: an introspective and introverted man is "liberated" by an eccentric and extroverted young woman. There's that and also Murakami's strange obsession with breasts. (Hashimoto)

Across critical reviews, a general idea exists that Murakami's women are written as objectified two-dimensional beings whose sole purpose is to serve the male protagonist by becoming his salvation.

In an interview conducted with Murakami, Mieko Kawakami, a Japanese author and feminist, stated:

> It's common for my female friends to say to me, "If you love Haruki Murakami's work so much, how do you justify his portrayal of women?" The notion being that there is something disconcerting about the depiction of women in your stories. It irks some people, men and women alike. (Kawakami)

When questioned about what precisely the reason for this opinion might be, she responded:

> It goes beyond whether they are realistic, or come across as "real-life women." It has more to do with the roles they play. For example, as we were saying earlier, the woman functions as a kind of oracle, in that she's made to act as a medium of fate. (Kawakami)

Murakami's women are frequently reduced to how they can function in relation to their male counterparts. As Kawakami notes, women are made to "act as a medium of fate" for the male protagonists, typically as a key to change their projected path throughout the novel. The women are a figurative gateway for male transformation, usually via sex.

Murakami's women are undoubtedly written through a heavily sexualised male gaze. Despite this, Murakami argues that his male and female characters are treated equally and are undefined by gender; they are simply people who reflect their environment.

> **HM**: The focus is on the interface, or how these people, both men and women, engage with the world they're living in. If anything, I take great care not to dwell too much on the meaning of existence, its importance or its implications. Like I said earlier, I'm not interested in individualistic characters. And that applies to men and women both. (Kawakami)

The fact that Kawakami is a well-established feminist Japanese writer known to be a fan of Murakami makes her commentary on Murakami's women particularly impactful; however, Kawakami is not alone in her analysis of Murakami's female characters. Gitte Marianne Hansen has written that "analyses of Murakami Haruki's gender representations often conclude that his fiction mirrors Japanese patriarchy with female characters traditionally portrayed as objects for male subjectivities" (Hansen 229). However, Hansen notes that while this is a valid point from those reading Murakami from a feminist perspective, not all of Murakami's women share the same lack of autonomy:

> While such criticism regarding some of Murakami's fiction may make a much-needed point, they are incomplete by ignoring his works where the main characters, protagonists, and narrators are females who act as subjects in their own worlds. Although these female subjects are mostly not feminist-empowered characters who stand up for themselves, they are representative of realities many women face in contemporary Japan: 'isolation', 'contradictive femininity', and 'violence'. (Hansen 229)

These statements represent two ideas that are found to be common when researching feminist analyses of Murakami's works: that his descriptions of women are misogynistic or that they are simply an accurate representation of the average Japanese woman's everyday life. This discourse will form the basis for this thesis' analysis of Murakami and his women, scrutinising to what extent either statement is true and fair in its critique of Murakami. This thesis will analyse the three instalments of the *1Q84* series, the choices Murakami makes in defining the gender of his characters and to what extent the male gaze of the author objectifies and sexualises women.

With that in mind, this thesis will discuss stereotypical associations within male and female gender roles, both within the cultural context of Japan and the West, and therefore the notion of perceived bias must be considered. Bias on behalf of the critic is often unavoidable within a literary discussion, though this should be acknowledged and addressed in order to present a fair and thorough argument. As a young, white woman with a strong belief in feminist principles, recognising perception bias in the milieu of culture and gender is vital in the production of this thesis. In the interest of forming a coherent and well-founded case, this thesis will aim to focus solely on the evidence presented within the text of *1Q84* and draw upon additional information from author interviews and critical reviews to provide context and support to the critique. By focusing on performing a close reading of the novel, this thesis aims to draw attention to areas of the text which appear to be contradictory or particularly ambiguous to form the basis of its argument. So as to mitigate any perceived bias on behalf of the critic, this thesis will also operate under the pretext of 'the intentional fallacy' as coined by Wimsatt and Beardsley (468-488). The concept of the intentional fallacy suggests that the reader can never truly evaluate a body of work by making assumptions about the author's true intention in its creation. At the same time, some notion of the intentionality of an author is an indispensable element in any responsible reading of a text, even if that notion can never guarantee the text's 'meaning'. By offering alternative readings of the novel, conclusions drawn from close textual analysis and contextual observation will contribute to building a reading based on plausible ideas concerning how the novel can be read, tested against the primary text and interpretations from other critics as opposed to my own bias and speculation.

In order to explore the possibility of the male gaze within *1Q84*, this thesis must first define the male gaze and how it exists within fiction. In the 1980s, influenced by Laura Mulvey's work 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', feminist critics began to suggest that women in any work of art, such as film, paintings and literature, may be perceived through the eyes of the 'male gaze'. As society as a whole is under patriarchal influence, the inequality between men and women extends well beyond social and economic oppression; patriarchy permeates every aspect of daily life, even down to the way in which men and women look at one another.

> In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female form which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness. (Mulvey 19)

As Mulvey argues, women are looked upon by men who, in their position as oppressors, project their own "phantasy" onto women. That is, a woman is an object of desire, and men are the ones who look at them; the male gaze refers to "the sexually objectifying attitude that a representation takes towards its feminine subject matter, presenting her as a primarily passive object for heterosexual-male erotic gratification" (Eaton 878). This additional distinction of a "heterosexual" male gaze is imperative to understanding the male gaze in literature - particularly in the case of *1Q84*. As Eaton states, "It is rarely observed but worth noting that the male gaze is really a heterosexual male gaze, never a gay male gaze" as the way in which the women are being observed is inherently erotic; therefore, only men with the sexual desire for women are executors of the male gaze (Eaton 878). Under this assumption, the male gaze is as much defined by the object of desire as it is by the one who is doing the looking; in order for the heterosexual male gaze to occur, there must be a woman-as-object to be looked at.

Borrowing from the Lacanian concept of The Gaze, this thesis will further explore how perceptions of women in *1Q84* are altered by the direction from which they are gazed upon and aims to scrutinise the way in which the gaze of the author and the gaze of the reader can present differing perspectives on the women in the novel.

In his later works, Lacan refers to the gaze as inducing a sense of anxiety and in a psychological context, the gaze implies that the gazer (the one who looks) is in a position of power or superiority to the object (Schroeder 208). In this case, the 'object' can be seen as women who are being gazed upon by men. Lacan argues that "the gaze of others towards us disorganises the field of perception", and by applying this to Murakami, we can see how Murakami may only view his women through his (male) gaze and that he cannot perceive his object(s) looking back at him via the reader's potential critique.

Admittedly, while Murakami's women are undoubtedly written through the male gaze, the saving grace of many of these characters is their charismatic and unique personalities. Almost all of Murakami's novels follow a similar structure: a lethargic, lost male content within his predictable, sheltered, usually frugal life meets a bright female love interest who drives him to complete whatever quest or challenges are before him. The prize for completing these quests? More often than not, the women themselves become their romantic and sexual partners.

This thesis will begin by briefly introducing *1Q84* and explaining key elements within the plot. 'Japanese Feminism' will provide a contextual understanding of Japanese

feminist theory in the 1980s, the time at which the novel is set, and analyse the actions of Aomame and to what extent she exhibits the ideology of the *ūman ribu* (women's liberation). In The Masculine Woman and The Bombshell chapters, Aomame's personality traits are compared with those of popular masculine characters before examining to what extent the male gaze views her as a 'Cool Girl' as defined by Gillian Flynn in a later chapter. Subsequently, it will analyse the contrasting image of the Bombshell using the criteria set out by Millar, exploring the idea that regardless of how Aomame is perceived, she is always at the mercy of the male gaze. 'A Sexual Being' will navigate the sexual relationships within the novel and the way in which women are represented as commodities for male consumption. It will use feminist critique to discuss the relationship between societal expectations of sex and chasteness and to what extent the women of the novel are presented as 'provoking their own demise'. In 'The Protector Of Women', this thesis will discuss the social context of women's position in Japan and appraise whether Aomame's brand of vigilante justice depicts her as a hero to women. 'The Oracle/ A Woman Embodied' will draw upon arguments from Kawakami's interview with Murakami to discuss the use of sex and the female body as a key to transformation for male characters. In 'The Herbivorous Man', it will evaluate to what extent Murakami's own heritage is mirrored within the character of Tengo and whether the label of 'Herbivore' applies to his characterisation.

An Introduction to *1Q84*

Haruki Murakami is a Japanese novelist whose novels have sold millions of copies worldwide and have been translated into more than 50 languages. *1Q84 (いちきゅうはちよん)* was published in three volumes between 2009-2010, with the novel's first print run selling out on the day of release and selling over a million copies within the first month. The (UK) English translation of the novel was translated into two parts, with books one and two sold as a single volume, translated by Jay Rubin, and book three, translated by Phillip Gabriel. This thesis will focus on the three instalments of Murakami's *1Q84* and how, throughout the plot, Murakami defines and distinguishes genders.

The novel's genre is often hard to pinpoint; there are elements of romance, dystopian science fiction and magical realism. The novel primarily follows the lives of Tengo and Aomame, a man and woman who met in middle school and fell in love after briefly holding hands in a classroom. Despite the brevity of their interaction, twenty years on, they still think of one another and love one another deeply. The novel is told from alternating perspectives: Tengo is an aspiring writer embroiled in a plot to ghost-write a best-selling book, whereas Aomame is a personal trainer who secretly specialises in assassinating abusive men. Aomame is tasked with killing the leader of a reclusive religious cult known as the Sakigake - she is successful in her endeavours, but this leads her to become hunted by the cult members and forces her into hiding.

Tengo and Aomame's stories become intertwined, and the pair are somehow unwillingly transported to the strange alternate world of 1Q84, created by a series of

god-like beings known as the ‘Little People’. Most notably, in the world of 1Q84, there are two moons in the sky that everyone but Tengo, Aomame - and later, Ushikawa, an investigator hired by the Sakigake to find Aomame- fails to see. Tengo and Aomame must navigate this strange world, troubled by the Sakigake and the Little People, in order to find their way back to one another.

JAPANESE FEMINISM

The novel opens with Aomame in a cab stuck in traffic on the Metropolitan Expressway in Tokyo, listening to Janáček's *Sinfonietta*, a piece of music that becomes a recurring theme throughout the novels. Despite being the very opening chapter of the series, this is a pivotal moment that defines the plot throughout; it is after a strange conversation with the cab driver that Aomame decides to climb down the expressway's emergency escape stairs to make an 'appointment' with a client - an appointment to murder an abusive husband in a Tokyo hotel. The driver asks Aomame to "please remember: things are not what they seem" (20). He elaborates further: "It's just that you're about to do something *out of the ordinary*" and "once you *do* something like that, the everyday *look* of things might seem to change a little. Things may look *different* to you than they did before" (20). This ominous warning sets the tone for the novel's strangeness, the entry to the world of 1Q84, as Aomame calls it, the 'Q' standing for question mark. These warnings of something out of the ordinary seem innocuous initially, but oddities reveal themselves further into the novel. Aomame first notices that things seem to be *almost* the same as the real 1984, but small changes have occurred in the design of police uniforms and weapons and, most noticeably, the appearance of two moons in the sky.

The world of 1Q84 is not the only thing "out of the ordinary" in the novel (20). Aomame's character does not conform to the expectations of an ordinary 1980s Japanese woman. Whilst women were becoming significantly more involved in the workforce by the 1980s, the everyday Japanese woman was still expected to find a

husband and take care of her family - even if she chose to work. Japanese society was (and to some extent, still is) deeply patriarchal, and the belief that women are mothers and caretakers over individuals was still extremely prevalent. According to Shigematsu, prior to the conceptualisation of *ūman ribu* (women's liberation) former women's movements had "never rejected" the patriarchal family system or "questioned the sex-role division of labour" (Shigematsu 558). Women were prescribed the belief that "a woman must become a man's wife and reproduce *his* children"; there remained the idea that women are housewives and housewives are mothers (Shigematsu 558):

> The equation that woman = housewife (shufu) = mother (haha) has functioned as the modern prescription of "womanhood," a teleological prescription directing women toward the regulatory ideal of *ryōsai kenbo* (good wife, wise mother). (Shigematsu 558)

This belief remained so profoundly ingrained amongst Japanese men and women that it "continued to influence state policies toward welfare, education, employment, sexuality and reproduction at least until the late 1980s" (Shigematsu 559). Around 1983, the feminist movement in Japan attempted to become somewhat unified in its platform and dealt with the more 'pressing' matters of the collective focus, such as paving the way for women to enter the workforce, after which many branch groups turned inward for a closer and more reflective examination of the theory. Despite the shift towards a singular focus, Japanese feminism remained a fragmented theory spearheaded by a collective of well-established individual feminists. Yet, whilst these women became celebrated in their own right, it seemed as though the feminist debate was reserved for those within the 'clique', and the impression was given that feminism was something that only these 'special' women dealt with and, for the average Japanese woman, feminism was "remote from ordinary women's concerns'' (Ehara 55). The case may be made that Aomame comes across as one of these 'special' women; her confidence, open

attitude towards sex and her body and the desire to protect women reflect the ideals put forward by these figureheads of the *ūman ribu*. On a surface level, Aomame does appear to be a feminist character; she checks the boxes for a 'strong female protagonist' – however, the problematic nature of the writing and constant presence of the male gaze throughout the novel instead suggests these attributes are an example of virtue signalling on behalf of Murakami.

After she exits the cab, readers get a true sense of Aomame's personality and mindset. When preparing to climb down the fire escape, she remarks on the number of eyes on her from other cars sitting in the traffic jam on the expressway and how unbothered she is by this attention. For many, something as dangerous as walking on an expressway and then climbing down a fire escape ladder would induce anxiety, even more so with hundreds of people watching; Aomame remains cool and focused, silently urging her audience to look all they like.

> 'Billie Jean' was playing. She felt as if she were performing a striptease. *So what? Let them look all they want. They must be bored waiting for the traffic jam to end. Sorry, though, folks, this is all I'll be taking off today.* (23)

Aomame asserts dominance over everyone around her early on in the novel. Murakami uses this moment to set up not only the plot but also Aomame's personality; she exudes confidence and sexuality. Furthermore, as Aomame prepares to descend the ladder, her miniskirt rides up "to her hips" as she climbs over the barrier (24). Once again, in this moment, Aomame is assertive in her mindset.

> *Who gives a damn? Let them look all they want. Seeing what's under my skirt doesn't let them really see me as a person.* Besides, her legs were the part of her body of which Aomame was the most proud. (24)

Aomame is, within the first few pages of the novel, presented as a self-confident woman, clearly ahead of the times in terms of her mindset, proud to show off her body to passers-by and unbothered by their gaze. It is important to note that she recognises the men who are looking at her before mentioning the woman and her child who are also observers; it appears as though Aomame is more aware of men's eyes on her than women and her pride in showing off her legs suggests she enjoys the gaze. This first encounter with Aomame is a blatant representation of the male gaze in the form of a host of ogling men - and Aomame's first reaction is to present herself to them as a subject to be looked at. Arguably, this is a strategic act by Murakami for his female protagonist to exhibit herself as an object of desire to be looked upon by men in her first appearance in the novel; Aomame is determined from the beginning of the novel to be a woman who is also an object of the male gaze. This initial encounter with Aomame defines her image for the rest of the novel as someone who enjoys and welcomes the opportunity to be objectified by men. As with many of the female characters within the novel, Murakami seems to create these women in a way that makes it acceptable to view them as an object of the male gaze. This is how the male gaze operates directly within the novel, as, not only is Aomame gazed at (and welcomes this gaze) by the men around her, but her characterisation stems directly from the influence of the male gaze of the author. From the very beginning of the novel, the impression is given that the author is explicitly aware of his own influence upon Aomame; her apparent enjoyment of being sexualised by almost everyone around her from the beginning of the novel can be viewed as a pretext for the expression of Murakami's own desires in the construction of her character.

