

A Study on *1Q84*'s Critical Responses:
Inspecting Language and Themes of Murakami Haruki's Novel

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Contents

Acknowledgments.....	3
Introduction.....	4
Chapter 1 - About <i>IQ84</i>	7
1.1 Publishing History and Characters.....	7
Chapter 2 - Thematic Aspects of <i>IQ84</i>	15
2.1 In Writing Begin Responsibilities.....	15
2.2 Breaking Normative Thinking.....	24
Chapter 3 - Linguistic Aspects of <i>IQ84</i>	33
3.1 The Dispute on the Style.....	33
3.2 Problems in <i>IQ84</i> 's Translation.....	40
Conclusions.....	50
Works Cited.....	53

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INTRODUCTION

Already from its incipit, *IQ84* presents a vertical movement through the image of a staircase. In fact, the first chapter of the novel opens during year 1984, and the protagonist Aomame, stuck in the traffic in a taxi, decides to adopt an extreme solution. Defying the rules of common sense, she opens the vehicle's door and calmly walks towards one side of the roadway. With the eyes of drivers and passengers on her, she delicately takes off her shoes and slips them into her bag. Her elegant shape gets smaller and smaller, and step by step she climbs down the staircase towards a new year: 1Q84.

The staircase marks the transition to a new dimension, which differs from the starting one in the history and science of the narrative universe. After going down the last step, while wandering around the city, the protagonist in fact notices an unusual element in a policeman's uniform: the collar is not as she remembered it, the gun is not a common revolver. Even two moons shine in the sky. Nonetheless, this shift of framework is not depicted as a sudden leap, on the contrary, characters penetrate it gradually, until it culminates with the sum of random clues collected in progression, a realization as lightning-fast as it is shocking.

This same narrative universe also gives birth to the other protagonists, of which

Murakami Haruki carves a deep psychology diluted in a long narrative. The tangle of interactions with which the characters touch each other is often bizarre and convulsive (Row 6), and its power reveals a wide variety of themes of which otherness, writing or imagination are just a few. These, in turn, justify a range of linguistic and stylistic choices which, such as the intertextuality or the *non-Japaneseness* (6) of his language, embody the author's signature and which will be analyzed along this paper by comparing the voices of several scholars.

In fact, this thesis aims to collect the answers that critics have given to *1Q84*, discussing approaches to the thematic and linguistic aspects of the novel. The positions of literary critics and translators will be considered following a linear path of three chapters, connected in sequence like the rungs of a ladder.

The first chapter of the thesis will inquire about the editorial history of the novel, along with a brief description of the plot, the characters, and in turn the importance of the work among the others in Murakami's production. Further, starting from notions about the publishing history of the novel, the chapter will present the main themes addressed in the critical bibliography, opening a discussion on their multiplicity and recurrence in the author's works. Finally, it will examine contributions based on Murakami's language and style, dedicating a space to the controversies surrounding his label of Japanese writer, the

problems met with his translations abroad, and the influence of Murakami's translation experiences, including those made by the writer himself. Along this analysis, in which each rung is a support necessary to justify and understand the next, this thesis will also attempt to observe how, on the one hand, new reflections could arise from the juxtaposition of the interventions on *1Q84*, while on the other hand, inquire about the prejudices, the constants, assumptions and techniques of analysis of the critique.

This dissertation mainly focuses on sources written in English, with the exception of a small group of representative articles in Japanese.

Since the novel is rich in content but the contributions of English-language critics are still at an earlier stage than the Japanese ones, this study represents only a principle of the descent in the analysis of *1Q84*. In this sense, this thesis wants to collocate itself as a means to trace the limits of the research and stimulate it, as well as an opportunity to carry out a simple but not simplistic way to analyze the positions of scholars, and clarify the state of the art of the targeted book, without forgetting its complexity.

CHAPTER 1

About 1Q84

1.1 Publishing History and Characters

Dmitry Kovalenin had already translated several of Murakami's works into Russian, when he received an e-mail message in 2003. The writer's office staff contacted him to discuss an offer, so the translator, who was temporarily located at the University of Tokyo as a researcher, went to Aoyama, a neighborhood in the capital, to hear what they wanted to propose.

It was not the first time Kovalenin had met Murakami, and it was on one of the previous occasions that the two had the following conversation:

“Murakami-san, you travel a lot. You’ve probably seen half the planet. How come you’ve never been to Russia?”

“Well,” he said, as always half-shyly, “I’d like to go there, truly, but your country is so vast... Where exactly in Russia would you recommend?”

I did not have time to think, so as a Sakhalin native, I suggested my home island. (Kovalenin 110)

During 2003, Murakami was collaborating with a travel magazine: they paid the travel expenses of the writer who in exchange would write an article about the place he visited. This usually involved inaccessible or unexplored destinations for Japanese tourists, and the goal of the collaboration was the promotion of these locations. In the summer of the same year, Kovalenin found himself leaving for Sakhalin, taking on the role of tour guide for Murakami.

Watching him, I silently wonder what visions are floating in his mind at such moments, reading these dark and chilling chronicles written some 120 years ago about the Sakhalin katorga (penal colony) [...](112)

In recounting this experience, Kovalenin claims to have caught the writer during his journey in reading Anton Chekhov's *Sakhalin Island*. The translator observed Murakami writing annotations on the novel which would not only be mentioned in *IQ84*, but would also constitute a symbol within the story, a significant element for the protagonists who will in turn find themselves reading it throughout the narrative.

