

been disappearing as, to quote Roland Barthes again:

A text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author. (Barthes 148)

This remark brings to mind an author who is attempting something very new, something very different from modern national fiction, reflecting multiple selves.

Nam Le, a Vietnamese-Australian, is another writer who opened a new possibility in modern literature. He was born in Vietnam in 1978, and his parents escaped from there after the Vietnam War ended in the 1970s. His family stayed in a refugee camp in Malaysia for a while and then arrived in Australia as boat people and made their home there. He could be considered as a postcolonial writer as his background shows, but his writing does not reflect the framework of the postcolonial binary. Nam Le made his debut and his collection of short stories, *The Boat*, was published. His name had a strong impact on the publisher as it reminds readers of the Vietnamese, and the title of the book particularly reminded them of boat people. His book was a great success (Arimitsu 399).

Nam Le's success, however, was not because he was an ethnic writer or because his writing was about his experiences as a refugee. His seven short stories neither reflect the author's ethnicity nor are they about the author's experiences, although the settings of two stories are in Vietnam or about Vietnamese people. The remaining five stories have nothing to do with the author's ethnicity, personal experiences or even his times. The characters in the stories do not have anything at all in common with the author himself. Ironically, this is one of the important reasons why his book attracted the attention of so many readers as well as critics.

What Nam Le was interested in was to write something which transcended the national, ethnic, cultural as well as religious boundaries, instead of writing something reflecting his own background. He wrote stories with settings all over the world. Nam Le attempted to write from various viewpoints, transcending a single focused viewpoint, and to look at others through "other eyes" (Cunningham 134). If he is trying to do something new in his fiction, he is trying to transcend his own "subjectivity."

Nam Le has multiple identities within himself; his ethnicity is Vietnamese, his nationality is Australian, and it is difficult for him to tell which his actual identity is. For him, there is no clear border between "self" and "others" in the framework of post-colonialism. In Nam Le's case, no national, ethnic and cultural identities hinder him from writing fiction. It might be said that he became interested in a totally different way to write.

In his collection of short stories, the author wrote about several characters of different national, ethnic, cultural as well as religious backgrounds crossing all these borders. However, for the author, crossing borders does not simply mean to present multiple identities or to fuse them but to

remove "subjectivity" from himself as well as his characters. The author could be anybody else other than himself and could create any characters disconnected from his own identity. Most of his characters, therefore, do not act of their own accord because they are not based on a national, ethnic and cultural background. As a result, the author lets the characters float in their memories, illusions, and dreams as well as sub-consciousness. The author tends to keep a distance between himself and his characters. Nam Le thus writes about these characters not from his own viewpoint, but from their viewpoints.

Nam Le simply narrates a human reality unenclosed by the limits of national, ethnic and cultural identities. He creates characters with various identities without reflecting his own identities but depending on something else, something beyond national, ethnic and cultural identities. He uses memories, fantasies, dreams and sub-consciousness, which are not solid or stable, but changeable, floating and ambiguous. While Castro or Ishiguro attempt to sever themselves from the past, Nam Le attempts to remove his "subjectivity," and is able to create characters disconnected from the author's identity.

In his first collection of short stories, Nam Le fully removed "subjectivity" from his characters and created characters with multiple selves, locating them in any place or time by using his imagination. For him, transcending "nationality," "ethnicity" and "cultural identity" is to remove "subjectivity," and he thus took on the challenge to write fiction in a totally different style. It was necessary for him to do so, as the world is so rapidly globalizing that a single focused self is now disappearing and multiple selves are observed in many ways.

Finally, I would like to go back to Haruki Murakami. As I mentioned at the beginning of this paper, Murakami's works are read on worldwide scale, although they were originally written in Japanese. His readers outside Japan, therefore, have to read his works in translation but they are still well understood and evoke readers' sympathy and affinity. His works thus transcend national, ethnic, and particularly linguistic boundaries. The reasons why Murakami is accepted by many non-Japanese readers could be that his works have something in common with contemporary readers, something to do with losing their "subjectivities" in this globalizing age. In Murakami's works, the character's mind is usually floating just as if it were blown by the wind, difficult to understand, difficult to grasp. His central character usually chases his dreams but the fragments of the dreams are not linked to each other and never seem to create any story. The character does not usually concern himself with others at a deep level, just as he does not concern with himself at a deep level either. As Masashi Miura argues, Murakami's character behaves just as if he were air; as if his body did not exist, even did not belong to himself (Miura 235-238).

Murakami is asking the question, what is "subjectivity" or "identity" in the present time, as one of the characters in his novel *The End of the World and Hard Boiled Wonderland* asks:

What is identity? It is the system of thought which is

brought about by the accumulation of one's past and memories. You could call it mind. Everybody's mind is all different from each other but almost nobody has not yet grasped most of your system of thought. I have not grasped it yet, nor have you. (Murakami 79)

According to this passage, Murakami seems to believe that your mind is limitless and if you concentrate on the relation between literature and nation, you yourself set the limit to your literature. If you practice your literary study in your relation to the modern nation-state, that study ought to concentrate on realism in historical and materialist terms. Paul Jay argues that We need to continue to reorganize the study of literature in ways that move us beyond one outmoded nationalist paradigm in which we still operate and that highlight how during various periods literature has been caught up in the multi-directional flows Friedman identifies. (Jay 107)

For Murakami, concentrating on the relation between literature and nation was not his way to write a novel. This is the major reason why he goes beyond Japanese literary lineage; he has not been directly influenced by his predecessors. It is often said that his creativity was not greatly supported by historical or conventional Japanese literature, but rather influenced by American contemporary writers such as Scott Fitzgerald, Truman Capote, Raymond Carver, Raymond Chandler, Kurt Vonnegut, and Richard Brautigan, etc. He is a contemporary novelist as well as a good translator of these writers' works. Murakami himself has crossed national, cultural and linguistic borders.

Junzaburo Nishiwaki, the Japanese poet I mentioned at the beginning of this paper, was not successful in being awarded the Nobel Prize in the 1970s, since he was far from being "a typical Japanese poet." This was at a time when literature was supported by "national frameworks." Murakami's success makes it possible to say that the definition of modern literature has thus drastically changed in this globalizing age. As I mentioned previously, not only Murakami but also many writers from other countries cross national, cultural, and language barriers. This is a worldwide trend of contemporary literature, and this trend verifies a drastic change in modern literature, based on one nation, one culture and one language, and this eventually leads to the transformation or collapse of "subjectivity," which had been an essential prerequisite for the development of modern literature.

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Prize four times from 1958 to 1962. Machida Shinya, "Tanizaki, A Candidate for Nobel Prize Four Times," The Yomiuri Shinbun, 2013, January 14, 1-2.

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- [27] Edward W. Said, Reflection on Exile and Other Essays (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2002), 269; Gayatri Spivak declares the death of comparative literature in the era of globalization in her Death of a Discipline (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003); The Japanese critic Karatani Koujin remarks that Japanese modern literature is coming to an end, although literature itself will continue, and says that the literature of the future will be unrecognizable. Karatani Koujin, Kindai Bungaku no Shuen (Tokyo: Inscript, 2005), 30-31

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