THE MASCULINE WOMAN AND THE BOMBSHELL

Aomame displays multiple characteristics derived from typically masculine characters, much like a female James Bond. Bond represents a form of toxic masculinity that shows very little emotional depth and focuses on his physical and sexual prowess and ability to detach from the reality of murder. Culturally, he is often considered to be the embodiment of the 'macho-man', fiercely independent and self-reliant. In many ways, Aomame acts in a similar manner to Bond; Aomame is happy to discuss cars with her cab driver; she is unbothered by men looking at her body, even actively encouraging their gaze; she works at a sports club and is a killer for hire. Not only this, but Aomame is not shy about her sexuality although the manner with which she views sex and goes about seeking sexual partners can be considered to be an example of the male gaze in literature. Aomame is presented as the 'ideal'; she is a 'badass' woman, a 'Cool Girl' - a woman who is not intended to be relatable to women, rather one that they are expected to embody. In the novel *Gone Girl* by Gillian Flynn, the protagonist, Amy, perfectly describes the 'Cool Girl' or 'pick me' girl attitude:

> Men always say that as the defining compliment, don't they? She's a cool girl. Being the Cool Girl means I am a hot, brilliant, funny woman who adores football, poker, dirty jokes, and burping, who plays video games, drinks cheap beer, loves threesomes and anal sex, and jams hot dogs and hamburgers into her mouth like she's hosting the world's biggest culinary gang bang while somehow maintaining a size 2, because Cool Girls are above all hot. Hot and understanding. Cool Girls never get angry; they only smile in a chagrined, loving manner and let their men do whatever they want. Go ahead, shit on me, I don't mind, I'm the Cool Girl.
>
> Men actually think this girl exists.
>
> Maybe they're fooled because so many women are willing to pretend to be this girl. For a long time Cool Girl offended me. I used to see men – friends, co-workers, strangers – giddy over these awful pretender women, and I'd want to sit these men down and calmly say: You are not dating a woman, you are dating a woman who has watched too many movies written by socially awkward men who'd like to believe that this kind of woman exists and might kiss them. I'd want

> to grab the poor guy by his lapels or messenger bag and say: The bitch doesn't really love chilli dogs that much – no one loves chilli dogs that much! And the Cool Girls are even more pathetic: They're not even pretending to be the woman they want to be, they're pretending to be the woman a man wants them to be. (249,250)

In *Gone Girl*, Amy is specifically talking about women who, consciously or unconsciously, alter their behaviour in line with the desires of the men around them. Whilst Aomame does not adhere to all of the behaviour described in the above quotation, she does still represent enough of the Cool Girl ideology in her persona that she can be viewed as a Cool Girl. The Cool Girl talked about in *Gone Girl* is a woman who distances herself from other women by aligning her behaviour with that of the men around her, whilst maintaining her position of submission to the patriarchy by never calling men out on poor behaviour. Unusually, Aomame does not see other women as competition and is much more inclined towards a distaste for men than women. Aomame also never appears to critique other women around her, unlike Amy, who criticises the 'Cool Girl' type, but also the women who model themselves on this persona. This behaviour is unusual for this type of female character written by a man, as women are, more often than not, pitted against one another. However, Aomame's persona and behaviour is entirely dictated by the desires of the male author; whilst she is not into "football, poker, dirty jokes and burping", she does engage in anal sex, threesomes and is a "hot, brilliant woman"(249). These actions, which in *Gone Girl* appear to be choices made by women in line with the male gaze, are actions and personality traits written into Aomame's persona by the author. In essence, Aomame is a Cool Girl specifically because that is who Murakami wanted her to be.

A common flaw when creating a strong female character is creating a woman that is, essentially, a man with breasts. Their interests, thoughts and actions are that of a typically masculine person. Of course, it is essential to note that not all women will enjoy 'girly' or feminine things, and not all men will enjoy stereotypically 'masculine' things; real-life people exist on a spectrum of masculine and feminine. However, herein lies the problem - some authors forget that women are able to exist on both masculine and feminine planes. Consequently, their female characters are crammed into one specific category of woman: one of 'the boys', the 'Cool Girl', the aforementioned man with breasts who does not care what she looks like (but is still effortlessly beautiful) and hates 'girly things'. Or, these women are the complete antithesis, an extremely feminine woman who is overly concerned with her appearance, only dreams of romance, having babies and getting married.

Aomame is portrayed as a unique individual, continuing the perception of a woman very different to everyone else around her, even down to the uniqueness of her name:

> She didn't travel much, but on those rare occasions when she stayed in an unfamiliar city or town, she would always open the hotel's phone book to see if there were any Aomame's in the area. She never found a single one. (12)

Over the last few decades, an increasing number of female protagonists have been presented in a manner similar to James Bond. A significant example is Lara Croft, the female protagonist of the *Tomb Raider* franchise. Initially beginning as a video game series, the franchise then also developed into comic books, films and novels. From the very beginning of the franchise, Lara Croft was considered to be a female rendering of James Bond by fans. Much like Bond, Croft throws herself into potentially dangerous situations in the name of something she believes in and notoriously comes out the other

side victorious. When researching the two individuals, several recurring traits were mentioned for both characters:

Table A

Characteristic	James Bond	Lara Croft
Highly Intelligent	X	X
Athletic	X	X
Sex Symbol	X	X
Brave	X	X
Independent	X	X

The generally accepted definition of a sex symbol is a famous person or character that is considered to be sexually desirable. The idea of both characters being a 'sex symbol' is a repeated theme in the character profile of Bond and Croft. Although Croft appears as a gender-swapped version of Bond, she remains a sex symbol despite displaying the many characteristics that are derived from such a masculine-presenting character. Mulvey notes that the male gaze in cinema not only applies to the sexualisation and objectification of women, but also the tendency to inspire narcissistic identification amongst male viewers (Mulvey 17-24). While the male gaze positions women as an object to be looked at, it also positions male protagonists as a desirable idol to mirror. Mulvey argues that viewers feel the need to identify with the male protagonist, even if they do not have the same looks and abilities leading to the 'misidentification' and the glorification of these traits creating a narcissistic element that boosts viewers' self-esteem (Mulvey 17-24). The persistent theme of these characters is the presentation of an eroticised ideal of physical beauty (and the suggestion of sex that lies behind that).

The distinctive difference between these characters is not necessarily their gender, but rather the way these traits are received by audiences *due* to their gender.

The issue that stems from writing women in this way is that in an attempt to write a 'badass' or (perceived) feminist woman simply by recreating the traits typically applied to male protagonists and using them for a female character, it often disregards aspects of the experience of being a woman. The typically misogynistic representation of women in literature is a beautiful woman who needs a man to come and save her; she is the damsel that requires rescue, yet in this story, Aomame saves Tengo. Women who fall under the label of 'strong female character' are portrayed as the total antithesis of the damsel in distress by the male gaze; the implication of this is that for a woman to be 'badass' or feminist, she must be irreconcilable to the image of the damsel.

Table B

Characteristic	James Bond	Lara Croft	Aomame
Highly Intelligent	X	X	X
Athletic	X	X	X
Sex Symbol	X	X	X
Brave	X	X	X
Independent	X	X	X

This presentation is precisely the reason *why* Aomame is an example of the male gaze in literature. When considering Aomame from the perspective of these masculine-derived characters, Aomame is the 'perfect' protagonist: she is fashionable yet isn't afraid to get her hands dirty; she is highly intelligent, confident and can handle a gun. Aomame embodies the many characteristics of these masculine-derived sex symbols, whilst also

being fashionable, beautiful, and devoted to Tengo. One contemporary colloquialism for these kinds of women is 'Girl Boss'.

Whilst the male gaze does not *typically* render female protagonists as having masculine-derived characteristics (such as that of Bond), it would not be overly critical to suggest that Aomame is still an example of the male gaze at the other end of the spectrum; still under the scrutiny of the male gaze, simply in a different manner to the traditional trope of a damsel in distress. Instead, Murakami deliberately creates female characters that always remain subordinate to the desires of male characters, and by extension Murakami himself. Women become an archetype, stripped of the complexities that make up the human experience or the full spectrum of womanhood and femininity. Jacques Lacan famously stated that "man's desire is the desire of the Other", meaning that a person's desire is never truly their own, always seeking to satisfy that which is perceived as lacking in the Other, in this case, women (235). Building upon teachings from Lacan and Freud, no 'real life' woman could ever truly satisfy this male gaze; it is insatiable in its nature, in the same way that desire is never satisfied, leaving male writers to create unrealistic female characters in line with these stereotypes in order to attempt to satisfy their desires.

However, if we consider the male gaze to be a 'demand' in Lacanian terms, this denotes the act of gazing upon women as the 'need' and the 'demand for love' as sexual satisfaction. In creating fictional women in the image of the male gaze, the 'need' is satisfied; yet, the Other (real-life women) does not satisfy the 'demand for love' that is

sought out by men and their desire remains unsatisfied. As such, the creation and sexualisation of fictional women in this manner continues to reinforce unrealistic expectations and enforcement of the male gaze in the real world.

An alternative perspective on the 'masculine-derived' woman is Millar's theory of the Bombshell. In 'Blonde: Preliminary Materials for a Theory of the Bombshell', Millar contends that there is yet another trope that can be attributed to the male gaze. Borrowing from Tiqqun's *Preliminary Materials for a Theory of the Young-Girl*, Millar's theory of the Bombshell uses the well-known figure of Marilyn Monroe as its basis, and conceptualises the Bombshell or successful "dumb blonde" as that which "(in contrast to the entrepreneurial self) embodies the explosive existential potential of Monroe as a fatherless, motherless being who gave birth to itself "(Millar 112, 119). Murakami notes that while Aomame does have a present mother and father, due to their committed involvement in an intense religious sect known as The Witnesses, at age eleven she "cut all ties'' with her family and after entering high school she was independent from her family entirely; for this "extremely impressive feat", Ushikawa commends her to be "a strong-willed woman" (863). Millar notes that the experience of parentlessness for Monroe brought about the invention of her persona "as a way of shielding herself from the depths of sadness and in the vain hope of luring her father back through her sheer luminous beauty" (Millar 122). Conceivably, Aomame's own 'mask' which she is mentioned as exercising frequently is not for the purpose of luring her father back, but rather luring others, particularly men, into a false sense of security through her inconspicuousness; "this was how she had protected herself since childhood" (23).

> Whenever something caused her to frown or grimace, however, her features underwent dramatic changes. The muscles of her face tightened, pulling in several directions at once and emphasizing the lack of symmetry in the overall

> structure. Deep wrinkles formed in her skin, her eyes suddenly drew inward, her nose and mouth became violently distorted, her jaw twisted to the side, and her lips curled back, exposing Aomame's large white teeth. Instantly, she became a wholly different person, as if a cord had broken, dropping the mask that normally covered her face. The shocking transformation terrified anyone who saw it, so she was careful never to frown in the presence of a stranger. She would contort her face only when she was alone or when she was threatening a man who displeased her. (23)

Similarly to Monroe, who uses her public persona to hide her sadness, it can be argued that Aomame hides her "terrifying" true self underneath her mask of politeness and feminine wiles (23).

Drawing further upon Millar's assessment of Monroe:

> We could say that the dumb blonde archetype (one which is heavily layered with racialized, hierarchical white femininity) culminates in today's Girl Boss trope; an entrepreneurial form of subjectivity that cultivates hyper-femininity in order to accrue power and status. It is a term that supposedly started off as a compliment for some and quickly became an insult. (Millar 122)

Aomame exhibits many traits of the modern day 'Girl Boss'; she uses her femininity to draw in men and appear as no threat to them before she is able to murder them swiftly and efficiently. For example, her first kill in the novel takes place at a hotel near Shibuya Station after she has climbed down the expressway. Aomame's first action upon entering the hotel is to head to the ladies' room to perfect her appearance:

> She walked in and headed straight for the ladies' room. Fortunately, it was empty. The first thing she did was sit down for a good, long pee, eyes closed, listening to the sound like distant surf, and thinking of nothing in particular. Next she stood at one of the sinks and washed her hands well with soap and water. She brushed her hair and blew her nose. She took out her toothbrush and did a cursory brushing without toothpaste. She had no time to floss. It wasn't that important. She wasn't preparing for a date. She faced the mirror and added a touch of lipstick and eyebrow pencil. Removing her suit jacket, she adjusted the position of her underwire bra, smoothed the wrinkles in her white blouse, and sniffed her armpits. No smell. (54,55)

She notes that her appearance is that of a "capable businesswoman", not someone who is about to murder an abusive man (55). Aomame tells Mr Miyama he has a speck of bright green paint on the back of his neck and, under the guise of being a caring and helpful woman, manipulates him into trusting her enough to completely expose the back of his neck. Mr Miyama does this most likely due to her gender and position, not suspecting that a woman, one in a smart suit at that, would bring him harm.

After his death, she claims that "my mission was to send this man to the other world as swiftly - and discreetly - as possible. Now, I have accomplished that mission" (60). Aomame, who receives funds from the dowager as payment for the killing of abusive men is at her core, a businesswoman, repeating the phrase to herself in a motif. In Millar's words, she is "entrepreneurial", the culmination of the "dumb blonde" and the 'Girl boss' (119, 112). Aomame coolly completes her work and receives payment in return. After cleaning up the site of the murder, she heads to the bathroom to ensure her appearance is in order and thinks to herself: "I'm not a cool killer anymore, just a smiling, capable businesswoman in a sharp suit" (62). If the contemporary Bombshell culminates in the 'Girl boss' stereotype, then it can be argued that Aomame displays many characteristics of the 'Girl boss'.

It must be considered exactly *why* it is that the term Girl Boss so quickly became entangled with negative connotations. Whilst the term was first popularised by Sophie Amuroso with her book *#GirlBoss*, detailing her rise to success as a businesswoman in a male-dominated landscape, the term has since flooded social media in a manner that initially appeared as an uplifting feminist ideal that encouraged hard work in order to

break down patriarchal barriers preventing women from entering male-dominated workspaces.

However, in a consumerist patriarchal society, the term Girl Boss has since become associated with overconsumption and capitalistic gain. As Tiqqun notes, women may recognise that they are still at a disadvantage in a patriarchal capitalist society and that by becoming a Girl Boss, women are instead able to benefit in some way from the 'tyranny' of patriarchal capitalism. Arguably, the idea that a woman who works harder than all others will attain the aesthetic, balanced lifestyle (a husband, children and career) advertised by the Girl Boss ideology instead represents a kind of false empowerment, one that acts as a 'kind of substitute' for a real feminist movement and progression in a neoliberal era (Robinson 2). In short, the title of Girl Boss is a pacifier, given to women to ensure the continuation of the consumerist society that benefits the patriarchy in a way that appears (falsely) to be benefitting the feminist movement; an 'attainable' title that draws more young women into the triple-burden of motherhood, marriage and housework.

In representing Aomame in this way, Murakami dictates Aomame's image as that of a strong, badass woman; yet, when examining her actions through a feminist lens, Aomame remains subservient to the patriarchal system that she seeks to dismantle; she sells herself to the dowager for her services, even if her murdering abusive men is beneficial to women. The male gaze renders her not just as a 'cool girl', or a masculine-derived woman, or a Bombshell, or a Girl Boss, but all of these simultaneously. The common element remains that all of the above categorisations of Aomame's character are driven by the male gaze; her sexuality, attitude and actions are all at the behest of

male desire. Regardless of her multifaceted characterisation, ultimately, each element can be recuperated in servitude to male desire and patriarchal values. Aomame is representative of the unattainable woman, one lusted after by men and who women must strive to embody in order to satisfy the male gaze.

A SEXUAL BEING

Aomame gives off the aura of a woman written by a man. For example, Aomame's sexual appetite is introduced early on in the novel and remains a constant feature throughout. Aomame, after having just "sent a man to the other side", as she often refers to her murders, decides to visit a bar for a drink to calm her nerves (83). At this bar in an Asaka hotel, she begins to look for a man to have sex with; Aomame then reveals the type of man she typically enjoys sleeping with:

> Aomame herself did not know why, but ever since the time she was twenty, she had been attracted to men with thinning hair. They should not be completely bald but have something left on top. And thin hair was not all it took to please her. They had to have well-shaped heads. Her ideal type was Sean Connery. His beautifully shaped head was sexy. Looking at him was all it took to get her heart racing. (85)

Murakami, who was 60 at the time of writing *1Q84*, appears to be the age and description of the men to whom Aomame is sexually attracted. The phrase "Aomame did not know why" is particularly striking when considering the implications of this statement. It is true that, as humans, we do not control what attracts us; this is determined by many factors including social and cultural influence. However, in this particular example, Aomame's attraction *could* be considered to be an example of Murakami's own fantasies. Aomame does "not know why" she is attracted to this kind of man because she has no free will over this decision; every aspect of her character and psyche is determined by the author who has written her. Aomame does "not know why" she restricts her attraction to balding, middle-aged men, however, it may suggest that this information about Aomame's sexual preference is an example of the male gaze at

work; playing out the fantasy for a young and fit twenty-something to desire an older man.

This description of Aomame's sexual preferences holds no weight within the novel and in no way furthers the plot; if anything, it appears to cause confusion as Aomame's 'one true love', Tengo, is nothing like the kind of man to which she is attracted. This aspect of the novel comes across as a moment of fancy for the author, an opportunity for Murakami to insert himself into the fantasy of sex with a young woman. Aomame is tailored to the preferences of her author in many ways. This is particularly off-putting to some who identify with Aomame's character and gives the impression of the 'dirty old man' stereotype of fantasising about being with a young and innocent woman.