When the translated version of *IQ84* was published in Russia in 2011, it immediately hit the market, to the point that it also gave a surge to Chekhov's novel sales. (111–12) As

noted by Giorgio Amitrano (Amitrano, “1Q84 di Murakami Haruki” 17), Italian translator for *1Q84*, a similar phenomenon took hold in Japan as well, when in 2009 in Japanese bookstores, seven years after *Umibe no Kafuka* (Kafka on the shore) was released, the writer's latest novel *1Q84* finally appeared. It reached the top of the charts, and in less than a month more than a million copies were sold (Kubota pars. 2-5).

The publishing history was not only noted for the numbers, but also the ways in which the book was proposed to the public were singular. Readers and media were in fact subjected to a policy of silence, as any news relating to the novel was strictly silenced both by the writer and by the Shinchōsha publishing house. Amitrano defines this as "a truly unique case of a marketing operation based on the absence of marketing" (Amitrano, “1Q84 di Murakami Haruki” 17). Insufficient information, a typical feature of Murakami's stories, had now crossed the border of the written dimension, invading reality, leading readers towards a race to buy the novel, guaranteeing it instant success. Consequently, many works with which the writer had established an intertextual relationship within *1Q84* found themselves involved in this phenomenon of increased sales. In fact, when the two volumes of the novel were displayed on the shelves with their two large Qs – which according to Amitrano recall two Orwellian eyes (15), but which could also refer to the two moons of the novel – they were often placed right next to

records and books cited throughout the story (17). *1Q84* was therefore displayed, for instance, next to the CD of Leoš Janáček's *Sinfonietta*, of which 6000 copies were sold out in the first week (Kubota pars. 2-5), or next to *The Brothers Karamazov* by Fëdor Dostoevskij, to *1984* by George Orwell, or again next to the aforementioned novel by Chekhov, *Sakhalin Island*. Just as it would have happened for the latter in Russia, the same rush to reprints occurred earlier in Japan, where Chekhov's story had not been able to boast a great fame, but whose reputation Murakami had indirectly empowered with his new novel. Compared to *1Q84*, the sales of *Sakhalin Island* were nevertheless smaller, so much so that Amitrano wondered what was driving the general public to queue in endless lines, rising a fever of consumption, first in Japan then abroad, just to obtain a book with very little to no commercial features (“1Q84 di Murakami Haruki” 18). On May 30th 2009, the book broke the silence and appeared without previous warnings; subsequently, with the same speed, it became a subject of discussion, and gave rise to the release of numerous articles in magazines and monographs (18).

The unexpected publication and the considerable success of the novel constitute a binomial which could be identified not only on the outside, but also within the plot of the book. *1Q84* in fact tells the story of Tengo, a mathematics professor full of talent for writing. The protagonist works in collaboration with Komatsu, an eccentric editor and a

professional in his field. It is from Komatsu that he is offered the rewriting of a novel, *Air Chrysalis*, as a ghostwriter. The editor's goal is to have Tengo's pen polish and perfect it, then to publish it under the name of the original writer, and lead her to the award of a prestigious literary prize.

Fukaeri is a mysterious seventeen year old, characterized by a slim and silent figure, and is the writer of *Air Chrysalis*. As will be analyzed in more detail in the following chapters, one of the constitutive characteristics of Fukaeri is her dyslexia, an aspect that has given the translators of *IQ84* quite a few difficulties in the process of adaptation (Holm 131–32). Fukaeri comes from a sect associated with scandals, and it will be thanks to her meeting with Tengo that the book will be published. This event will have significant repercussions both for the protagonists, and more generally for the story. Similarly, to what happened outside the novel, the publishing of *Air Chrysalis* will give rise to a fierce promotion by the media and a race to buy the novel.

The story takes place in a 1984 Tokyo, from which the novel takes its title, where Aomame works as both as a gymnastics instructor specializing in massages and a killer. It could be argued that, in addition to the digressions on the Gyliaks,¹ the mentions of

¹ The Gyliaks are an indigenous Russian population settled near the estuary of the Amur River and the island of Sakhalin.

Chekhov, and the character of Tamaru – a bodyguard of Korean nationality –, the role of Aomame was also influenced by the author's trip to Sakhalin with Kovalenin. Among the chronicles of his journey, the translator reports several discussions at the table with the writer, including the theme of massages and the insistence with which Murakami allegedly wanted to avoid them (Kovalenin 116). Considering the abundant presence of elements reformulated from the events of this journey in *IQ84*, which could be found in Kovalenin's retrospective as well, it is not difficult to think of the theme of massages as one of these.

Aomame and Tengo embody two distant extremes that wander in search of something lost, confirming how the absence and disappearance of an object or a person leads to the urgency of a quest for its discovery, a recurring structure in most of Murakami's stories (Kurihara, "Murakami Haruki ga Nōberu" pars. 3-8). In the case of *IQ84*, it is possible to witness the mutual search for the protagonists, who take different paths and lose sight of each other after being classmates during elementary school. Both lean towards the future, while remaining anchored to the past, stuck inside a memory of their childhood. The shadow of the memory in which they are sealed allows them to have faith towards the next day. These characters identify this condition as a representation of the purest love, the only force capable of transcending all realities. Their search spills out not only on a

journey through the skyscrapers of the metropolis, but also through the channels of memory, dreams and, as will be analyzed later, spaces where the rules of logic do not apply, outlining an intricate plot full of details. This abundance does not undermine the narrative experience, making it inscrutable nor difficult to assimilate: Jess Row notes that the structure of *1Q84* is characterized by greater intuitiveness and symmetry than those built for the previous Murakamian novels (Row 6), based on an alternating division into chapters and an immediate and hyper-realistic style. A language to which Toshio Miyake, indicating the writer's previous works, refers to with the expression "meticulous simplicity" (Miyake 305).