The experience of being touched as a child is discussed between Aomame and Ayumi when confiding in one another about their sexual desires and fantasies. Ayumi is quick to ask Aomame if men touched her as a child, which Aomame was not. Later, Ayumi reveals that she was a victim of molestation at the hands of her brother and uncle. "Ayumi gave a little shrug. Then she said, "To tell you the truth, they messed around with me a lot when I was a girl."" (421). She goes on to say that the reason she believed Aomame was also molested, is that Ayumi feels she is unable to have 'normal' relationships with men in her adult life. This causes Ayumi to seek out one night stands with older men as she is "too afraid" of men to let them get close to her in a similar fashion to Aomame.

> "To tell you the truth," Ayumi said, "I kind of thought that you must have had the same kind of experience as me."
>
> "Why did you think that?"

> "I don't know, I can't really explain it, I just sort of figured. Maybe I thought that having wild one-night stands with strange men was a result of something like that. And in your case, I thought I detected some kind of anger, too. Anyhow, you just don't seem like someone who can do the ordinary thing, you know, like everybody else does: find a regular boyfriend, go out on a date, have a meal, and have sex in the usual way with just the one person. It's more or less the same with me."
>
> "You're saying that you couldn't follow the normal pattern because someone messed around with you when you were little?"
>
> "That's how I felt," Ayumi said. She gave a little shrug. "To tell you the truth, I'm afraid of men. Or, rather, I'm afraid of getting deeply involved with one particular man, of completely taking on another person. The very thought of it makes me cringe. But being alone can be hard sometimes. I want a man to hold me, to put his thing inside me. I want it so bad I can't stand it sometimes. Not knowing the man at all makes it easier. A lot easier."
>
> "Because you're afraid of men?"
>
> "I think that's a large part of it". (423-424)

This extract *could* be considered to be an example of Murakami offering up an alternative, somewhat psychological, explanation for the women's behaviour, suggesting a valid reason as to why most of the young women in the novel engage in casual relationships. However, the reasoning behind their sexual activities seems to be presented in a forced manner by Murakami; he presents an emotionally charged rationale that does not outright condemn the women as promiscuous, perhaps allowing him to evade the charge that he enjoys the idea of young women engaging in lots of anonymous sex.

Ayumi is touched as a child and develops an 'unhealthy' sexual relationship with men. The suggestion of childhood sexual abuse and violence against women points towards Ayumi's struggle with forming healthy relationships and, eventually, appears to be the deciding factor in her death at the hands of the men she has sex with.

> The article reported that Ayumi had been found dead in a Shibuya hotel room. She had been strangled with a bathrobe sash. Stark naked, she was handcuffed to the bed, a piece of clothing stuffed in her mouth. A hotel staff person had found the body when inspecting the room before noon. Ayumi and a man had taken the room before eleven o'clock the night before, and the man had left alone at dawn. The charges had been paid in advance. This was not a terribly unusual occurrence in the big city, where the commingling of people gave off heat, often in the form of violence. The newspapers were full of such events. This one, however, had unusual aspects. The victim was a policewoman, and the handcuffs that appeared to have been used as a sex toy were the authentic government-issue type, not the cheap kind sold in porno shops. (510)

Whilst the novel never specifically states that the Little People are the cause of Ayumi's death, it is heavily implied that she is a 'loose end' and her death is nothing more than a way to force Aomame into following a path she had already chosen to go down. Ayumi's death appears to be a punishment for her sexual choices, though, rather than lay the blame with Leader, the accountability for the violence against women is removed from men and attributed to a mysterious entity. Regardless of her connection to Ayumi, Aomame had already made the decision to kill Leader and to leave her old life behind. Ayumi's death does not necessarily further the plot in any way, her disappearance from the narrative simply puts an end to any other alternative path. Ayumi's death comes across as unnecessarily violent; as a police officer, there are many ways in which she could have passed away, and yet the author chooses to humiliate her in her final moments, leaving her tied up, gagged with "her stockings or underwear", naked and exposed with no real conclusion as to who her killer really was (525). This assassination, disguised as a stereotypical sex murder, serves to strike a chord with Aomame, to further her hatred of men for hurting women - especially those close to her.

> Aomame shook her head. "In any case, they can't attack me for now. And so they aimed at a weak point near me. In order to give me a warning. To keep me from taking your life."
>
> The man remained silent. It was a silence of affirmation.

> "It's too terrible," Aomame said. She shook her head. "What real difference could it possibly have made for them to murder her?"
>
> "No, they are not murderers. They never destroy anyone with their own hands. What killed your friend, surely, was something she had inside of her. The same kind of tragedy would have happened sooner or later. Her life was filled with risk. All they did was to provide the stimulus. Like changing the setting on a timer". (641)

Leader tells Aomame that Ayumi's death was inevitable due to her way of life, further exhibiting the novel's theme of using patriarchal violence as punishment for the display of healthy female sexuality. The novel treats female characters who have sex outside of relationships as promiscuous and therefore morally suspect; Ayumi's death at the hands of men is a given, and she is treated as though a violent death is inevitable for the way she has chosen to live her life.

Throughout the novel, there is the recurring idea that the characters have "something inside" of them that is beyond their control and forces them along whatever path they are on. In a similar manner to Aomame, who simply "didn't know why" she found herself attracted to middle-aged men, Leader tells Aomame that the cause of Ayumi's death was "something she had inside of her'' and that the "same kind of tragedy would have happened sooner or later". This suggests that Ayumi's very nature, combined with the sexual trauma she experienced at the hands of men as a child and her choices in sexual activities as an adult would have led to her death regardless of whether or not the Little People had provided the "stimulus" (641). It seems clear that Murakami is fully aware of violence against women at the hands of men and even more so the vulnerability of someone who is often alone with unknown men. Murakami implies that Ayumi was bound to die because of the "risk" in her lifestyle, victim-blaming women for putting themselves into a situation where they are alone with strange men and

expecting readers to simply accept Ayumi's death without question. This further demonstrates that this 'unknowable thing', that only appears to reside amongst Murakami's women, forces them down a dark and predetermined path, based upon their sex. Furthermore, the idea that Ayumi (among others) simply "had something inside of her" begs the questions of *what is it* and *who put it there*? Was the unknowable 'thing' inside of women there from the very beginning, or is it something that has been put there by the men around them? In creating a convincing character, alluding to some unfathomable mystery that provides motive for and influence on their actions can simply be explained as a literary trope. In Ayumi's case, she believes that being "messed around with" as a child by her relatives is the reason for her sex drive and choice of partners; Aomame on the other hand has no idea. Conceivably, the reason for the 'unknowable thing' inside of Aomame may be Murakami himself imposing his own fantasies upon his characters. For Aomame, it seems more pertinent that this 'unknowable thing' is something that readers may not be *permitted* to know about, perhaps to prevent the unmasking of Murakami embedding his own desires within the character. Murakami is the creator of these women, and outside of precisely how Murakami has written them, they have no free will or agency.

According to Edwards, women who engage in casual sex are viewed by men to be "provoking their own demise" and those "who contest male power are seen to deserve their lot" (Edwards 152,153). Edward goes on to note:

> Women victims of rape, as Edwards (1981) and Adler (1982 and 1984) show, are assessed for the degree to which they conform to sexually appropriate models. As Adler (1984) argued, judges continue to be prejudicial in terms of admitting past sexual history within the trial process. In exercising their discretion regarding Section 2 of the Sexual Offences Amendment Act, 1976, they are, in effect, giving a judgement. In the investigation process, Chamber and Millar (1983) found that the police are less likely to believe the drunk woman, the

> unchaste woman and the woman with some kind of sexual past. In their study, for example, eight out of nine women, all known prostitutes, who complained of rape got no further than making a complaint at the police station. (Edwards 153)

This suggests that in order to believe that a woman has been raped, she must first pass a test of virtue, set by patriarchal standards. Ayumi, too, is portrayed as 'deserving' of her demise and is not the only woman in the novel who suffers this fate. Tengo's mother is also purportedly found dead at the hands of a man through her infidelity. Tengo's first memory is that of his mother in a white slip dress letting "a man who was not his father suck on her breasts" (26). This reoccurring memory is a motif throughout the novel and is brought up frequently by Tengo. It serves as a reminder that women who do not conform to the standards of being a faithful wife and mother will be punished by men in one way or another.

> Before he was even two, his mother had been strangled to death at a hot springs resort in Nagano Prefecture. The man who murdered her was never caught. She had left her husband and, with Tengo in tow, had absconded with a young man. Absconded – a quite old-fashioned term. Nobody uses it anymore, but for a certain kind of action it's the perfect term. Why the man killed her wasn't clear. It wasn't even clear if that man had been the one who murdered her. She had been strangled at night with the belt from her robe, in a room at an inn. The man she had been with was gone. (1217)

Tengo's mother is said to have been killed in an almost identical manner to Ayumi, though there is little explanation as to why. Arguably, the humiliation of their deaths in a patriarchal society serves to teach them a 'lesson' about their conduct and positions them as a 'warning' to other women who appear to be engaging in supposed 'undesirable' behaviour in the eyes of men. It appears as though certain types of women - typically, those who engage in casual sex - are viewed as disposable characters. Whilst the term 'disposable women' was not coined by any one person, it is a recognised trope within media that is often deployed to provoke the protagonist, by killing a woman close

to them, such as a partner, mother or sister. The protagonist becomes so consumed by grief that avenging the death of the disposable woman acts as a motive for their actions. The trope portrays a disposable woman as an object, and the narrative becomes about seeking answers or revenge for the protagonist while forgetting entirely about the pain and suffering of the woman disposed of. In this case, Ayumi is Aomame's first real friendship since the loss of her high school best friend many years before. This friend, Tamaki Otsuka, who was murdered by her abusive husband, sets Aomame along the narrative path where the reader meets her in the novel: murdering abusive husbands. Tamaki is the first disposable woman in a long list of female characters who meet an unfortunate end at the hands of Murakami's fiction. After the death of Tamaki, Aomame is reluctant to become friends with Ayumi as she fears becoming as close to another person as she was with Tamaki; yet despite the odds they become very attached until Ayumi is brutally murdered by a man in a similar fashion. In analysing Aomame's trajectory, it can be argued that while her actions are heroic and provide a sense of justice within the novel, her character arc is dependent on the sacrifice of other women. Taking vengeance on abusive men is the core of Aomame's character; violence against women is so pervasive that her entire character is built around her anger towards men. From a feminist perspective, Aomame's path through the novel speaks to that of a fairy-tale - once the evil character, in this case Leader, has been slain, Aomame is then able to run away and fall in love with the male protagonist. Ultimately, Aomame receives her 'Happily Ever After', soon forgetting about the cause she stands for, protecting women, in place of her own happiness.

Even Tengo's mother falls under the category of disposable woman, though he remains unaware of the details of her death (believing it to be a case of her running away or

divorcing his father): her death remains a constant feature in his narrative. Tengo talks often of his relationship with his father, going back and forth between believing he is his biological son and not, the disappearance of his mother remaining an unspoken barrier between the pair. This forces Tengo to visit the 'Town of Cats' in order to resolve the mystery of his parentage. The 'Town of Cats' is the name given by Tengo for a coastal town known as Chikura; the "cat town" is named as such from a short story referenced by Tengo in the novel. In the short story, a young man steps off the train to take in some scenery when he realises the beautiful town is entirely abandoned until night time when it is overrun by anthropomorphised cats. The man in the story soon concludes that if the cats become aware of his presence, they will not allow him to leave the town alive; it is only after his third night hiding in the town that he realises that the train that dropped him off will no longer return to the town to collect him. Tengo seems particularly drawn to the story and even reads it to his father when he visits him at the sanatorium. Together they discuss the meaning behind the strange tale, deciding that the town may have been built by humans and in their unexplained absence, a vacuum is created which is filled by the cats.

> His father nodded. "When a vacuum forms, something has to come along to fill it. That's what everybody does."
>
> "That's what everybody does?"
>
> "Exactly."
>
> "What kind of vacuum are you filling?"
>
> "His father scowled. Then he said with a touch of sarcasm in his voice, "Don't you know?"
>
> "I don't know," Tengo said.
>
> His father's nostrils flared. One eyebrow rose slightly. "If you can't understand it without an explanation, you can't understand it with an explanation."

> […]
>
> "I see. So you are filling some kind of vacuum," Tengo said. "All right, then, who is going to fill the vacuum that you have left behind?"
>
> "You," his father declared, raising an index finger and thrusting it straight at Tengo. "Isn't it obvious? I have been filling the vacuum that somebody else made, so you will fill the vacuum that I have made. (587-588)

It can be argued that, in the same way Tengo fills the vacuum that his father leaves behind, disposable women will always fill the vacuum left behind by another woman killed. For example, after the death of Tamaki, the vacuum left behind is filled by Ayumi. In the case of Tengo, the death of his mother and his earliest memory being of her sexual activities clearly has some Freudian connections to his sexual relationship with his Older Girlfriend, who in turn, after her odd disappearance, is replaced by sex with Nurse Adachi and finally, with Fuka-Eri.

The issue with these disposable women, is that in their use as a narrative prop, they desensitise society's view of violence against women, reducing them to a plot driver through their victim status, rather than a human being (Scarborough). It is clear that, despite the progress made towards equality, the overwhelming opinion remains that women who do not conform to society's standards of 'chaste' are treated as though they are at fault for the violence they experience at the hands of the patriarchy.

Yet, despite Aomame living the same lifestyle as Ayumi, she is not punished by men for her actions. As mentioned previously, Aomame is treated differently from other women and is portrayed as though she is 'above' all other women.

The theme of the 'it-girl' continues with Aomame's profession. Aomame is not only a trainer at a prestigious fitness club, but also an assassin for hire. She is fit, disciplined and trained in self-defence; in other words, she does not need a man to protect her. In many ways, the character of Aomame leaves readers feeling conflicted, she is a woman to be admired but also feels too much like a pre-packaged male fantasy. Her personality traits make her both a feminist, a woman admired by women, and a sexual object in the eyes of men concurrently, a balance which is hard to achieve and in some areas of the novel, leans too heavily on either side of the scale.

THE PROTECTOR OF WOMEN

In her role at the fitness club, Aomame is reprimanded for her women's self-defence class, particularly for her 'ball-kicking'.

> Aomame was primarily in charge of classes in muscle training and martial arts. It was a well-known, exclusive club with high membership fees and dues, and many of its members were celebrities. Aomame established several classes in her best area, women's self-defense techniques. She made a large canvas dummy in the shape of a man, sewed a black work glove in the groin area to serve as testicles, and gave female club members thorough training at how to kick in that spot. In the interest of realism, she stuffed two squash balls into the glove. The women were to kick this target swiftly, mercilessly, and repeatedly. Many of them took special pleasure in this training, and their skill improved markedly, but other members (mostly men, of course) viewed the spectacle with a frown and complained to the club's management that she was going overboard. As a result, Aomame was called in and instructed to rein in the ball-kicking practice. (190)

Aomame's desire to protect women and teach them to protect themselves is admirable and favours the idea that she is a feminist pioneer. The key theme of Aomame's storyline is avenging violence against women; she appears to be a stimulating evolution in Murakami's oeuvre, whose previous female characters arguably lacked Aomame's agency. Aomame, and therefore Murakami, recognises the threat that men pose to women and the threat that the patriarchy imposes on women. Violence against women, and '*Chikan',* a Japanese term for sexual harassment, is a frighteningly prevalent phenomenon in Japanese society. An NHK study into the general public's experience of sexual harassment conducted in 2022 elicited over 38,000 responses, a striking difference from the usual average of 4,000 responses (Osawa 5). The overwhelming response to the survey suggests there is a distinct desire from the general public to bring awareness to the issues surrounding sexual assault and harassment in Japan. Of the respondents, 91.3% identified as female and 74.6% of respondents were under the

age of 20 (Osawa 2). Osawa remarks that, even today, "rape myth" is persistent in Japan, meaning that there is a widespread idea that "the victims of rape and sexual assault are at fault" (Osawa 2). There is a "patriarchal complacency about rape and sexual assault" that is embedded within Japanese society, leaving media outlets, governing bodies and eventually the wider general public to adopt a "collective averted eyes" approach to the matter (Osawa 2). From 1907 until 2017, there were no revisions to laws surrounding sexual abuse and assault in Japan. In 2017, revisions were made to laws surrounding sex crimes, finally recognising forced oral and anal penetration as sexual assault and imposing longer sentences for those found guilty of abuse. This revision, however, made little to no amendments regarding the rule that a victim must prove they resisted their attacker. It was believed that any absence of violence on the attackers' behalf meant that the victim did not resist and the act was therefore consensual (Kaneko).