In conclusion, in *1Q84* one could witness the events of protagonists imprisoned in their lives' loneliness, in the apparently disconnected orbits that they trace while moving in search of love. Tengo, with his mind committed to the past, will find himself rewriting a story originally written by a young girl with an unusual language and a mysterious past. Their meeting takes place as if following the footsteps of an ineluctable prophecy, and guides the reader through a multi-layered narrative, a story within a story, *Air Chrysalis*. Aomame will be involved without escape by the progression of the plot, whose narrative levels slowly overlap, opening up into a wide range of themes.

The work, says Matthew Carl Strecher, is one of the subsequent productions of

Supūtoniku no koibito (Sputnik Sweetheart) which, published in Japan in 1999, constituted a watershed between the author's novels. A fact which implies the urgency of a completely new analysis regarding the novelties of Murakami's themes (M. C. Strecher 169–70). Journalist Kurihara Yūichirō and translator Jay Rubin highlight the constants in the Murakamian themes and style within the author's works (Kurihara, “Murakami Haruki wa, naze ‘onaji hanashi’ o” 2-6), a recurrence that Jess Row also identifies in *1Q84*. Overcoming the statement of his colleague Strecher, Row points to the novel not only as the meeting point of the themes developed by the author during his career, but also as their opportunity for definitive consolidation (Row 6). The following chapter will clarify more precisely what are the topics dealt with, and will compare the relative positions of the critics.

CHAPTER 2

Thematic Aspects of *1Q84*

2.1 In Writing Begin Responsibilities

1Q84's long plot revolves around two pillars: on the one hand the rewriting process of the novel *Air Chrysalis*, on the other hand the mutual search of Aomame and Tengo for each other. To define which of these two pillars constitutes the main one would be complicated, and, seen their progressive permeation, it would also probably not be relevant. As a matter of fact, it does not take too long for the protagonists to realize that the reality they live in became the same one described in *Air Chrysalis*, where their reciprocal search follows the rules of a new world whose details were rewritten by the same Tengo. It is possible to argue that writing and, as its extension, books are both dominant themes in the story, opening the possibility of narrative space for other important subjects such as introspection, imagination, and the responsibilities of writing.

If the quantity of intertextual connections present in Murakami's books (Zielinska-Elliott and Holm 16) or his experience as a translator (Amitrano, "Books Within Books" 202; Holm 124) could suggest the novelist's affection towards writing in general, Amitrano offers an even more interesting perspective:

Even though Murakami has celebrated these writers and their books in many ways [...] his attraction for books transcends such personal preferences and rather express a passion for the book itself as a magical object radiating an almost mystical energy. (Amitrano, "Books Within Books" 204–05)

For *IQ84*'s characters, books fill the place everywhere like shadows, and it is possible to identify numerous scenes in which the main characters interact involving them. Tengo reads to Fukaeri *Sakhalin Island*, already mentioned multiple times so far; Aomame finds herself locked into an apartment in Koenji for weeks, killing time reading Marcel Proust and even Fukaeri's novel. Books are never depicted as mere objects, on the contrary they represent concrete events able to shape reality. Aomame's reading of *Air Chrysalis* stands as an example for this, since through her experience of Fukaeri's book she finds out that she is living in that same novel's world, and she paradoxically starts to use it as a guide for her universe. (Hong 172)

It is possible to argue that in Murakami's narrative universe, the actions of reading or writing a story coincide with a punctual change, starting from a simple reflection to a total reinterpretation of reality. In other words, giving birth to a story implies responsibilities. The writer clears this message in a specific passage of *Umibe no Kafuka*. In the scene the protagonist is reading a book about Adolf Eichmann's trial, and

while leafing through the pages notices an annotation:

It's all a question of imagination. Our responsibility begins with the power to imagine. It's just as Yeats said: *In dreams begin responsibility*. Turn this on its head and you could say that where there's no power to imagine, no responsibility can arise. (Murakami, *Kafka on the Shore* 123)

Murakami hints at an almost scientific cause and effect relationship: trespassing in the realm of imagination always leads to a reaction, contrarily to what one would expect would happen in the abstract dimension of imagination. In fact, again, in *Umibe no Kafuka* one of the protagonists will carry out a murder through a dream (Amitrano, “Books Within Books” 211). *1Q84* is a channel for the same message of the author: despite logic dictating it impossible, Aomame gets pregnant in a dimensional layer where she is not physically present (Pasha 55). Another example is represented by the scene where the protagonist enters a hotel room to assassinate Sakikage’s Leader, the mysterious religious cult from which Fukaeri comes. Katayun Pasha reflects:

Murakami seems to acknowledge that a queered space does not follow normative rules, and the very unreal sex between Aomame and Leader has very *real* consequences. (55)

The first part will be analyzed later, in relation to the spaces of the novel, while in this section the focus will be placed on the second part. Pasha argues that Aomame, practicing a massage for the Leader before killing him,² gives birth to a scene where imagination plays a crucial role. Despite no physical-sexual touch is involved, the two characters develop a connection which enables them to communicate without talking. In that room, the rules of logic adapt to a new meaning and Aomame, discussing with herself the sexualization of the scene and its possibilities over reality, ends involved in the consequences of a sexual intercourse uniquely imagined.

In this context, Rebecca Suter's contribution analyzed by Strecher is decisive, since according to Suter the imagination in Murakami's works is greatly intertwined with the novelist's social commitment, that is the possibility to generate a change into reality through the themes of his stories. Suter argues:

It is only by descending into our inner selves and passing through "other worlds" that we can reach toward others and really "do something". Social responsibility is thus strongly situated in the realm of

² Aomame is a gymnastics instructor. In this context, her work is a pretext for approaching the Leader in order to kill him.

imagination and of interiority. (Cited in Strecher 170)

However, Murakami's social commitment intended in a narrower sense remains a debated topic. If until 1995 Murakami has distinguished himself to a certain distance from the theme, in the years following the publication of *Supūtoniku no koibito*, his engagement began to emerge through his works (M. Strecher 856), of which *1Q84* is a discussed example.