This is mirrored in the lives and deaths of Ayumi and Tamaki Otsuka; their deaths are used within the plot to further Aomame's hatred of men and yet neither of them appear to receive justice for their crimes. In the case of Tamaki Otsuka, she "lost her virginity" in an act of rape by her older classmate (239):

> The man was one year older than Tamaki, a fellow member of the college tennis club. He invited her to his room after a club party, and there he forced her to have sex with him. Tamaki had liked this man, which was why she had accepted the invitation to his room, but the violence with which he forced her into having sex and his narcissistic, self-centred manner came as a terrible shock. She quit the tennis club and went into a period of depression. The experience left her with a profound feeling of powerlessness. Her appetite disappeared, and she lost fifteen pounds. All she had wanted from the man was a degree of understanding and sympathy. If he had shown a trace of it and had taken the time to prepare her, the mere physical giving of herself to him would have been no great problem. She found it impossible to understand his actions. Why did he have to become so violent? It had been absolutely unnecessary! (239)

When Aomame advises Tamaki to seek justice, Tamaki responds that her "own carelessness had been a part of it" and that she bore "responsibility for going to his room alone"(239). Seeing the powerlessness her good friend felt, Aomame decides she must take action:

> Aomame decided to take it upon herself to punish the man. She got his address from Tamaki and went to his apartment carrying a softball bat in a plastic blueprint tube. Tamaki was away for the day in Kanazawa, attending a relative's memorial service or some such thing, which was a perfect alibi. Aomame checked to be sure the man was not at home. She used a screwdriver and hammer to break the lock on his door. Then she wrapped a towel around the bat several times to dampen the noise and proceeded to smash everything in the apartment that was smashable – the television, the lamps, the clocks, the records, the toaster, the vases: she left nothing whole. She cut the telephone cord with scissors, cracked the spines of all the books and scattered their pages, spread the entire contents of a toothpaste tube and shaving cream canister on the rug, poured Worcestershire sauce on the bed, took notebooks from a drawer and ripped them to pieces, broke every pen and pencil in two, shattered every lightbulb, slashed all the curtains and cushions with a kitchen knife, took scissors to every shirt in the dresser, poured a bottle of ketchup into the underwear and sock drawers, pulled out the refrigerator fuse and threw it out a window, ripped the flapper out of the toilet tank and tore it apart, and crushed the bathtub's showerhead. The destruction was utterly deliberate and complete. (240)

This is the first instance in the novel that readers see a drive for revenge within Aomame. Whilst this is certainly not to the level of violence she later undertakes, this revenge against the upperclassman is a turning point in the novel, one which offers the first real explanation for Aomame's actions. Tamaki's issues with men seem to be the spark that ignites the fire within Aomame to achieve the justice that women in both Japan and the rest of the world seem unable to achieve through due process. Aomame notes that "where relations with the opposite sex were concerned, Tamaki was truly a born victim", that men would always "betray her, wound her and abandon her, leaving Tamaki each time in a state close to madness"(241). The trend of abuse continues as Tamaki eventually marries a wealthy older man, a wedding that Aomame does not approve of or attend. Aomame remarks that, while Tamaki insists that all is well, she has

a premonition that this man is just as abusive as the others before him. Eighteen months into the marriage, Aomame receives a suicide note from Tamaki, stating:

> I am living in hell from one day to the next. But there is nothing I can do to escape. I don't know where I would go if I did. I feel utterly powerless, and that feeling is my prison. I entered of my own free will, I locked the door, and I threw away the key. This marriage was of course a mistake, just as you said. But the deepest problem is not in my husband or in my married life. It is inside me. I deserve all the pain I am feeling. I can't blame anyone else. (244)

Not only does Tamaki write that she is 'deserving' of the pain she suffered at the hands of her husband, but also that she feels personally responsible for it. She writes that "it is inside me", once again referencing the unknowable 'thing' that resides within most of Murakami's female characters. As previously discussed, it may be that this 'something' within women is an imposition of the author's opinions and fantasies - after all, this 'something' has been put there by Murakami himself. Alternatively, one could argue that the unknown 'thing' within these women is the presence of the patriarchy and the many ways in which its social, cultural and political influence leads to women's abuse.

It seems that in the case of Tamaki and Ayumi, this 'something' inside of them has led them to the hands of violent men and eventually their deaths. This suggests some recognition from Murakami of the way in which the patriarchy and its violence is able to systematically break down women and victim-blame them for their suffering.

A landmark case sparked outrage in 2019 when a father was acquitted of raping his nineteen-year-old daughter on multiple occasions on the basis that there was a lack of evidence to prove that his daughter had resisted the attacks (Siripala). Over 400 protestors took to the streets to protest the ruling, which was eventually overturned and the father was sentenced to ten years in prison. It was not until June 2023 that

further reforms were made to the law, raising the age of consent from thirteen to sixteen years old and expanding upon the definitions of non-consensual sex. This redefinition of non-consensual sex meant that consent is no longer thought of as inherently or automatically given within a marriage and victims no longer need to prove that they have physically resisted their attacker (Kaneko).

NHK's survey of sexual abuse is thought to have been a driving force behind the landmark changes to the Penal Code; when asked why they participated in the survey, some victims stated that they "want people to know that sexual abuse exists in greater numbers than are being brought to light" (Osawa 5).

> The survey broadly defined sexual violence as being: unwillingly undressed (16.4%), being penetrated by genitals or other body parts (18.6%), being ejaculated on (8.9%), being forced to watch as someone masturbated (10.8%), being directly touched (39.6%), and being verbally harassed with sexually explicit language (40%). Many victims also report multiple experiences of assault and abuse. Most of the incidents were recent but some had taken place decades earlier, indicating how this is a trauma that lingers. (Osawa 5)

Osawa goes on to note that "this institutionalised scepticism helps explain why only 5% of victims make a report" and only half of these are recorded by the police (Osawa 5). Further to this "the victims' willingness to resist sexual violence was an important requirement to charge the perpetrator with a crime" yet only around 20% were able to physically resist during their attacks (Osawa 5). This feeling of being in a "frozen state" and being "unable to think straight" seems to be a common occurrence amongst victims and highlights the difference in outcome that may come from Aomame's self-defence classes (Osawa 5). Aomame's teaching of self-defence and, in particular, defence against men, illustrate the recognition of a need to protect women from patriarchal violence at all costs.

> Aomame felt not the slightest regret at having caused male club members to feel anxious and annoyed and upset. Such unpleasant feelings were nothing compared with the pain experienced by a victim of forcible rape. She could not defy her superior's orders, however, and so her self-defense classes had to lower the level of their aggressiveness. She was also forbidden to use the doll. As a result, her drills became much more lukewarm and formal. Aomame herself was hardly pleased by this, and several members raised objections, but as an employee, there was nothing she could do. It was Aomame's opinion that, if she were unable to deliver an effective kick to the balls when forcefully attacked by a man, there would be very little else left for her to try. In the actual heat of combat, it was virtually impossible to perform such high-level techniques as grabbing your opponent's arm and twisting it behind his back. That only happened in the movies. Rather than attempting such a feat, a woman would be far better off running away without trying to fight. (191)

Based upon the time period in which the novel is set, as mentioned above, it was also necessary for these women to 'prove' their lack of consent by fighting back against their attackers. Aomame notes that in the heat of the moment, it is nearly impossible to fight back using technical moves and a woman has a much better chance of escape by kicking their attacker in the genitals and running away, however, this teaching was poorly received by male club members. Aomame rightly notes that any annoyance felt by the male club members is "nothing compared with the pain experienced by a victim of forcible rape", displaying her ability to empathise with these women based on her prior experiences with her friend Tamaki Otsuka (191). Aomame is able to recognise the importance of being able to defend oneself, and rather than preaching so-called 'preventative' measures, she values teaching women how to protect themselves. Mori Setsuko, a key figure in the Japanese feminist movement, argues that women are "too passive toward men" and instead, in order to achieve liberation, women must recognise their sex (gender) as "suppressed and submerged" (Shigematsu 68). Aomame clearly recognises the suppression of women by men and takes steps to teach other women to

break free of this oppression. Mori further states that in order to liberate women, "onna must acquire her own violence"; this is exactly what Aomame does (Shigematsu 68).

After the death of Tamaki, Aomame goes on to kill her first man in the name of revenge and Tamaki's death, whilst ruled a suicide, was clearly due to the constant physical, mental and emotional abuse at the hands of her husband.

> The husband's constant sadistic violence had left Tamaki covered with scars both physical and mental. His actions toward her had verged on the monomaniacal, and his parents generally knew the truth. The police could also tell what had happened from the autopsy, but their suspicions never became public. They called the husband in and questioned him, but the case was clearly a suicide, and at the time of death the husband was hundreds of miles away in Hokkaido. He was never charged with a crime. (244)

Aomame affirms that the death of Tamaki "marks a borderline" and she will no longer be the same from this point forward (245).

> Aomame resolved in her heart to punish the man for what he had done. *Whatever happens, I must be sure to present him with the end of the world. Otherwise, he will do the same thing to someone else.* (245)

This facet of Aomame's character is what allows her to be deeply likeable to female audiences, regardless of her shortcomings; she uses her skills to liberate herself and the women around her, and she is able to "acquire her own violence" in ways that many women cannot. As a protector of women, Aomame is a protagonist in whom many women can take comfort; both as a provider of justice, but also as a woman who recognises the violence of the patriarchy and is willing to take action. While Aomame's actions can be read as a victory for female empowerment, one must question how sustainable and effective the vigilante justice within the novel may be against the patriarchy as a whole. Of course, the idea that abusers are "sent to the other side" and their victims freed from abuse is particularly gratifying, however, Aomame as a lone-

warrior in the fight against patriarchal violence does little to paint the novel in its entirety as progressive literature. The dispatch of individual abusers as opposed to fighting against the systemic patriarchal influence prevalent in 1980s Japan further suggests an attempt to render Aomame alone as a strong female protagonist rather than making any particular statement on the social and political climate by Murakami. Despite this, in a cultural landscape notorious for victim-blaming and the shaming of women, Aomame is a beacon of hope for the fight against patriarchal rule. However, this form of heroism is bittersweet when considering the violence women must undergo in order to have a cause for Aomame to fight against. The concept that Aomame acts as a protector of women is built upon the 'sacrificial lambs' within the novel, such as Tamaki and Ayumi, both of whom are described within the novel as a "born victim" (241). These women are written ('born') to be murdered by men in order to force Aomame into her acts of heroism; they are destined from the very beginning to suffer at the hands of men. The ideology that some women are born to be victims is a motif within the novel, suggesting that some women's sole purpose in life is to be used up by men. This motif is repeated by multiple characters throughout the novel such as Leader, Ushikawa, Aomame and Tamaki, and only ever refers to the women who have been brutally murdered by men. This seemingly universal judgement from both the men and women in the novel suggests that rather than a social commentary on the Japanese patriarchy, this may be identified as a proposition supported by Murakami. In order for Aomame to be seen as a protector of women, there must be women to be protected from men and her success is, ultimately, built upon their sacrifice.

THE MALE GAZE

Despite Aomame's success in physically defending herself against men, she is not as successful in defending herself from the male gaze, particularly that of the author. As previously discussed, Aomame is viewed from a sexual perspective throughout the entire novel. From the first chapter, she is perceived as 'stripping' for the men watching her from their cars (and appears to like the idea) and frequently goes to bars to meet up with strangers for sex: "by engaging in wild sex with unknown men, what she hoped to accomplish, surely, was the liberation of her flesh from the desire that bound it" (534).

Aomame engages in 'wild' sex throughout the novel, yet this in no way develops her character or narrative. These throwaway references to her sexual activities come across perhaps as an attempt to make her character more relatable to women - a cool young woman who feels empowered by sex and takes what she needs from men - but once again, Murakami falls short in his characterisation of Aomame, and women in general. There is a lack of recognition on behalf of Murakami of the double standard that women are held to and the difficulty faced in navigating the cultural and social value system placed upon women who engage in casual sex.

In spite of decades of feminist critique, there still persists this double standard in opinions concerning sexual promiscuity and casual sex between men and women (Farvid et al.1). Men who have a greater amount of casual sex are generally considered in a more positive light socially (the greater the number, the bigger the achievement), whereas women who seek out casual sex are generally considered more negatively (the greater the number, the more ashamed she should be) (Crawford and Popp 13). In more

recent years, the term 'slut' has been reclaimed by groups of women seeking to shift the negative associations with the term and use it to reinforce the need for the feminist movement. In January 2011, a Toronto police officer advised a group of female students to stop "dressing like sluts" in order to avoid becoming victims of sexual assault (Teekah 11). This derogatory comment, indicative of the wider issue of misogyny and rape culture engrained within society and governing establishments, catalysed the beginning of the global SlutWalk movement. The SlutWalk was designed as a protest movement that seeks to highlight the socio-political climate that remains apathetic to male violence against women and to create a re-articulation and reclamation of the word slut (Teekah). At the movement, many women who attended dressed in provocative clothing and held signs utilising sex-positive language to call attention to the daily microaggressions faced by women in a patriarchal environment. The SlutWalk movement is emblematic of how the image of female sexuality has progressed from the passive (apathetic and submissive to male pleasure) to the perception that women actually *do* take a more active, pleasure-seeking role in the bedroom. This has changed the way in which society perceives the 'slut' - from a title that women shy away from, to a title that is owned, particularly in the contemporary West which encourages women to "embody a type of feminine identity that is sexual, sassy, and 'up for it'" (Farvid and Braun).

Yet, as Farvid, Braun and Rowney observe, "representations and expressions of female heterosexuality currently occupy a contradictory domain" (Farvid et al. 2). Previously, women have been represented socially as subdued and passive sexual objects, yet contemporary popular media such as film, TV and social networking invites modern women to explore uninhibited, casual sex in a cultural landscape that is more accepting

of a sexualised perception of women (Attwood). Attitudes, particularly in the Western world, have shifted from women's sexuality being perceived as 'dirty' and 'slutty', to 'glamorous' and 'chic'", perhaps due to the growth of sex-positive feminist movements such as the SlutWalk (Farvid et al. 2).

> In the face of these cultural shifts in rhetoric, discourse and practice, women who do not embody these identities and practices increasingly risk being classified as sexually uptight or prudish (Gavey, 2005; Walter, 2010). Conversely, those who display an openly desirous and active sexuality run the risk of being labelled promiscuous or slutty. (Beres and Farvid, 2010) (Farvid et al. 545)

This sexual double standard leaves women in a state of confusion about their social status; there exists a cultural value system with no set scoreboard. A woman is viewed as a 'slut' for engaging in too much casual sex, yet another is seen as 'prudish' for not having enough of it. In either scenario, women are condemned to be too much, or not enough and are never just right.

The idea that sex is the quick fix to all of Aomame's problems is an indication of how disconnected the character of Aomame is from the plight of the sexual double standard women are held to:

> All of that sex did seem to have done her body a lot of good, though. Having a man hold her and gaze at her naked body and caress her and lick her and bite her and penetrate her and give her orgasms had helped release the tension of the spring wound up inside her. (228)

Murakami falls foul of the idea that women are too wound up from the stresses of daily life and that the only way for this to be fixed is to seek out the help of a man to satisfy them. It is not necessarily the sex that is the issue at hand - rather that the woman is portrayed as a cool, independent person who must still rely on the help of strange men, in order to find any sort of relaxation.

Aomame frequently seems to question her own decision-making when it comes to sexual activity – often crossing the line of what she perceives as a healthy amount of casual sex into what are "wild" and crazy one-night stands.

> She vaguely remembered that they changed partners. I was in bed with the young one, and Ayumi did it with the thin-haired one on the sofa. I'm pretty sure that was it. And after that ... everything after that is in a deep fog. I can't remember a thing. Oh well, maybe it's better that way. Let me just forget the whole thing. I had some wild sex, that's all. (228)

It is vital to consider that the labelling of women as 'slutty' or 'prudish' can only be maintained by a social and cultural landscape in which women's sexual activity is examined and surveilled in a manner that does not apply to men. It seems that, even amongst women themselves, there is an unquantifiable value placed upon casual sex - one for which women in the novel pay the price for with their lives. In a study by Farvid, Braun and Rowney, in which 15 young female participants were interviewed on how they navigate this sexual double standard, it was noted that:

> The women distanced themselves from having a sexual reputation by using a number of subtle discursive strategies. Other women also noted behaviours that would supposedly, legitimately, render someone a 'slut'. These were: sleeping with 'random' or just-met partners, sleeping with a different person each night or every weekend, having casual sex to boost one's self-esteem, and having casual sex to garner affection. These were relayed as the wrong way to do casual sex and were very much linked to broader constructions of what constitutes good casual sex versus bad casual sex… Bad casual sex is unhealthy and damaging and Kat constructs her level of sexualness as healthy, versus diseased (nymphomaniac). (Farvid et al. 553)

The sexualisation of the characters is prevalent throughout the novel, from Aomame's "wild sex" parties with Ayumi, to constantly thinking about her own body and others' bodies.

> Aomame got undressed and took a hot shower. Stepping out, she dried herself off and looked at her naked body in the full-length mirror on the back of the door. Flat stomach, firm muscles. Lopsided breasts, pubic hair like a poorly tended soccer field. (165)

This quotation advertises a particularly crude attempt at free indirect discourse, inserting the observations of the narrator into Aomame's internal narrative. The choice of language and simile exposes this lapse in the continuity of character; "a poorly tended soccer field" is perhaps not the first kind of comparison a Japanese woman would reach for when describing her pubic hair (165). As discussed previously, Aomame's character is suggestive of the 'bombshell', a woman who is envied and lusted after by those around her - so why is it that her internal thoughts are so misaligned from the character she is portrayed to be? Murakami inserts his fantasy into the internal narrative of his characters, using the guise of a fictional character to emancipate himself from the moral ambiguity of sexualising women; he hides behind his equivocation, never forthcoming enough to anger the "-isms", as he names them (a direct quotation that will be discussed later within this thesis), but just enough to allow each "erroneous thought" to play out within the relative safety of his fiction, a concept discussed in the next subchapter of this thesis (Wilsey).

Throughout the novel, breasts are mentioned more so than any other body part, regardless of whether the situation is sexual or not. Aomame in particular, thinks or talks about the size and shape of her breasts frequently. The discussion of breasts throughout the novel seems unavoidable; the topic is a permanent fixture, and no female character is spared from some kind of comment about their chest. Murakami stated in interviews that Aomame was the female character with whom he had spent the most time engaging as a person, yet, for whatever reason, Murakami seems to

objectify her and fixate upon breasts throughout the novel in a way that can only pertain to the male gaze. Even the two moons in the sky are described in the same manner as Aomame's breasts, one being the regular "full" moon, the other, smaller and "lopsided" (285). The two moons in the sky are also referenced as being 'hung' in the sky, much in the same manner that breasts are referred to as hanging from a woman's chest. Aomame tells Ayumi, "they're too small, and they're different sizes. I have trouble buying bras because one side is bigger than the other'' (283). The inevitability of references to breasts in the novel speaks of the ever-present sexualisation of its women. Womanhood is boiled down to the breasts a woman bears, reducing them to little more than a sexual object; a constant, clumsy reminder that these characters are women, no matter what their status within the novel. This attitude towards sexual organs is not only problematic for cisgender women, but also excludes any person who may identify with womanhood who *doesn't* have breasts, such as women who have undergone surgery or some transgender individuals.

The permanence of breast-like moons in the sky is yet another way in which women are suppressed in the novel, reduced to the physical and sexual functions of their bodies. Eco-critical feminists may look to the comparison of breasts and moons as a progressive idea, the analogy of the feminine and its inherent connection to mammalia/nature being a key part of the theory (Otto 15). Some branches of the theory also take into account the visualisation of nature and the cosmos itself as a feminine entity, *Gaia*:

> An anthropologist, Ortner finds men's subordination of women to be universal and asks what it is in every culture that leads to this subordination. She reasons that the pancultural oppression of women follows from the like- wise pancultural tendency to identify women with nonhuman nature. Ortner borrows from Simone de Beauvoir to show that breasts, the uterus, menstruation, and pregnancy highlight humanity's fundamental animality, our inescapable belonging to the class Mammalia. (Otto 15)

Yet, Gaia denotes a female entity. In a patriarchal landscape, one cannot designate an entity as feminine without guaranteeing its status as subservient (Murphy 61).

In the case of *1Q84*, the idea speaks to the continual oppression of women and nature itself. The two moons are subject to derogatory language and are considered to be a cryptic message relating to entering the parallel universe of 1Q84 within the novel:

> One was the moon that had always been there, and the other was a far smaller, greenish moon, somewhat lopsided in shape, and much less bright. It looked like a poor, ugly, distantly related child that had been foisted on the family by unfortunate events and was welcomed by no one. (783)

> Aomame raised her hands to cover the lower half of her face, and she continued staring at the two moons. Something is happening, for sure, she thought. Her heartbeat sped up. *Something's wrong with the world, or something's wrong with me: one or the other. The bottle and the cap don't fit: is the problem with the bottle or the cap?* ...
> *Maybe the world really is ending*, she thought.
>
> "And the kingdom is coming," Aomame muttered to herself.
>
> "I can hardly wait," somebody said somewhere. (286)

The moons are said to watch over the characters and events of the novel:

> *I have to stop staring at the moons like this*, she told herself. *It can't have a good effect on me*. But try as she might not to look at the moons, she could not help feeling their gaze against her skin. *Even if I don't look at them, they're looking at me. They know what I'm about to do.* (494)

The negativity associated with the moons by all who see them indicates the sex-stereo typing of the landscape, the moons themselves are imperfect, harbingers of death and chaos in the realm of 1Q84. In the same manner as the moons, the author renders the women as imperfect; women's bodies are either disparaged (based on their age or breast size) or heavily sexualised by men. Aomame brings about the downfall of violent men in the same way that the emergence of two moons brings about the chaos of the

parallel universe, 1Q84. To summarise, the continual presence of the condemned, breast-like moons in the sky and their suggestion of an impending sense of doom alludes to the ceaselessness of the male gaze of the author, omnipresent in its nature, sexualising and judging the women of the novel.

Aomame reduces herself to her body and how it can function in her favour, whether this pertains to being able to benefit her massage clients or the men she sleeps with. Murakami focuses relentlessly on the sexualised aspects of women's bodies throughout the novel, often in an unflattering and derogatory manner, yet the bodies of men are often complimented and flattered. After taking the man from Kansai back to the Akasaka District hotel room, Aomame makes disparaging remarks about her own body whilst flattering the stranger she is there with:

> "I know you're thinking my breasts are small," she said coldly as she looked down at him in her underwear. "You came through with a good-sized cock and all you get in return is these puny things. I bet you feel cheated". (95)

The man is described as having a "bigger than standard" penis and Aomame notes later on that his penis was "exactly right" for what she needed (93,97). She tells him his penis is "pretty impressive" a "nice shape, just about ideal size, and firm as a tree trunk" (96). It seems that despite being an older, balding man, his penis is bigger and firmer than Aomame expected and she leaves the encounter feeling satisfied. Murakami has a tendency to have his female characters describe all penises in the novel as a pleasant surprise for them, despite their owners usually being older or less conventionally attractive. Tengo's member is also recounted in a similar manner by his older girlfriend: "I love your wonderful penis - the shape, the size, the feel. I love when it's hard and when it's soft, when you're sick and when you're well" (446). Yet, this courtesy is rarely

extended to the women of the novel, who are deprecated in some way, even when it is disguised as a compliment.

The dowager, an older woman who runs the home for battered women, cannot escape the male gaze; a gaze which is not removed simply by being viewed through the eyes of a female character.

> Even now, in her seventies, the dowager retained physical traces of youth. Her body shape had not disintegrated, and even her breasts had a degree of firmness. (232)

The choice of language used by the author plays a significant role in Murakami's illustration of his female characters. The insinuation that the dowager should have "disintegrated" at her age is a clear example of ageism. The 'desirable' women in the novel are classified as young and sexy and their youth - especially in the case of Fuka-Eri - is mentioned often. Chivers discusses the effects of the societal and cultural fear of ageing and the consequences for depictions of older women in literature. They note that there is a "norm" that presents women as declining after childbearing age, after their perceived 'use' as a woman has come to an end and eventually, the ageing woman as "decrepit, asexual and frail" (Chivers IX). The idea that a woman deteriorates as she ages suggests a certain degree of sexism, as Tengo's father is not afforded the same derogatory language, described in his coma as being "utterly tranquil" (828). According to Chivers, as women age, their sexual function is seen as declining; as they lose their youth, in the eyes of men they also lose their ability to be seen as sexual beings (Chivers XXIV - XXXVI). Whilst it may seem unconventional to critique the author for the lack of sexualisation of a female character within an argument based around the depredations of the male gaze, this thesis posits that the *way* in which Murakami sexualises the

dowager is the male gaze at work in itself. The description of the dowager suggests she is 'not-quite-as-bad' as one would expect from a woman based on her age, praising the firmness of her breasts, granting her a modicum of attractiveness in her perceived decrepitude.

According to Tiqqun's *Preliminary Materials for a Theory of the Young Girl*, the concept of the Young-Girl (while never a "gendered concept") was perhaps once defined as a person in their early years. However, as society has evolved and consumerism has become so deeply ingrained within the societal landscape, the image of the Young-Girl has adapted (Tiqqun 14). The phenomenon of the Young-Girl is now any person, of any age who is a "model citizen as redefined by consumer society" (Tiqqun 15). Tiqqun's postulates that "often, before her decay has become too obvious, the Young-Girl gets married. The Young-Girl is only good for consuming, pleasure or work, it doesn't matter" (Tiqqun 24). Women who show more physical signs of ageing are perceived as having 'failed' to "maintain autonomy" and "succumbing to the inevitable 'ravages' of age and thereby becoming a social burden"(Chivers XI). The dowager is no longer viewed as a consumable product by the male gaze; her lack of name, only ever referred to by her title of 'the dowager' (a widow with wealth derived from her late husband) suggests that she has already been 'used up' by a man and, in her old age, has nothing left to be depleted by the male gaze.

Murakami highlights the "degree of firmness" of the dowager's breasts, most likely as a compliment to her ability to ward off the decline of old age, yet this once again speaks to an ageist and misogynistic viewpoint from the author. Women's beauty and youthfulness should not depend upon the "degree of firmness" of their breasts. (232)

Furthermore, the sexualisation of the young women in the novel borders on perverse. Just as with the description of Aomame's sexual preference for men, her sexual history as a young woman feels as though it is a simple fantasy, written on a whim with no real depth added to the story.

> Given all their problems, the two lonely girls had a mountain of things to tell each other. When they took a trip together one summer, they touched each other's naked bodies in the hotel bed. It happened just that one time, spontaneously, and neither of them ever talked about it. But because it had happened, their relationship grew all the deeper and all the more conspiratorial. (238)

The one-time sexual exploration between the women seems a perfunctory way of explaining the depth of a close personal relationship between friends, particularly as this leads to no self-discovery of sexual orientation in either party and is never mentioned between them again. The encounter is clearly not held in high regard by either Aomame or Tamaki, and yet the impression is given that it is a vital piece of information to be shared by Murakami. Evidently, Murakami is unable to accept that women can form close *platonic* bonds without an underlying secret lesbian relationship. The relationship between Aomame and her close friend Tamaki was evident without the inclusion of a sexual encounter. Aomame has few close personal relationships throughout the novel; Tamaki, Ayumi and the dowager - with whom she has a motherly bond. Yet, within these friendships, Aomame is described as having sexual experiences with two out of her three friendships. It seems as though fantasy pervades the female friendships within the novel, as heterosexual women seem to be unable to form bonds with one another without the introduction of sexual activity and tension. Later in the novel, after a drunken night out with Ayumi to meet up with men, Ayumi reminds Aomame that they were also "doing lesbian stuff". (281)

> "We were naked and touching each other's breasts and kissing down there and – "
> "Kissing down there?!" Aomame exclaimed. After the words escaped her lips, she nervously glanced around. She had spoken too loudly in the quiet bar, but fortunately no one seemed to have heard what she said. (281)

Throughout the novel, there is not one healthy relationship between women. Even Aomame's mother fails to show her daughter what a healthy relationship should look like, criticising her appearance and forcing her to focus only on the activities of the church they were involved in.

> Aomame had never once felt beautiful. No one had ever told her that she was. Her mother treated her like she was an ugly child. "If only you were prettier," her mother always said. (1169)

The motherly bond Aomame is portrayed as having with the dowager is not free from iniquity; the dowager expects much from Aomame, with very little given in return. Aomame clearly views the dowager as a motherly substitute, discussing her pregnancy with her and giving some insight into her emotional state during her stay in the safehouse. Yet, Aomame gives up her ability to have a 'normal' life in order to assist the dowager in protecting battered women. The dowager repays Aomame with "more money than [she] know[s] what to do with" and a promise of protection from the Sakigake - as long as it was "desirable" to have a connection with her - but little else in the sense of a close personal relationship (819, 890). It seems that the relationship between the pair is built upon their desire to avenge the abused women more so than a parent/child relationship as it first may seem to be. This highlights the impermanence of relationships between women within the novel; despite Aomame's reputation as a woman who fights for other women, she is unable to maintain any long lasting or profound connections with the women around her.

The male gaze permeates every aspect of the novel, from the physical appearance of women, their sex lives and their relationships with one another. Aomame notes frequently that she is on her own and can only trust herself . Despite the various women around her, she is never able fully to be herself and allow herself to let her guard down unless there is sex involved somehow. This is exemplary of the male gaze within the novel; the women are portrayed as though sex is the only way in which they are able to form a close personal bond with their friends. The references to the lesbian sex between Ayumi and Tamaki is the peak example of the male gaze within the novel, with the friendships built upon engaging in sexual acts with one another as opposed to any emotional depth.

THE ORACLE / A WOMAN EMBODIED

Sex is often the key to transformation and travelling to alternative realms. In many of Murakami's novels, a woman's role is reduced to her ability to become a sexual object for the male protagonist, one whose sexual function is the key to his development within the narrative. In response to Kawakami's idea that "the woman functions as a kind of Oracle, in that she's made to act as a medium of fate", Murakami agrees that "she takes you by the hand and leads you off somewhere" (Kawakami). Murakami openly admits that women remain the driving force for men, just somewhere slightly in front of them, hand outstretched, guiding them towards their potential - all too often, via the bedroom.

Kawakami goes on to note:

> In these transformations, as long as sex is being posited as a way into an unfamiliar realm, the women, when faced with a heterosexual protagonist, have basically no choice but to play the role of sexual partner. Looking at it from a certain angle, I think plenty of readers would argue that women are forever in this situation, forced into an overly sexual role, simply because they're women. (Kawakami)

Kawakami further argues that a significant number of Murakami's women exist "solely to fulfil a sexual function", as evidenced by Fuka-Eri (Kawakami). Fuka-Eri, whose real name is Erika Fukada, the seventeen-year-old girl behind the novel *Air-Chrysalis*, is described in a sexual manner from the beginning of the novel.

> She wore a thin crew-neck sweater of pale green and white jeans, with no jewellery or makeup, but still she stood out. She had a slender build, in proportion to which her full breasts could not help but attract attention. They were beautifully shaped as well. Tengo had to caution himself not to look down

> there, but he couldn't help it. His eyes moved to her chest as if toward the centre of a great whirlpool. (71)

The above passage refers to the first meeting between Tengo and Fuka-Eri in a small restaurant in Shinjuku. Having just met her for the first time, Tengo, a man almost old enough to be Fuka-Eri's father, cannot refrain from staring at this young girl's chest. The Fuka-Eri that is present throughout the novel is only one half of the true Erika Fukada. It is explained later in the novel that the Little People are able to separate people into physical representations of the mind and the body; one cannot exist without the other. In a confusing and unsatisfactory explanation of the concept, Murakami writes that from this process there emerges two physical beings that are identical; one who has the emotional and mental capability of a person (receiver) and one who is a shell of a person, with no emotional capability or subjective thought. The Little People create an Air Chrysalis, inside which grows the Dohta, and when the chrysalis hatches, the 'clone' and its counterpart become the Maza and Dhota. When explaining the concept to Erika, the Little People define this as the Dohta acting as a "stand in'' for the Maza (772).

> "Do I get split in two?" the girl asks.
>
> "Not at all," the tenor says. "This does not mean that you are split in two. You are the same you in every way. Don't worry. A *dohta* is just the shadow of the *maza*'s heart and mind in the shape of the *maza*". (772)

The Dohta is the perceiver of the Little People and acts as a passageway into the realm of 1Q84, whereas the Maza, is the receiver, though Murakami does not specifically explain what it is they receive. The Little People go on to explain that the Maza cannot live long without the Dohta beside her, although they refrain from answering her when she asks what would happen if she were to lose her Dohta. This seems to be one of many

unanswered questions/loose ends of the novel as despite their warnings, Fuka-Eri goes on to run away from the compound in which she has grown up and leaves her other half behind. Whilst it is not explicitly clear which half of Fuka-Eri Tengo meets at the beginning of the novel, the point remains that she is a young, sexualised woman who is only half of her true self, reduced primarily to her leeringly-described pneumatic body.