One could in fact presume a political denunciation already from Orwell novel's title, a possibility that Amitrano denies:

1Q84, though, is not so strongly related to Orwell's novel as the choice of the title might suggest. *1984* is referred to a few times, but its influence is neither direct nor particularly relevant. So why did he choose this title? As is often true in his case, Murakami accepts messages from the unconscious without scrutinizing them. He brings them into his fiction still imbued with mystery and deftly builds stories around them, leaving their core unexplained and unexplored. (Amitrano, "Books Within Books" 213)

Murakami's attitude towards his creative process would not seem to be built on the

scheme of long, premeditated designs, but rather on the adoption of paths whose foundations and evolutions are taken care of along the way. This vision is corroborated by an article released in 2009 by *The Guardian* where it is stated that Murakami did not think about the entire plot of *1Q84* before its drafting (Flood), and from an article released on the *Tōyō Keizai* portal which mentions how the presence of symbols in his works would seem to have a precise meaning, but which sometimes simply remain autonomous images (Rubin).

However, the absence of reasoned allusions to *1984* does not imply an absolute absence of the novel's polemical tone. According to Lica Hashimoto, translator of the Portuguese version of *1Q84*, Murakami confronts us with controversies that leave us silent before the injustices which we decide to ignore (Hashimoto 196).

Nonetheless, some scholars fail to identify the writer's political interest through his works. Hong Tiffany defines this disinterestedness typical of Murakami's figure, presenting the example of the past of Tamaru (Hong 178), a bodyguard whose Korean origins are treated candidly and apolitically. Row, referring to the title of the novel, declares:

What's perhaps most striking about *1Q84*'s overall design is that, for a book invoking Orwell and

dwelling for long passages in the revolutionary politics of the late Sixties, it is entirely, avowedly apolitical. (Row 6)

His statement does not seem to communicate with the state of the art: the expression "avowedly apolitical" is in fact in stark contrast to the position of Strecher who, in 2011, the year before Row's review, examined with an abundance of details Murakami's transition from detachment to social commitment (M. Strecher 863–64). Strecher in fact believes that *1Q84* has brought the message of denunciation in Murakami's essay *Andāguraundo* (Underground)³ to a global stage, a criticism of those who abandon themselves to simplistic judgments on terrorism and religious fanaticism by depicting them as "a group of bad people doing bad things to good people":

If Murakami's examination of trauma following the AUM Incident invoked humanity's most essential fears – of death, darkness, loneliness, despair – then with *1Q84* he has at last wed these "universal" (*mukokuseki*) themes to our more era-specific obsession with terrorism and religious fanaticism, a combination that may well explain his emergence onto the post-9.11 global stage. (M. Strecher 865)

³ *Andāguraundo* (Underground) is an essay by Murakami written between 1997 and 1998 focused on the terrorist attack on the Tokyo subway in 1995. Divided into two sections, the first contains the interviews of the victims while the second those of the members of the sect who launched the attack.

Strecher's reflections are placed in a new light through Jenkin Suen's contribution. In Suen's interpretation, *1Q84* is a metaphor on how fictional writing can be used to imagine a different past, opening up the possibility of rewriting the official course of history. In fact, the novel highlights the relationship between history and fiction, subjecting the link between the two to an interesting pressure:

[...] by re-imagining historical events, Murakami challenges the linearity of time and history. It opens up readers to an imagined historical era, so that we can re-connect ourselves to the experience of history through the act of reading a novel in an era of the present. Instead of treating history as linear timeline and past events as forgone memories, *1Q84* re-connects the Japanese to historical events through the art of storytelling, so that history no longer becomes obsolete to them. (Suen 41–42)

Suen's thought is well matched by Strecher's analysis, as the latter is fascinated by the relationship between Murakami's fictional writing, which regularly manipulates the historical discourse, and the potential allegories that could be found there (M. Strecher 861–62). In conclusion, according to Strecher, Murakami's writing represents a form of social responsibility, a self-imposed commitment by Murakami aimed at guiding readers

to place the stories they have read within themselves to give a sense of direction and purpose to their lives (863).

2.2 Breaking Normative Thinking

– Think of it this way, Tengo. Your readers have seen the sky with one moon in it any number of times, right? But I doubt they've seen a sky with two moons in it side by side. When you introduce things that most readers have *never* seen before into a piece of fiction, you have to describe them with as much precision and in as much detail as possible. What you can eliminate from fiction is the description of things that most readers *have* seen. (Murakami, *1Q84* 173)

Even before *1Q84*'s publication, it was possible to witness the irruption of a parallel reality in several of Murakami's novels, or as Pasha defines it "simultaneous reality". (Pasha 45) This other reality, despite its unnatural features, tends to be accepted by the author's characters as if it were ordinary (Bienati and Scrolavezza 208). Certainly, *1Q84*'s characters do not miss a chance to get astonished when they happen to meet the Little People, anthropomorphic entities whom Jess Row believes are inspired on *yūrei*, ghosts that appear in Japanese folklore (Row 6), or in front of a sky with two moons. However, despite these protagonists being thrown into an irregular reality, they seem to be able to operate a surgical internalization of the new normative. Row acutely uses a comparison with homeostasis to refer to Murakami's characters' serene, and almost passive acceptance:

[...] we might call this a state of “homeostasis” — the surgical term for a body that is self-sufficient, not in danger, and at rest. (Row 6)

Considering what is above, it is not hard to suppose that Murakami’s characters’ encounter with otherness creates more wonder for the readers than for the characters themselves. Further, it is possible to consider this stylistic trait as belonging to the genre of magic realism, since mystery and magic are assimilated as a category of reality (Bienati and Scrolavezza 208).