The Japanese Penal Code states that the legal age of sexual consent is sixteen years of age, however, the Japanese Child Welfare Act defines any person under the age of eighteen as a child; according to this, any act of 'obscene' (or sexual) behaviour with a person under the age of eighteen is considered 'misbehaviour', the specific punishment for which remains unclear. Given Fuka-Eri's lack of 'heart and mind', which leaves her in an almost robotic state, and her position as an underage girl, the interactions between Fuka-Eri and Tengo become increasingly uncomfortable from this point on and indicate the power of the male gaze in fiction. Murakami decides that Fuka-Eri will undergo a process which means she cannot fully understand her decisions and can only act in an unthinking, unfeeling manner, in order that she can be used as a 'medium of fate' so that Tengo can be transported into the world of 1Q84. The author either fails to recognise, or simply does not care, that Fuka-Eri is not of sound mind and that in her current state, she is unable fully to provide consent to the sexual acts between herself and Tengo.

> But this seventeen-year-old girl, Fuka-Eri, was different. The mere sight of her sent a violent shudder through him. It was the same feeling her photograph had given him when he first saw it, but in the living girl's presence it was far stronger. This was not the pangs of love or sexual desire. A certain something, he felt, had managed to work its way in through a tiny opening and was trying to fill a blank space inside him. The void was not one that Fuka-Eri had made. It had always been there inside Tengo. She had merely managed to shine a special light on it. (75)

Unlike the women of the novel, whose 'something inside' appears to designate them as a "born victim", the male characters require a woman to find and fill this void inside of them (241). Murakami's women become a literal key to the gateway of transformation for men; more often than not using sex as a portal into another physical or emotional realm. In this way, sex becomes women's key function, aiding in unlocking the void inside of men and allow them to flourish at the expense of women.

Despite Tengo's acknowledgement of the supposed lack of sexual desire for Fuka-Eri, the idea that the "mere sight of her sent a violent shudder through him" has deeply sexual connotations. The 'violent shudder' conjures up vivid imagery of achieving sexual release and, regardless of Tengo's protests, his comments on her breasts and appearance leave readers with the impression that he views the young girl in a sexual manner. This sexual desire Tengo harbours for Fuka-Eri borders upon the perverse, considering that she is underage, unable to withhold consent, and he is almost thirty.

> Could I be in love with her? No, impossible, Tengo told himself. It just so happens that something inside her has physically shaken my heart. So, then, why am I so concerned about the pajamas she had on her body? Why did I (almost unconsciously) pick them up and smell them? (381-382)

The use of "*almost* unconsciously [my italics]" suggests there is a degree of conscious desire on Tengo's behalf, he makes an active choice to smell the clothes of a young girl and then climaxes to the memory of it later in the novel, whilst having sex with his older girlfriend (381-382):

> Tengo thought of Fuka-Eri's face as she slept. She had fallen asleep wearing Tengo's too-large pajamas, the sleeves and cuffs rolled up. He had lifted them from the washing machine, held them to his nose, and smelled them.
> I can't let myself think about that! Tengo told himself, but it was already too late. The semen surged out of him in multiple violent convulsions and into his girlfriend's mouth. (400)

After spending some time working on *Air Chrysalis* together, the novel is published and Fuka-Eri begins to stay with Tengo at his apartment while she is in hiding from the Sakigake who are deeply upset at the secrets of the Little People being revealed to the general public. It is at this time that Tengo is transported to the world of 1Q84 when, during a heavy storm, the same night that Aomame kills Leader, Tengo has sex with Fuka-Eri. The night of the storm, Fuka-Eri asks Tengo to join her in bed so that the Little People cannot find an entrance through them. She tells him "this will be a purification" (679).

> The purpose of doing so aside, the sheer act of holding a beautiful seventeen-year-old girl in his arms was by no means unpleasant. Her ear would touch his cheek now and then. Her warm breath grazed his neck. Her breasts were startlingly large and firm for a girl with such a slim body. He could feel them pressed against him in the area above his stomach. Her skin exuded a marvelous fragrance. It was the special smell of life that could only be exuded by flesh still in the process of formation, like the smell of dew-laden flowers in midsummer. (681)

The focus upon the sexualised aspects of Fuka-Eri's body, such as her breasts and slim body create a sexually charged moment regardless of Tengo's intentions (or evasions). His constant use of her age to preface describing Fuka-Eri adds to the immoral feeling of the relationship between Tengo and Fuka-Eri. It seems wrong that he is so enthralled by the body of a girl half his age. The choice of phrase, "flesh still in the process of formation", suggests Tengo views her as a child and he still goes on moments later to get an erection at the thought of being her lover.

> *If this girl were my lover, I would probably never tire of kissing her there, Tengo thought. While I was inside her, I would kiss that ear, give it little bites, run my tongue over it, blow my breath into it, inhale its fragrance. Not that I want to do that* now. This was just a momentary fantasy based on pure hypothesis concerning what he would do if she were his lover. Morally, it was nothing for him to be ashamed of – probably. (683)

There is clearly something to be said about the discord between morality and control within Tengo's characterisation, which may be explained by both learned and inherent patriarchal influence. Robert Jensen argues that regardless of male intention, all heterosexual sex is patriarchal sex, as male desire takes precedence over the wishes of women.

> In patriarchy, there is an imperative to fuck- in rape and in "normal" sex, with strangers and girlfriends and wives and estranged wives and children. What matters in patriarchal sex is the male need to fuck. When that need presents itself, sex occurs. (Jensen 91)

Murakami frames Tengo as someone in denial about his intense attraction to an inappropriate love object; yet Tengo refuses to follow through on his uncertainties regarding the morality of his sexual desire for Fuka-Eri. Tengo lacks the necessary control to prevent his "patriarchal need to fuck" Fuka-Eri and, despite his multitude of internal protests and reasonings with himself, he seems unable to prevent himself from acting upon carnal desire (Jensen 91). Murakami seemingly invites his readers to condemn Tengo through this third-person narrative; readers are presented quite openly, and from Tengo's point of view, with the reasons why this union would be so immoral, and yet, the sex happens anyway. Despite listing the many reasons why their union is wrong, readers are left with the impression that the sex between Tengo and Fuka-Eri is inevitable; a point brought up by Fuka-Eri herself, telling Tengo "this was necessary" (690). The crude insertion of half-hearted protests within Tengo's internal narrative conveys the impression that Murakami attempts to forestall any objections from readers to the relationship between Tengo and Fuka-Eri; communicating that Tengo has tried his level best not to 'indulge' in the beautiful, young woman before him and so he should be absolved of any wrongdoing. Through these constant reassurances to the reader, it appears as though Murakami is able to have his moral cake and eat it

too - using Tengo's internal narrative to depict both the immoral and titillating thoughts of sexual acts with a young woman, whilst recognising and condemning those unscrupulous thoughts at the same time: "But whether this involved a moral question or not, he should not have been thinking about it" (683).

Kawakami's observation that women exist within Murakami's novels to fulfil the role of sexual function is proven most convincingly during the night of the storm. Tengo awakes to find himself "completely and totally naked next to Fuka-Eri" (684). Tengo continues to obsess over the perfect nature of her large breasts and notes the various ways in which Fuka-Eri's body is perfectly childlike such as "where there should have been pubic hair there was only smooth, bare, white skin" and the air of "defencelessness" that it exudes (685). Referring to her pubic area and her "freshly made vagina" as defenceless suggests there is something there to be attacked, ravaged or dominated, only reinforcing the idea that women are sexual opponents for men to defeat and that they invite the "patriarchal need to fuck" (685)(Jensen 91). Tengo penetrates Fuka-Eri, once again infantilising her body; "it seemed inconceivable that his adult penis could penetrate her small, newly made vagina"(686). The sex is, supposedly, not an act of sexual desire but, as readers later find out, Tengo's transportation to the world of 1Q84 - but this in no way distracts from the perversity of the situation.

Fuka-Eri's body is used as an object to perform a sexual function, her very purpose is to have sex with Tengo in order to further the plot of the novel. The storm takes place in Part Two, after which Fuka-Eri virtually disappears from the novel and other than her brief stint hiding out in Tengo's apartment, not much is said of her. This sex scene within the novel made such a poor impression upon readers that it was nominated for

The Literary Review's 'Bad Sex Award' in 2011 - an award that first debuted in 1993 "to draw attention to the crude, tasteless, often perfunctory use of redundant passages of sexual description in the modern novel, and to discourage it" (Flood). This chapter of the novel, and the character of Fuka-Eri is perhaps the best (or worst) example of Murakami's habit of using his female characters to perform sexual functions and act as a gateway to the next aspect of the storyline.

Women become the ultimate prize for the men in the novel, whether this is sexual or financially driven. For Tengo, meeting up with Aomame would resolve all of the issues in his life, he would have a lover after the mysterious disappearance of his older girlfriend and for her other pursuer, Ushikawa, finding Aomame would lead to significant financial reward from the Sakigake.

Intercourse with Fuka-Eri is not the only example of women being used as functionaries to further the narrative in *1Q84*. As a singular character, Tengo does very little to contribute to the narrative of *1Q84*; instead, he is led hand-in-hand through the novel by women who drive the narrative. The action and suspense throughout most of the novel occur in Aomame's dedicated chapters. Aomame kills abusive men for the dowager, she kills Leader, she goes into hiding from the Sakigake and she becomes pregnant and is the one to seek out and find Tengo at the novel's culmination. The impression is given, nevertheless, that the agency displayed by these female characters, particularly Aomame, is less about creating a strong female character and more a bid for feminist credentials - although any interest in feminism or political activism is strongly denied by Murakami, who agrees that his work may be condemned from a feminist perspective.

In an interview with Sean Wilsey, Murakami is asked about his tendency to sacrifice his women for the sake of the male lead and the apparent effort he had made in more recent novels to give his female characters a greater sense of agency. Murakami responded:

> If the revolution happened next month, I might be arrested for the crime of thinking erroneous thoughts, have a three-cornered red hat stuck on my head, be cursed by the mob and strung up from the nearest lamppost. But that's just the way it goes. I've enjoyed the way I've lived my life … I've never followed the tide of popular opinion in the way I write my novels. I'm not going to start now. (Wilsey)

Perhaps the "erroneous thoughts" to which Murakami refers suggest an awareness of his sexualisation of women, and can be applied to the inappropriate relationship between Tengo and Fuka-Eri. Though Murakami declines to expand on what these "erroneous thoughts" are, such a noncommittal response suggests they are sexual in nature, given the question posed (Wilsey).

When asked about his view on feminism, he responded:

> The way I live my life, I don't really have anything to do with all the "isms" of the world. I'm not an anythingist. I just make an effort not to write anything into my stories that would hurt or show contempt for someone because they're male or female. Or could that be an ism in itself? You could call it Murakami-ism if you like. (Wilsey)

Murakami seems to apply the tactic of eliding feminism into a jumble of other "-isms" as a means of dismissing it and its effects on his work and its image; he appears as though he is above any kind of received ideology, including sexism, furthering the rhetoric that his female characters are just the 'average' woman, rather than caricatures constructed by the male gaze. Yet, whilst Murakami argues that he makes an effort to "not write anything into [his] stories that would hurt" someone based on their gender, it is clear

that this lack of care for the “isms” of the world has had a significant impact upon Murakami’s women (Wilsey). Having garnered a reputation for poor characterisation of women, any sense of empowerment or agency displayed by Aomame is perhaps a counterargument to the idea that these women are slaves to him, that he may sexualise and write them into any sexual role deemed fit for the narrative. After all, it is documented in interviews that Murakami is never satisfied with his work, describing them as dirty underwear to be discarded:

> There’s always so much I’m dissatisfied with when it comes to my own works, it’s really hard for me to answer when someone asks me which is my favourite. It might not be the best metaphor to use, but a book I have finished writing feels kind of like a pair of underwear I took off and flung into the laundry. (Wilsey)

The terms 'empowered' or ‘agency’ to describe the women in the novel are used loosely. In the discussion of women's liberation, terms such as empowerment, agency and autonomy have been used interchangeably with little distinction in their definition. According to Mishra and Tripathi, “options, choice, control, power, ability to make decisions, control over one's own life and over resources, ability to affect one's own well-being and make strategic life choices” are all factors to be considered when thinking about the agency and empowerment of women (Mishra and Tripathi 59). Empowerment is not easily measurable, it varies from person to person, in different cultures and socio-political climates and therefore cannot be defined by one specific meaning; however, the general consensus amongst feminist critique is that one cannot attain a sense of empowerment without agency.

> Agency encompasses the ability to formulate strategic choices, and to control resources and decisions that affect important life outcomes. Therefore, agency should be treated as the essence of empowerment, and resources and achievements as enabling conditions and outcomes, respectively. (Mishra and Tripathi 59)

Mishra and Tripathi state that improvement in women's autonomy cannot be regarded as female empowerment unless women themselves have been "significant actors in the process of change". Rather than benefiting from cultural or political influence, women must display their own agency to achieve empowerment (Mishra and Tripathi 59). For the women of *1Q84*, none of them are able to have a sense of agency and therefore, cannot be considered empowered; all of the women are slaves to the patriarchal world around them, unable to do exactly what they would like to be doing. Aomame is a killer for hire by choice, however after killing Leader, she is forced to go into hiding and leave her entire life behind. Aomame also becomes pregnant without having sex, despite how careful she is in using condoms with the men she sleeps with, suggesting it is also not her choice to become a mother. Aomame cannot be deemed an empowered female protagonist as her circumstances are dictated entirely by the men around her; Tomaru instructs her killings, Leader's death forces Aomame to abandon her old life, Ushikawa's investigation means she must remain in the safe house and Tengo's baby means she must risk her life to find him again. As Mishra and Tripathi argue, agency suggests the capacity to "control resources and decisions that affect important life outcomes", it can be argued that not only is Aomame unempowered, but lacking in any kind of agency (Mishra and Tripathi 59).

Kawakami argues that women are left to play out the physical action in the narrative, whilst the men act in a more introspective manner.

> **MK**:A common reading is that your male characters are fighting their battles unconsciously, on the inside, leaving the women to do the fighting in the real world… in *1Q84*, the Leader is killed by Aomame. Granted, it isn't necessary to apply a feminist critique to every single novel, and a pursuit of rectitude is not why any writer turns to fiction, but reading these books from a feminist perspective, the common reaction would likely be: "Okay, here's another woman whose blood has been shed for the sake of a man's self-realization." Most women

> in the real world have had experiences where being a woman made life unliveable. Like victims of sexual assault, who are accused of asking for it. It comes down to the fact that making a woman feel guilty for having a woman's body is equivalent to negating her existence. There are probably some women out there who have never thought this way, but there's an argument to be made that they've been pressured by society into stifling their feelings. Which is why it can be so exhausting to see this pattern show up in fiction, a reminder of how women are sacrificed for the sake of men's self-realization or sexual desire. (Kawakami)

Any agency displayed by Aomame is in service to the male protagonists in the novel; the main concern of the plot is the trajectory and apotheosis of the male protagonists. Therefore, while it can be argued that Aomame does have agency within the novel, she is not empowered.

In fact, the only time in which Aomame does not appear to be actively battling in the physical realm is in Part Three, after she has killed Leader, gone into hiding and become pregnant with Tengo's child - at which point, her entire demeanour changes and rather than the 'ball-kicking', strong-willed defender of women she embodied in parts One and Two, she becomes unsure of herself and hopelessly lovesick. She reminds herself "I've got to go back to being the cool, tough Aomame". The tough exterior Murakami has built around his protagonist suddenly crumbles at the culmination and Aomame is left utterly changed, pining and putting her own safety at risk by chasing after Tengo outside of the safe house provided by Tomaru and the dowager.

Almost ten years after the final instalment of *1Q84* was published, Murakami famously agreed that his women are made to act as a trigger point for the male protagonist:

> **MK**:… the woman functions as a kind of oracle, in that she's made to act as a medium of fate.

> **HM:** She takes you by the hand and leads you off somewhere.
>
> **MK:** Exactly. She triggers a metamorphosis in the protagonist. There are many cases where women are presented as gateways, or opportunities for transformation. (Kawakami)

In the case of *1Q84*, Tengo benefits the most from little to no work, whilst the women work unknowingly to act as his gateway to the future. Tengo begins the novel with no one but his 'older girlfriend' in his life, and ends the novel with the supposed love of his life magically impregnated with his baby - with virtually no effort made on his behalf to achieve this traditional heteronormative partnership.

Across such a massive novel, readers see very little development in Aomame. In light of her drastic change from cool assassin to wavering mother, one may even argue she reverts to another female stereotype rather than evolves as a human being. When Aomame (non-consensually) becomes pregnant, with what readers can only assume is Tengo's child through Murakami's typically unexplained magical realism, she begins to change once more. Rather than the unsure, anxious woman awaiting Tengo, locked away in her tower awaiting him to save her from the world of 1Q84, she becomes the protective, doting mother:

> Once she had cried for a while, at a certain point the tears would stop, and she would continue her lonely vigil. No, she thought, I'm not that lonely. I have this little one with me. There are two of us – two of us looking up at the two moons, waiting for Tengo to appear. From time to time she would pick up her binoculars and focus on the deserted slide. Then she would pick up the automatic pistol to check its heft and what it felt like. Protecting myself, searching for Tengo, and providing this little one with nourishment. Those are my duties now. (1067)

Aomame relatively quickly comes around to the idea that she is carrying a magical child, fathered by her long-lost lover, with no real explanation. Despite remaining in a dangerous and unpredictable situation with the Sakigake, her worries seem to fade

away with the growth of her foetus. While this could be viewed as Aomame taking comfort in having a "little one" with her during her loneliness in the safehouse, an alternative reading may be that the progression to motherhood has instantly removed any 'negative' aspects to her characterisation (such as her sex drive and penchant for murdering men) and replaced them with the patriarchal 'ideal' of submissive, caring and chaste mother. It seems as though, in the eyes of Murakami, her hormonal transition to mother brings about a natural instinct to nest within the safehouse and focus only on her baby. The sudden change in her identity from 'badass' killer to anxious damsel in distress to warm and loving mother portrays a stereotypical progression of a woman 'tamed' in the eyes of the patriarchy. Radical feminism, in particular, argues that the circumstances around motherhood act as a key function for women's oppression in patriarchal societies (Bleier). Furthermore, "feminist analyses of the conditions surrounding motherhood have identified its socially prescribed conditions: as an accompaniment to marriage, heterosexuality, monogamy and economic viability" (Nicolson 201). This radical shift in Aomame suggests that she is now beholden to Tengo; Aomame's ability to be an independent, quick-thinking assassin driven by anger has left her, and the space left behind has been replaced by a child.

Returning to the concept of the woman as the Oracle, it is clear that in the transformation of men, the women must physically perform in order to transport men to a new environment, usually via sex. However, this contrasts with any partial 'transformations' that the women may undergo - these changes are performed internally or behind-the-scenes and are typically naturally occurring, such as death and motherhood. It seems that men, particularly Tengo, are given the space to evolve on a physical, cultural and spiritual level for which the reader is brought along, whereas the

women change physically to suit the whim of men - either by dying at their hands off-page or becoming a mother via immaculate conception.

On the night of the thunderstorm and the night of killing Leader, both the dowager and Aomame appear to lose their anger towards men, the driving force for their actions. It is on this night that Aomame believes she became pregnant, suggesting that in order to become a mother and find the love of a man, she must cast aside her beliefs and become submissive to patriarchal rule.

> "That's right. I can't feel the pure, intense anger I used to have anymore. It hasn't completely disappeared, but like you said, it has withdrawn to someplace far away. For years this anger has occupied a large part of me. It's been what has driven me."
>
> "Like a merciless coachman who never rests," the dowager said. "But it has lost power, and now you are pregnant. Instead of being angry."
>
> Aomame calmed her breathing. "Exactly. Instead of anger, there's a little one inside me. Something that has nothing to do with anger. And day by day it is growing inside me". (1076)

The anger towards men that drove Aomame to commit her acts of justice "occupied a large part" of her metaphorically (1076). At the precise moment she falls pregnant, Aomame says she feels this anger suddenly went away, and is replaced with a baby growing inside of her, physically occupying the space her anger held. In telling the dowager that "instead of anger, there's a little one inside me. Something that has nothing to do with anger", Aomame recognises that becoming a mother has all but removed her hatred of men, thereby making her compliant with the rules of the patriarchy, as she has lost her drive to create change and free women from patriarchal influence. From this point forward in the novel, Aomame's only goal seems to be to seek

out Tengo, her long-lost love, a stark juxtaposition to her previous missions to seek out and kill abusive husbands.

> "I know I don't need to say this," the dowager said, "but you need to take every precaution with it. That is another reason you need to move as soon as possible to a more secure location."
>
> "I agree, but before that happens, there's something I need to take care of"
>
> After she hung up, Aomame went out to the balcony, looked down through the plastic slats at the afternoon road below, and gazed at the playground. Twilight was fast approaching. *Before 1Q84 is over*, she thought, *before they find me, I have to find Tengo.*
>
> *No matter what it takes.* (1076)

In the 'Housewife Debate' of the late 1950s, ideas of motherhood and the family unit began to change in Japan (Molony 4). Later, in the 1970s, "motherhood, which earlier housewife feminists had viewed as a source of strength, came to be seen as leading to inequality", a source of emotional, economic and social control on both a social and political level, forcing women to be emotionally and economically dependent on their spouses (Molony 17). Perhaps by forcing Aomame into motherhood, Murakami sought to bring a new dimension to her character, allowing readers to see a gentler side of Aomame that has rarely been present throughout the rest of the novel. Yet by doing so, Murakami only seems to bring about the downfall of Aomame - the loss of her anger towards men strips her of her drive and independence, forcing her to become dependent on others.

A common criticism of Murakami's works is that Murakami often spends too much time looking at his women as a gateway or an "opportunity" for his men - so much so that he forgets they are people at all (Kawakami). Aomame is the first of Murakami's women to share an 'equal' role as a protagonist, yet the 'work' that goes into moving everybody

forward is not shared equally. The Bechdel test, typically used in reference to film, was created by Alison Bechdel and is used to measure *active* female presence in a work of fiction, not just how women relate to male characters. In most iterations of the test, the criterion is simply that two women have a conversation about something other than a man. One may think this is a simple benchmark to aim for, yet Rivera argues that Murakami's novels "would not pass the Bechdel test" (Rivera). Upon closer inspection, within *1Q84*, there seems to be only one conversation (between the dowager and Aomame) in which two women are alone together discussing something other than a man. Yes, this does mean that the novel would (barely) pass by Bechdel's standards; however, the issue does not lie with whether or not the test is passed, but rather, how *difficult* it is to determine its success. Across such a massive novel, surely there should be more than one conversation between two women that discusses something other than a man? The relationships between women appear to be an inconvenience, and scenes without men are either used as a way to discuss men or as a pornographic interlude in the narrative.

It is clear that the women in *1Q84* are written and viewed through this male gaze. They embody the 'ideal' women in a male author's fantasy; Fuka-Eri, an emotionless, innocent, attractive young girl used as a sexual gateway and Aomame, a cool, collected killer turned chaste and loving mother.

THE HERBIVOROUS MAN

草食(系)男子 (*Sōshoku(-kei) danshi*) or Herbivore men is a term widely popularised in Japan in 2008:

> The term sōshoku-kei danshi generally denotes young men who, resisting traditional standards of masculinity, are less ambitious in their workplace, willing to save money rather than buy brand items or cars, and more likely to share an interest in fashion and sweets with their girlfriends than to pursue sex. The term became so popular that it was one of the nominated most popular words of the year (ryūkōgo taishō) in 2009. (Nehei 63)

This type of man, typically heterosexual, is not aggressive in his pursuit of women and "seems in some way to have a reduced capacity for violence" (Morioka 2). Morioka notes that one of the "defining characteristics" of these men is that they are not assertive or proactive in seeking out romantic or sexual experiences. The term 'Herbivore' refers to non-meat-eating animals and applying this to men suggests they are not 'carnivorous' of women's flesh (Morioka 2). Therefore, according to Morioka, these kinds of men are "safe from a woman's perspective" (Morioka 2). Morioka points out that the herbivore man is not bound by physical traits, they tend to be:

> [k]ind and gentle men who, without being bound by manliness, do not pursue romantic relationships voraciously and have no aptitude for being hurt or hurting others. As a result, even a heavyset, broad-shouldered, muscle-bound man is a "herbivore man" if he possesses these internal traits. And no matter how slender, effeminate, and fashionable a man is, without these internal characteristics he cannot be said to be "herbivore". (Morioka 7)

Tengo exhibits many of the characteristics that define the herbivorous man. Nihei notes that the herbivorous man was born, partially, of the growing and changing attitudes to the workplace after the Japanese post-war era. The significant economic growth seen by Japan in the 1950s and 60s has been attributed to the rise of the salaryman or *kigyō*

senshi (corporate warrior); this "archetypal citizen" quickly became the defining embodiment of Japanese masculinity, replacing the earlier ideal of the masculine military male (Nihei 64). The salaryman's defining characteristic is that of the breadwinner in the household and his relationship to the nuclear family, having children and a full-time housewife.

> The salaryman discourse was so culturally privileged and pervasive that it created a standard of masculine performance both in public and in private. In the workplace, a man was expected "to display qualities of loyalty, diligence, dedication and self-sacrifice" (Dasgupta, 2003, p. 113), and in return he received guaranteed lifetime employment, and automatic promotion and salary increases. (Dasgupta, 2003, p. 119)(Nihei 64)

Tengo's father is expressly representative of the salaryman; his dedication to his job as an NHK fee collector and strict position as rule-maker within the home are all aspects particular to the role. Tengo, on the other hand, is not particularly driven in any aspect of his life, he is in his 30's, works part-time as a cram school maths teacher and lives in a small apartment; that is to say, he has no drive to do any more than is necessary to get by.

> Tengo himself had graduated from Tsukuba University's oddly named "School 1 College of Natural Studies Mathematics Major" and was writing fiction while teaching mathematics at a private cram school in Yoyogi. At the time of his graduation he could have taken a position at a prefectural high school near home, but instead chose the relatively free schedule of the Tokyo cram school. He lived alone in a small apartment in the Koenji District west of downtown Tokyo, which gave him an easy half-hour commute to school. Tengo did not know for certain whether he wanted to be a professional novelist, nor was he sure he had the talent to write fiction. What he did know was that he could not help spending a large part of every day writing fiction. (37)

Due to what was known as 'the era of men's problems' in the 1980s and 90's, the issues for the mental and physical health of the salaryman were exposed. An increase in death due to stress and overworking soon ended the era of the salaryman and from it emerged a new kind of male identity within Japan - the herbivore.

> In the workplace, the herbivores are characterised by their lesser ambition and their tendency to avoid competition and risk; rather than expecting promotion or changing their jobs for a better position, they prefer to stay where they are, emphasising security. Thinking highly of their own needs and interests, they are concerned about saving money, with little desire to buy a car or brand items as status symbols, and disagreeing with the idea that men should pay for women. Some consider this a stingy aspect of their character, while others see it as signifying an attempt to have an equal relationship with women. (Nihei 64-65)

According to Nihei, the lack of ambition and refusal to devote themselves to one company to an "extreme degree" resists the integral beliefs of the salaryman (Nihei 66). Tengo and his father seem to represent these core expressions of masculinity within Japan, both in their characterisation and their tense relationship with one another. Reflecting on his relationship with his father throughout most of the novel, Tengo grapples with the idea that his father is his biological parent due to their significant difference in beliefs. This differing ideology, one, deeply ingrained within Eastern collectivism, the other, younger, yearning to break away to the Western individualistic mindset is mirrored within Murakami's own experiences with his father.

In order to avoid the demands associated with being a successful Japanese writer, Murakami and his wife, Yoko, left Japan in 1986 for southern Europe until 1991 when they moved to the US where they resided until 1995 before returning to Japan. The general consensus amongst critics of Murakami's works is that they rely too heavily on Western references and many refer to Murakami himself as "Westernised Japanese" - something attributed to not only his time abroad, but also his obsession with Western music, literature and pop culture growing up (Lo 265).

After years of searching for his individualistic freedom in America, Murakami concluded that the *idea* of freedom from the collective mindset in Japan is far superior to the real experience. In an interview entitled *Becoming Japanese*, Murakami ruminates on his connection to his home country versus the fantasy he had created of the West within his mind from a young age:

> Having exchanged his private fantasy of America for the real thing, he felt the gap between himself and the country of his dreams widening. "In Japan, I wanted personal independence," he says. "I wanted to be free. In America, I felt free. But Americans take individual freedom and independence for granted. So the question for me was where to go from there". (Buruma).

This question of belonging led Murakami to a desire to rediscover and understand the long and complex history and politics of Japan. Murakami declared that, "as a Japanese writer, he should be more directly involved with Japan" going as far as to use the phrase "take political responsibility" (Buruma). This revelation led Murakami to insist that "The most important thing,...is to face our history, and that means the history of the war" (Buruma). During the interview, almost accidentally, Murakami reveals the fraught relationship between his estranged father and himself; he explains how, as a child, his father once revealed something "deeply shocking" about his time in China during the war (Buruma). Murakami cannot remember whether this is something his father witnessed or experienced, simply that upon hearing this, he became incredibly distressed and bore the burden of his father's confusing relationship with China and its people long into his adult life.

> "Perhaps that is why I still cannot eat Chinese food." Had he never asked his father about China? "I don't want to," he said. "It must be a trauma for him. So it's a trauma for me as well. We don't get on well. Perhaps that is why I can't have children". (Buruma)

Much in the same way Murakami bears the burden of his familial history, Tengo is also scarred by the secrets kept by his father throughout his childhood. Murakami's inability to stomach Chinese food due to his father's history is emulated in Tengo's failure to stomach food on Sundays after spending so long on his father's NHK collection routes.

> Tengo recalled his boyhood Sundays. After they had walked all day, his father would take him to the restaurant across from the station and tell him to order anything he liked. It was a kind of reward for him, and virtually the only time the frugal pair would eat out […] Despite the offer, Tengo never felt the slightest bit hungry on these occasions. Ordinarily, he was hungry all the time, but he never enjoyed anything he ate on Sunday. To eat every mouthful of what he had ordered - which he was absolutely required to do - was nothing but torture for him. Sometimes he even came close to vomiting. This was what Sunday meant for Tengo as a boy. (150-151)

In *Murakami's China*, Kwai-Cheung Lo proposes that ethnicity plays a significant role in the presentation of masculinity in Murakami's protagonists, particularly with respect to being Japanese and racial identity. Lo argues that "Murakami's work always involves a gap that prevents its first-person male protagonist from being fully Japanese and completely masculine […] They are always soft, irresolute men - homebodies with more dynamic girlfriends or wives" (Lo 259). In Tengo's case, his questions surrounding his biological parentage prevent him from understanding his own ethnic origin and, therefore, according to Lo, prevent Tengo from being completely masculine or feminine:

> The emotional recognition of one's own ethnic roots, cultural past, lost masculine energy or innermost truth, perhaps, are only the outcomes of a perplexed, dislocated modern subject. […] masculinity itself, like other sexual categories, is always a disjointed, fragmented, and self-contradictory thing that is never as monolithic as it appears to be. (Lo 260-261)

Continuing the discourse between Herbivore and Salaryman, unlike his father, Tengo lacks the determination to make any particular achievements, his only desire is the desire to write. For Tengo, writing comes to him naturally "like breathing"(37). Three of Tengo's stories have been added to the shortlist for a prestigious writing award and yet

none have won - for most this would be at least disappointing but for Tengo "this had not been a crushing blow" as "Tengo himself was not all that eager to become a novelist right away" (39). Murakami implies that Tengo is an intelligent man, yet he is far too unconcerned with worldly success to make something of his talents - until the novel, *Air Chrysalis*, already dreamed up by Fuka-Eri, is put before him. Tengo's greatest success throughout the novel is ghost-writing a story already written by a woman and, while she does receive the critical acclaim for this, it again exhibits the endless exploitation of women in the novel by men.

> When he was home, Tengo usually wrote from first thing in the morning until the approach of evening. All he needed to satisfy him was his Mont Blanc pen, his blue ink, and standard manuscript sheets, each page lined with four hundred empty squares ready to accept four hundred characters. Once a week his married girlfriend would come to spend the afternoon with him. Sex with a married woman ten years his senior was stress free and fulfilling, because it couldn't lead to anything. As the sun was setting, he would head out for a long walk, and once the sun was down he would read a book while listening to music. He never watched television. Whenever the NHK fee collector came, he would point out that he had no television set, and politely refuse to pay. "I really don't have one. You can come in and look if you want," he would say, but the collector would never come in. They were not allowed to. (40)

Readers are invited to believe that anything other than writing (coming to him "like breathing") is beyond Tengo's remit - anything else is too energetic and laborious and might suggest that he is a subject with desires, something which Murakami seems to actively deny to Tengo, as this would be far too suspect for someone with a herbivorous temperament (37). Tengo's refusal to watch or even own a television seems to serve a further purpose of distinguishing himself as the antithesis of his father. Given that Tengo's father had devoted his life to collecting NHK fees, often dragging Tengo along on his routes, the decision to avoid television altogether seems purposeful; a way in which to avoid any association with his father now that he is an adult. Much like Murakami and his father, avoidance and repression of his childhood appears to be an

easier route for Tengo than confronting his childhood trauma. The herbivorous man prefers life to come easily, rather than striving for change and achievements; this is one of the many ways in which Tengo (and perhaps Murakami himself in his younger years) embodies the herbivore.