In order for alterity to manifest, a break in the norms is necessary. Along his contribution Pasha analyses how *IQ84* has been placed in the position to challenge normativity, pre-established settings, and binarism. In fact, Pasha examines the processes according to which Aomame, Tengo, Fukaeri, or even the same narrative universe built by Murakami open a fracture in the normativity. Further, they suggest that not only is this fracture clearly visible, but it deepens Row’s arguments: the characters’ behavior of acceptance described by Row gets reinterpreted, and according to Pasha this very behavior would allude to a suspension of the judgment in favor of a fluid reality. (Pasha 47–8)

An example of this interpretation could be witnessed in a second reading of the scene in which Tengo, 1 year old, observes his mother having sexual intercourse with a man who Tengo does not recognize as his father. Also, as Pasha highlights (48), regardless Tengo is describing a scene of adultery, his moral judgment faculty is weakened by his memory's fallacy, as in the age at which the protagonist observed the scene suggests that some of the details embedded in his mind might be unclear, not allowing a complete, trustworthy re-elaboration of his past experiences.

Another example is represented by the scene where Aomame kills Ōtsuka Tamaki's husband, a friend of hers with whom she shared her first lesbian sexual experience. This scene, suggests Pasha, is presented with such naturalness that it does not leave space to debate, and they add, keeping into consideration how Aomame's sexual drive pushes the character to unusual situations:

Furthermore, not only do the separate acts of murder and a woman seeking out a man for casual sex lie outside of what is usually considered acceptable, but the conflation of the two into something that drives Aomame's sexual appetite undoubtedly puts pressure on the realm of "normal". (Pasha 51)

According to Pasha, Murakami, describing with detachment wishes that what would

commonly be labelled as weird, suggests that our intentions should work around any limit imposed by society, and should be built on top of each individual's unique experiences.

(51)

The fracture of the norm therefore represents a crucial element, as it constitutes a tool that enables characters to move through a new space, where they can work on a negotiation of the self. (7) When Aomame in *IQ84*'s first chapter is stuck in traffic and decides to make a choice challenging common sense. She gets off the taxi and walks to the side of the motorway with everyone's eyes locked on her. Climbing down the emergency stairs towards a different dimension, she is suddenly hit by the memory of her sexual intercourse with her best friend.

Climbing down the stairway, Aomame thought about Tamaki Otsuka. She had not been intending to think about Tamaki, but once the thoughts began, she couldn't stop them. Tamaki was her closest friend in high school and a fellow member of the softball team. As teammates, they went to many different places, and did all kinds of things together. They once shared a kind of lesbian experience. The two of them took a summer trip and ended up sleeping together when a small double was the only size bed the hotel could offer. They found themselves touching each other all over. Neither of them was a lesbian, but, spurred on by the special curiosity of two young girls, they experimented boldly.

(Murakami, *1Q84* 29)

The sudden memory that struck Aomame could apparently seem inexplicable, yet it could be considered as the result of a negotiation of the self which started during her transition towards the year 1Q84. This procedure of pushing characters towards liminal spaces, sometimes extreme, (Pasha 8) is nothing but the prior and necessary stage to the search of the definition of the self, towards which Murakami increasingly aims through his novels. (Strecher 863)

Between the spaces Murakami sets for his characters to move around the narrative universes, there is an abundance of the ones whose sense of liminality is particularly evident, and it is usually for these settings that the dimension of time is perceived as suspended or altered, a connotation that according to Pasha coincides with the manifestation of the fracture of the norm in favour of a more indistinct fluidity. One example is hotel rooms, settings that are constantly witnessed in Murakami's novels: in *Dansu Dansu Dansu* (Dance Dance Dance) the story revolves around a hotel, while in *Afutā Dāku* (After Dark) the plot begins with a homicide in the room 404 of a hotel. In *1Q84* Aomame, as a murderer, flirts with her victims leading them into a hotel room, eventually killing them. According to Pasha, these spaces are described as settings lacking

in familiarity, and yet trying to provide their related characters with that same familiarity.

In fact, hotel rooms are more or less the same regardless of where or when they offer a bed. Murakami, stressing on their suspicious and anonymous dimension, enables characters moving through them to act according to wishes beyond normativity, allowing them to get to a new level of understanding of the self. (Pasha 49)

Another space whose connotation is similar is witnessed inside of a story Tengo reads on his way to the facility where his father is hospitalized. *Town of Cats* is a short story whose setting is filled by animals able to speak, and it portrays their small society. The protagonist of the story finds himself in this place foreign to common scientific laws, where time seems stuck, and that is far from every other place and from which he is not able to leave.

Tengo's encounter with this book does not only bring a punctual reflection, but along *1Q84*'s storyline it will even be used to interpret a crucial event of the protagonists' lives.

Sakigake's location as well, the sect from which the character Fuka-Eri comes, is depicted as a far-away place, a bubble on which a line of separation from reality has been traced, portraying a place whose rules seem to never completely unfold (58). Situated between Yamanashi's mountains, the activities of the sect remain completely unknown and each individual out of it is cut aside. Its location, along with its related allusions to

the connection to a divine dimension, could be witnessed even in the most ancient Japanese distinction between wild and cultivated spaces: the mountain is in fact a place associated to what is inhuman, realm of the spirits of the dead, monsters and gods (Raveri 231–39).

Pasha, however, puts into evidence the unpredictability of the fraction of normativity: in the ending of the novel Tengo is so struck by being reunited with Aomame that he doubts it is true. Once out of *1Q84*, Murakami does not make his protagonists, who are finally reunited, wait, and readily introduces an additional doubt. Aomame and Tengo ask themselves the question as to whether the world they are now is a third world, different from the first and the second, where further, unpredictable laws are ruling. Using this passage, Pasha examines how the fracture of binarism enables a redefinition of the self, and, in turn, a triumph over old Murakami's schemes and the innovation of his approach and his social commitment. The latter is now embodied by the possibility of manipulation of one's identity in his stories, in order to connect with others. Yet Pasha still discusses how the consequences following the fracture of normativity remain undiscovered as well. (62–3) Pasha is not the only one to interpret the novel as an attempt of rewriting what is already established. In fact, contrarily to the *queer* viewpoint through which they inquire about the novel, Suen defines *1Q84* as a new interpretative key for

history and its critics, therefore as a contribution not only to change perspective towards the past, but also towards the future. Like Pasha, Suen also concludes citing the final scene of the novel, where despite the tensions accumulated throughout all three volumes being released, one question still remains, that is what is going to happen from that moment on. Even in front of the wisest analysis of the past, the future remains inscrutable, since it is not possible to predict through which shapes the future will manifest itself (Suen 48–9). Murakami seemed to particularly care about this matter when he was already writing in the first chapter:

Aomame imagined 1926 Czechoslovakia: The First World War had ended, and the country was freed from the long rule of the Hapsburg Dynasty. As they enjoyed the peaceful respite visiting central Europe, people drank Pilsner beer in cafés and manufactured handsome light machine guns. Two years earlier, in utter obscurity, Franz Kafka had left the world behind. Soon Hitler would come out of nowhere and gobble up this beautiful little country in the blink of an eye, but at the time no one knew what hardships lay in store for them. This may be the most important proposition revealed by history: “At the time, no one knew what was coming.” (Murakami, *1Q84* 3)

In conclusion, altering the perception of space and time, or through otherness, Murakami

seems to offer a vital space to his own characters, enabling their redefinition. Pushing his protagonists towards liminal areas he discusses their identities, which get sectioned and exposed to a dimension in which it is possible to find a new perception of the self through categories which are not depending on normativity. In this perspective, Murakami's work could be defined as socially committed, not necessarily in strictly political terms, as it offers through its content an example of a challenge for the search of new measures of the self.

CHAPTER 3

Linguistic Aspects of *1Q84*

3.1 The Dispute on the Style

Any discussion of Murakami, outside Japan and inside it as well, eventually comes around two observations: first, that his work is quintessentially “postmodern”; second, that it is not very Japanese. (Row 5)

The first English translation of Murakami appeared on the Japanese market in 1985, when Alfred Birnbaum translated *Sen-Kyūhyaku-Nanajū-San-Nen no Pinbōru* (Pinball, 1973). The edition was intended only for Japan, designed as a support to learning English (Zielinska-Elliott 93; Karashima 21–22). In the following years, Murakami's works began to be known overseas and gained such popularity that the writer became a transnational phenomenon. His success generated a long series of debates around his style, defined as distant from the Japanese literary prototypes, and influenced by the American ones (Miyake 305). Although some translators argue that adapting his *foreign flavor* to another language implies difficulties, other scholars declare that the translation of works written by Murakami is simplified by his characteristically *mukokuseki* (without nationality) style

(Pasha 4):

This *mukokuseki* style has proved an effective passport for Murakami's entry into cultures around the world, and has even helped to soften cultural relations with other parts of East Asia where Japan's recent colonial past remained a sore spot. (M. Strecher 857)

It is easy to suspect that Murakami's language was influenced by his numerous experiences of translation from English, among which authors such as J. D. Salinger, Franz Kafka or Raymond Carver stand out. For some of these translations into Japanese Murakami is the only translator (Hijiya-Kirschner pars. 1-5; Amitrano, "Books Within Books" 204–05). The relationship between his style and the novels he translated could be traced in the use of first-person narration (Pasha 2–3), or in the abundance of intertextual references (Zielinska-Elliott and Holm 16). Strecher observes:

Murakami's writing style both influences and is influenced by his longstanding relationship with translated literature as well. It is widely known that the author taught himself to read English through American popular fiction during his adolescence, and that his style and approach to writing, as noted above, owes much to writers like Vonnegut and Irving, as well as Raymond Carver, Raymond

Chandler, Truman Capote, and J. D. Salinger, among others. (M. Strecher 858)

The conformities of his style to the English language, says Strecher, are also visible through precise Anglicisms, such as respectively *sore ijō de mo nai shi*, *sore ika de mo nai* for “neither more nor less”, and *warukunai na* for “not bad” (858).

However, if in his early works Murakami seems to have an interest for "cultures that use the English language as a vehicle" (Amitrano, “Books Within Books” 202), his novels of the last twenty years, including *1Q84*, mark a turning point towards the inclusion of classical Japanese literature in the sphere explicit influences. *Umibe no Kafuka* offers readers a quote from *Genji monogatari* (The tale of Genji) and in *1Q84* the *Heike Monogatari* (The Tale of the Heike) is extensively quoted (205), of which Fukaeri recites a passage she had learnt by heart. Also in *1Q84* the narration in the first person is replaced by that in the third person, a choice that Amitrano defines as rare for the writer, and that distances him from the sources in English which he abundantly drew inspiration from (Amitrano, “1Q84 di Murakami Haruki” 21).