Tengo lives what appears to be a very frugal lifestyle, he cooks simple meals for himself and rarely goes out when he is not teaching; Tengo is a stagnant character and his involvement with *Air Chrysalis* is his only real contribution to the plot of the novel. This is true even more so when, after *Air Chrysalis* is published, Tengo continues to hide away in his apartment and his narrative becomes solely the act of visiting his dying father.

Tengo's position as herbivore offers him protection from the more violent and threatening aspects of the novel. Due to his lifestyle and temperament, his interactions with Ushikawa and, by extension, the Sakigake, amount to little more than conversations with vaguely threatening undertones:

> Tengo used the time until his next class to think through Ushikawa's remarks in his head. The man seemed to know that Tengo had participated in the rewrite of Air Chrysalis. There were hints of it everywhere in his speech. **All I am trying to say is that selling off one's talents and time in dribs and drabs to make ends meet never produces good results**, Ushikawa had said pointedly.
>
> "We know" – surely, that was the message.
>
> **I succeeded in meeting you and having this little talk with you, and I believe that you have gotten *our* message.** (484, emphasis in original).

Tengo is oblivious to the major events of the novel, only seeing out his day-to-day life while the significant physical action takes place in Aomame's narrative. On a surface level, this initially appears as though Tengo subverts the typical dominant patriarchal

presence expected of male protagonists (in Western novels at least) due to his lack of engagement with the motion of the plot. Aomame acts as the force of action throughout the novel, whereas significant portions of Tengo's point of view are simply devoted to his ruminations on life and his family history. Rather than referring to Aomame and Tengo as equal protagonists in the novel, it is fairer to argue that Aomame is the true protagonist, as she takes on the bulk of the physical action. Yet, in spite of everything Aomame achieves within the novel, ultimately, she is still reduced to the role of mother and housewife, undertaking the role of mother to Tengo's child, leaving behind her career and life she has built for herself as a single woman in the name of their decades-old 'love-story'. This analysis of Tengo's characterisation is important when considering how the patriarchy is so deeply ingrained within the social and cultural sphere that until significant changes are enforced, men continue to benefit from the systemic gender inequalities that lead to patriarchal dominance over women.

Drawing upon Sigmund Freud's 1914 essay *On Narcissism*, we can see how Tengo demonstrates a similar behaviour in his lifestyle as that of "His Majesty the Baby" (Fonagy 41). The concept of 'King Baby' suggests a type of behaviour pattern exhibited by adults who have retained the needs and desires of infancy - and having these wants and needs catered to at all times. Freud suggests that an infant is cared for by their mother and/or father and as they grow older and mature, they do not lose the idea that they are the centre of the universe and demand that their wants and needs are still catered to by those around them in a similar manner. Drawing parallels between this idea of King Baby and Tengo, Tengo frequently states his desire to live an uncomplicated existence; however, a simple life for Tengo does not necessarily suggest

a life without challenges; the idea seems to be that any challenges he might face are dealt with by compliant women volunteers.

For example, in the same manner as the herbivorous man, Tengo does not actively seek out sex . Instead, he receives regular visits at his own apartment from his married older girlfriend who also appears to be the dominant partner of the pair.

> Tengo was able to relax when he was with older women. Not having to take the lead in everything seemed to lift a weight from his shoulders. And many older women liked him. Which is why, after having formed a relationship with a married woman ten years his senior a year ago, he had stopped dating any young girls. By meeting his older girlfriend in his apartment once a week, any desire (or need) he might have for a flesh-and-blood woman was pretty well satisfied. The rest of the week he spent shut up in his room alone, writing, reading, and listening to music; occasionally he would go for a swim in the neighbourhood pool. Aside from a little chatting with his colleagues at the cram school, he hardly spoke with anyone. He was not especially dissatisfied with this life. Far from it: for him, it was close to ideal. (74-75)

Tengo notes that "not having to take the lead in everything seemed to lift a weight from his shoulders" and suggests that the ease of his arrangement with his older married girlfriend is all that he needs to keep him "pretty well satisfied" (74-75). By meeting at his own apartment and by pre-arranged appointment, Tengo does not have to put any particular effort into having his libido satisfied. The ability to have his sexual desire fulfilled without the need to put any particular effort into a relationship or having to seek out women with whom to have casual sex exhibits the way in which Tengo is both a herbivorous man and Freud's King Baby - any want or need that Tengo cannot satisfy for himself (i.e. "any desire (or need) he might have for a flesh and blood woman") is fulfilled at his convenience by his older married girlfriend. Tengo refers to relationships as a "burden" and by extension, interacting with the women who fulfil his needs:

> Tengo had no particular desire for other women. What he wanted most of all was uninterrupted free time. If he could have sex on a regular basis, he had nothing

> more to ask of a woman. He did not welcome the unavoidable responsibility that came with dating a woman his own age, falling in love, and having a sexual relationship. The psychological stages through which one had to pass, the hints regarding various possibilities, the unavoidable collisions of expectations: Tengo hoped to get by without taking on such burdens. (364)

Tengo wishes to live an uninterrupted life, seemingly entirely dedicated to his writing with no particular goal in mind; the phrase "unavoidable collisions of expectations" refers to the notion that he would have to, in some way, make considerations for a person other than himself (364). From Tengo's perspective, a relationship with women would be burdensome to his lifestyle - it would prevent him from existing in his selfish manner.

Initially, the relationship between Tengo and Aomame is portrayed as deeply romantic, as though they are fated to be together. On the surface there is an innocence to their relationship that supports the idea of Tengo being a herbivore. The first, and most of the second, instalment of the novel barely passes comment on the budding relationship between the pair and it is not until much later into part two that either character truly begins to seek out the other.

The basis of the relationship between the two seemingly separate characters, who appear to be strangers living very different lives, stems from a simple act of holding hands in middle school. After catching other children bullying Aomame due to her strict religious upbringing, Tengo asks her to join him and his group in their science experiment. He notes that it was "the first time he ever spoke to her (and the last)" during school, and whilst he was a "big, strong boy, whom others treated with respect" no one outright teased him for coming to her aid - yet he feels that, afterwards, his

"standing in the class seemed to fall a notch, as though he had caught some of her impurity" (223). Tengo goes on to claim that whenever their eyes met after that day, Aomame appeared tense and angry towards him for what he had done, though he could not confirm this. It seems that, despite everything, Aomame deeply appreciated the gesture, and felt somewhat attuned to Tengo, knowing that, just as she was dragged from door to door to hand out religious pamphlets on the weekend, Tengo was forced to go door to door with his Father collecting NHK fees.

> Then, one day, the girl took Tengo's hand. It happened on a sunny afternoon in early December. Beyond the classroom window, he could see the clear sky and a straight, white cloud. Class had been dismissed, and the two of them happened to be the last to leave after the children had finished cleaning the room. No one else was there. She strode quickly across the room, heading straight for Tengo, as if she had just made up her mind about something. She stood next to him and, without the slightest hesitation, grabbed his hand and looked up at him. (He was ten centimetres taller, so she had to look up.) Taken by surprise, Tengo looked back at her. Their eyes met. In hers, he could see a transparent depth that he had never seen before. She went on holding his hand for a very long time, saying nothing, but never once relaxing her powerful grip. Then, without warning, she dropped his hand and dashed out of the classroom, skirts flying.
> Tengo had no idea what had just happened to him. He went on standing there, at a loss for words. His first thought was how glad he felt that they had not been seen by anyone. Who knew what kind of commotion it could have caused? He looked around, relieved at first, but then he felt deeply shaken. (224)

The act of taking Tengo's hand appears to be the gesture that sets the plot of the novel into motion, something which in typical Murakami fashion, takes several hundred pages and twenty years to come to fruition. As discussed in the previous subchapter, Murakami himself acquiesced to the view that the common role of his female protagonists is that "she takes you by the hand and leads you off somewhere", literally, in the case of *1Q84* (Kawakami).

Tengo first reminisces upon this moment from his childhood during his climax into young Fuka-Eri, a deed which opens the gateway into the world of 1Q84. Until this

moment, Tengo does not pursue a romantic relationship with any particular voraciousness, not even seeking out his older married girlfriend after she mysteriously disappears, simply forgetting she existed.

> "I'm calling to give you a message," the man said. He then inserted a slight pause, rather like putting a bookmark in between the pages of a book. "My wife will not be able to visit your home anymore, I believe. That is all I wanted to tell you"
>
> [...]
>
> "Not be able to visit," Tengo echoed the words.
>
> "Yes, she will no longer be able to visit."
>
> Tengo mustered up the courage to ask, "Has something happened to her?
>
> […]
>
> "One thing should be perfectly clear. My wife is irretrievably lost. She can no longer visit your home in any form. That is what I am saying."
>
> "Irretrievably lost," Tengo repeated. (544-545)

As there is no real mention of Tengo's older married girlfriend from this point forward, it can be assumed that she has been disposed of either by the Little People or by her husband, who has discovered her affair; either fate leaves her as another disposable woman who is sacrificed for the sake of the male character's narrative.

Aomame, however, continues to hold onto her love of Tengo from her childhood. Aomame tells Ayumi that she "did have one person I fell in love with", and that "it happened when I was ten. I held his hand"(276). This moment appears just as significant to Aomame, acting as a turning point for her life going forward, putting both Tengo and herself on the path to the events of the novel:

> She had held the hand of a boy that year and vowed to love him for the rest of her life. A few months later, she had had her first period. A lot of things changed

> inside Aomame at that time. She left the faith and cut her ties with her parents. (325)

Aomame does not actively seek out Tengo until much later, in part three. Instead, she hopes for a chance meeting, leaving it up to fate to put her in Tengo's path; by chance, or by choice of the Little People, Aomame sees Tengo sitting on the slide in the children's playground outside the balcony of her safe house, gazing up at the moon. Alternatively, Tengo only makes the decision to seek out Aomame after his climax into Fuka-Eri (whilst envisioning himself ejaculating in the middle school classroom with Aomame). Tengo then asks Fuka-Eri how to seek out Aomame, concluding that he will look for her after twenty years.

> Tengo put his thoughts into some kind of order. Then he said, "I've probably been taking a long detour. This girl named Aomame has been – how should I put this? – at the centre of my consciousness all this time without a break. She has functioned as an important anchor to my very existence. In spite of that fact – is it? – I guess I haven't been able to fully grasp her significance to me precisely because she has been all too close to the centre". (730)

The terms of this realisation are significant; Tengo tells Fuka-Eri that despite the many years it has taken to come to this realisation, Aomame has been his "anchor" through it all (730). This suggests that Aomame's function within the novel is to act as that which secures and stabilises Tengo's existence, highlighting the way in which Murakami's women are held in abeyance of the male protagonist, bereft of consideration until they are 'needed' by men to move forward.

It seems as though in the eyes of Tengo, women are an afterthought once his desires have been satisfied and, once his current source of satisfaction has been used up or 'irretrievably lost', another source falls into place. Once the relationship with his older married girlfriend is "irretrievably lost", Tengo fixates upon his sexual attraction to

Fuka-Eri until he once again has his needs met (545). It is only once the two most convenient sources of having his sexual desires satisfied dry up that Tengo begins to seek out Aomame and his supposed 'love story' commences.

In this way, Tengo embodies both the herbivorous male and Freud's King Baby. He does not pursue women, while still acknowledging his sexual desire, and seems content to use any woman who may offer him release with the least amount of effort on his behalf. In the eyes of Tengo, and by default, Murakami himself, women are welcomed when needed to satisfy desires and when they have served their purpose of fulfilment, they are forgotten, "irretrievably lost" (545). Murakami displays how the male gaze operates in fiction via Tengo; as Kawakami remarks, Tengo is "a reminder of how women are sacrificed for the sake of men's self-realization or sexual desire" (Kawakami).

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis is to examine the representation of women, sex, violence and gender in the novel *1Q84*. This thesis maintains that the male gaze of the author directly influences the characterisation and representation of both male and female characters within the novel. The male gaze permeates every aspect of the novel, from the description of men and women, the actions of and expectations for female characters, to the very landscape in which the novel takes place. Throughout the novel, men are placed on a pedestal above women; described as having more generous anatomy, greater sexual prowess, and are always sought out by women for sex in every instance- despite their inability or refusal to undertake the labour of narrative progression. Women, on the other hand, are positioned in servitude to the male characters, depicted as sexual objects for male pleasure and forced to act as the gateway for male progression. Tengo, after becoming involved with the plot to rewrite *Air Chrysalis*, is first led on his path by the young and beautiful Fuka Eri, whom he appears compelled to sleep with after the loss of his other convenient source of sex, his older married girlfriend. Despite his lack of achievements and any real interest in the world outside of his writing, women are portrayed as falling at the feet of Tengo, who does very little to provide for them, and yet they remain loyal to him regardless. After having sex with Tengo, women tend to disappear entirely from the plot of the novel, clearly displaying the manner with which both Tengo, and by extension Murakami, view women. Women are simply treated as a sexual object to be discarded after use. In 'The Herbivorous Man', this thesis argues that Tengo is exemplary of many elements of the 'Herbivore', a label that allows him to masquerade as a 'safe' choice for women whilst enabling him to

continue to benefit from the imposition of patriarchal society on women. The relationships between Tengo and the women of the novel alone display the way in which women are crafted for the use and enjoyment of men, used either as a source of sexual pleasure or as disposable women, to further the narrative plot. Through this, the novel highlights the many ways in which women are positioned in servitude to men in daily life, though, arguably, this is not an intentional aim of the author. The male gaze, particularly that of the author, unequivocally shapes the novel's narrative and is especially apparent within the characterisation of Aomame, presenting her as an object to be leered at. Readers are invited by Murakami, usually through the internal narrative of Tengo and sometimes Aomame herself, to imagine the women in a sexual light and engage in viewing the women through the male gaze without accepting the responsibility of objectification.

As discussed in 'The Masculine Woman and The Bombshell', the multifaceted aspects of Aomame's characterisation can all be viewed as acting in subjugation to the male gaze; whether the reader views her as a 'cool girl' or as a bombshell, each element of her character has, ultimately, been created by, and for, the male gaze. The women of the novel are subject to objectification at every opportunity, which accentuates the struggle of women living in a patriarchal society. Objectification dehumanises women to the status of commodities, no longer women, simply objects in servitude for male pleasure. 'A Sexual Being' has shown how the novel subtly suggests the narrative that women who do not conform to socially 'acceptable' levels of chasteness as laid out by a patriarchal society are viewed as deserving of sexual assault and even death. Whilst this thesis does not argue that these views are entirely reflective of the author, it does maintain the idea that women who are perceived as sexually promiscuous are, in the

eyes of the patriarchy, seen as 'deserving their lot'. Ultimately, the novel leaves women in a paradox – they are used for sexual pleasure and expected to perform their 'duty' as a gateway for the transformation of male characters whilst existing under the double standard of not having 'too much' sex, thereby incurring the wrath of the patriarchy. The novel directly portrays many of the critical issues faced by Japanese feminists both in the 1980s and to the present day. The sexual liberation of women, creating freedom from the expectation of the housewife role and allowing women the choice to express themselves sexually was – and continues to be – a key element within the feminist movement. To some extent, the novel is able to portray Aomame as a sexually liberated woman; however, the lack of autonomy and empowerment for Aomame and other women in the novel indicates that the influence of the male gaze overpowers any progressive elements.

In closing, the sexualisation and violence against women portrayed in *1Q84* leave readers in a state of dichotomy – torn between the enjoyment of a novel written by a best-selling author and his misogynistic portrayal of women. Ultimately, the persistence of the male gaze at work within the novel suggests that there is still more work to be done in changing the representations of women in literature and eradicating the patriarchal influence on female characters. Aomame encapsulates the way in which the male gaze operates in literature, and the disposable women, Tamaki and Ayumi, are a stark reminder that violence against women is not yet a horror of the past, and the lasting effects of patriarchal violence are inescapable, even in fiction. The wounds inflicted by the patriarchy remain fresh and open; yet, by continuing to recognise and rally against misogyny in literature, perhaps we can work towards a future in which women can exist without the constraints of the male gaze and objectification and

liberate themselves from patriarchal influence. As Aomame states: “The body is not the only target of rape. Violence does not always take a visible form, and not all wounds gush blood” (350).

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