These innovations constitute a starting point for further debates on the implications of the author's nationality, and on the influences, it has on his narrative. Row wonders, in fact, which elements of Murakami’s writing are so cosmopolitan to challenge the idea of

typical Japanese literature, if such a thing even exists. The scholar argues that, in the writer's stories, the main setting always identifies with Japan, and that dimensions abroad usually do not take on a relevant meaning, except in identifying the products that surround the characters, who are in fact mostly Japanese (Row 6). Extending Row's criticism, Amitrano condemns the naivety of those who identify a distance between Murakami and Japan that does not actually exist; on the contrary, according to the Italian translator, Murakami's works are able to describe Japan as it presents itself today, that is, "devoid of typical Japanese characteristics and very little exotic" (Amitrano, "Books Within Books" 201).

Murakami has undoubtedly followed a process of evolution which has been parallel to his success. Over the years, some of the controversies relating to the writer, such as that of his *non-Japaneseness*, have begun to dry up in proportion to his prolonged presence on a specific national market, while others continue to be fueled by his popularity, such as those related to his translations.

Lica Hashimoto, translator for *1Q84* into Portuguese for the Brazilian market, explains that for several years, in Brazil, Japanese literature was influenced by the canon of American publishers, and that Japan was considered "a source of eroticism, nostalgia, an upside-down world" (Hashimoto 179). The audience was looking for the traits that

they believed were distinctive of that narrative, such as ambiguity, sensuality, longing or interiority, of which Kawabata Yasunari and Mishima Yukio, translated from French or English, were some of the main references, but which with surprise they did not find in Murakami (179). Anna Zielinska-Elliott describes a similar phenomenon in America:

[...] when Murakami's books made their Western debut in the United States and Great Britain, some critics were surprised to find them so "American" or "Western" in tone. Prevailing assumptions about the canonical elements obligatory for a Japanese novel led many to comment on what they thought should by rights have been there but was not. (Zielinska-Elliott 98)

In the time between about 1980 and the publication of *1Q84*, many of those orientalisms had already been abandoned (Hashimoto 180). Zielinska provides an example of how American and European readers, accompanied by Murakami's international success, were able to rewrite their own perception of the writer, who from a Japanese author has become more simply an author whose nationality is an aspect among many. In 1994, *The New Yorker*⁴ organized two photo sessions for the article *AUTHORS!*

⁴ *The New Yorker* is an American magazine, born in 1925, that focuses on writing, politics, satire and society, and is published by Condé Nast Publications.

*AUTHORS!*⁵ bringing together fourteen writers associated with the magazine. Murakami was the only one to come from Asia and write in a language other than English (Zielinska-Elliott 97–98).

Hashimoto argues that the Murakami phenomenon has allowed a reorganization of the perception of geographical boundaries, guiding the gaze of readers towards a perspective of substantial universality. Further, as Karashima David argues, changes and omissions started to actually appear even in early Murakami works translated into English and introduced to the United States. These adjustments aimed to present Murakami's appeal to the public, that was thirsty for a contemporary author able to depict the life of young people in Japan, yet offering a writing style the public itself could relate to (Karashima 52–55). In other words, Murakami allowed a change in the canon (Hashimoto 180).

Zielinska takes Hashimoto's observation to a further evolution, as she suggests to think of the author no longer as an international phenomenon, but as a distinct one for each nation. After all, Murakami's popularity has grown so much that it crosses over numerous countries, each of which, through their own sales strategies, establishes a

⁵ The article could be read at the following link:

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1994/06/27/authors-authors> (09.12.2020).

relationship with Murakami, adjusting it to the target language and culture of his translations (Zielinska-Elliott 95–96).

Indeed, prior to *1Q84*, some translations of Murakami's novels in Europe were made from the translated version into English, a practice that Murakami agreed to but which readers had some complaints about (Hijiya-Kirschnereit pars. 1-5). *1Q84* was the author's first novel to be promptly translated into a language other than English. In Korea it was published in August 2009, just four months after its Japanese publication, while the following year it had already been translated into multiple languages. The English translation appeared only in 2011 (Zielinska-Elliott 95).

Although, after the change in the canon suggested by Hashimoto, the dispute over his style is less controversial, Murakami's works continue to make scholars talk about the problems encountered in his translations, that require different tools and care determined by the market in which they are launched.

3.2 Problems in *1Q84*'s Translation

Although Murakami claimed to have used translation-ready writing to approach a "universal language", he ran into several obstacles along the way. In this section of the chapter, some of these will be reviewed in relation to *1Q84*.

As analyzed in the second chapter, if on the one hand it is possible to define writing as a synonym for responsibility, then on the other hand it would be possible to claim that translation is so too, since it essentially is another form of writing. Lawrence Venuti sheds light on how the translator has the responsibility of moving between two or more languages, conveying a message without taming it excessively, but rather permeating it through different cultural layers that tend to resist its adaptation (Cited in Zielinska-Elliott 100). The challenge of translating Murakami, claims Lica Hashimoto, lies in presenting readers with the same aesthetic sense of its narrative universe and its peculiarities, without violating the rules of the target language (Hashimoto 180). This implies a direct comparison with Murakamian language and its experimentalism, of which Murakami's translators in languages other than English have debated in a group of articles in the special section of the *Japanese Language and Literature* journal. These contributions aim to examine the author's writing by collecting the testimonies of different translators, in order to investigate analogies and differences of the Murakami phenomenon in different

countries. They also offer the opportunity to observe the author's writing in a new light, providing renewed perspectives on the perception of his works (Zielinska-Elliott 100–01). In addition to this space for debate, in 2006 a symposium on Murakami's works and translations was held in Japan, scheduled on three dates: March 25^h, 26^h, and 29^h in Tokyo, Kobe, and Sapporo.⁶ The event had a crucial importance, it provided a platform so that personalities related to the translation or criticism of the author knew and compared their ideas between each other. As a result, responses from various translators were collected in August 2011, some of whom have already been referred to in this thesis, such as Hashimoto for Portuguese or Zielinska-Elliott for Polish (Zielinska-Elliott and Holm 9).

One of the main problems related to *1Q84* was intertextuality. If it is true that Murakami's style is built on the continuous game of references and tributes, this aspect becomes an obstacle for the translators who are faced with names, if not even extensive quotes that force them to seek new sources and sometimes translate them (Hashimoto 181). This is the case of Hashimoto and Giorgio Amitrano, who translated *1Q84* in

⁶ The symposium has been titled *A Wild Haruki Chase: How the World Is Reading and Translating Murakami*. For further information visit the website: <https://www.jpf.go.jp/e/project/intel/exchange/organize/murakami/index.html> (05.12.2020)

Italian, since they both had to translate a passage from the *Heike monogatari* from the original:

Since *1Q84* also includes quotations of works so far untranslated into Italian, such as *Heike monogatari* (The Tale of the Heike), I had to translate the quoted passages for the first time (Amitrano, “Books Within Books” 205).

I translated the excerpts from other works quoted in *1Q84*, such as “The Battle of Dan-no-ura” from *Heike monogatari* (The Tale of the Heike), directly from the original Japanese (Hashimoto 187).

As translators enter the world of Murakami, Amitrano claims, they find themselves entering the worlds of other writers (Amitrano, “Books Within Books” 205). This dynamic necessarily involves an effort of flexibility of the translators, who will have to know the cited text and examine its context in order to make an appropriate selection of the lexicon in the translation (Hashimoto 181). However, Dmitry Kovalenin, translator for the Russian version of the book, demonstrates that translations are not always performed with blind fidelity to the original. When the Russian translator found himself in front of the writing of the passage cut out by the *Heike monogatari*, he

decided to tread his hand on the translation, making the text able to amaze a modern person like the protagonists or the readers of *1Q84*, without forgetting to be working on an old manuscript (Zielinska-Elliott and Holm 16).

Another problem is constituted by the repetitions or recurring summaries in the novel. As *1Q84* punctually proposes along its narrative, the protagonists share a similar past: if on the one hand they suffer the refusal of parents and classmates, then on the other they are constitutively resilient and manage to overcome these difficulties (Zielinska-Elliott and Holm 8). Murakami describes the past of the protagonists on several occasions and from multiple perspectives. Hashimoto defines this practice as a "*leitmotif* to make the production process of meaning intrinsically connected to the development of the plot" (Hashimoto 190):

In *1Q84*, the narrator develops the psychological time of the characters as an extension of objective events that have taken place in their everyday lives. In this sense, the summoning of a given event – for example, the scene in which Aomame and Tengo are alone in the classroom at the primary school – makes it a leitmotif; that is, the device of repetition functions as a leitmotif within the plot.

Nonetheless, one should note that every time an event is summoned, the reader is presented with

new information that may amplify his or her discernment and sensitivity to understand the event

from the various points of view developed throughout the narrative (Hashimoto 191).

According to Hashimoto, the difficulty faced with these repetitions is not identified in the translation, but in the understanding of a technique essentially considered long-winded (Hashimoto 190).

It may be thought that such repetitions in turn led to a second problem: the cuts on the text. When Jay Rubin and Philip Gabriel translated *1Q84* into English, they decided to remove some of these parts from the text (Holm 131). The fundamental reasons for this choice are two: to offer readers a less redundant narrative, but above all, to prevent the pages of the novel from being excessively numerous at the time of purchase. In America, the three volumes of the novel were published in a single volume by the Knopf publishing house, a choice that gave rise to an urge to make the book less bulky (Zielinska-Elliott and Holm 7). The cuts, in addition to entailing difficulties for translators, who find themselves discussing their choices with the publishing houses (Zielinska-Elliott 94), are also configured as an actual alteration of the original text, which according to some scholars would compromise the nature of the author's message. Indeed, Holm raises criticism of the cuts in Alfred Birnbaum's English

translations, arguing that repetitions are a building block of Murakami's novels, the elimination of which immediately undermined the understanding of the novel (Holm 124–26). Zielinska discusses around the same question, wondering if in the face of these choices it would be possible to speak of translation, or if it ends by being an invasive reworking of the text (Zielinska-Elliott and Holm 7). Murakami also expressed his opinion on this, which is summed up in a fundamental policy of trust towards translators, claiming that cuts are an acceptable practice as long as the text remains fluent in the target language (Zielinska-Elliott 96).

It is not the only occasion on which Murakami has expressed a judgment regarding the translations of his works. Indeed, other difficulties prompted translators to contact the writer or his office for clarification. Holm found herself doing it when, after the release of the third volume of *1Q84* in Japan, she encountered problems in translating the historical present (Zielinska-Elliott and Holm 11). The third volume of the novel unexpectedly marked a redefinition of the forms consolidated in the first two, as can be seen from the addition of a series of chapters dedicated to the character of Ushikawa (Pasha 59), who breaks the structure of the chapters hitherto binary (Amitrano, “1Q84 di Murakami Haruki” 22), or from the use of the present narrative. In general, the latter is a technique used in the Japanese language (Zielinska-Elliott and Holm 10), and as

Hashimoto suggests, it allows the reader to establish a bond of closeness to the narrator and the characters, as well as a greater involvement in the story (Hashimoto 192–94). However, some translators have struggled to translate this feature into their own language, leaving the meaning of the original text unchanged, therefore they have continued to use the past with which they had translated the first two volumes (Zielinska-Elliott and Holm 11–12). Again, Murakami gave *carte blanche* to translators, asserting that his use of the present narrative was spontaneous and instinctive, reconfirming his low planning priority in the creation of novels, and urging translators to choose when to translate the work depending on what would have worked best in their language (Zielinska-Elliott and Holm 11).

Finally, several obstacles were encountered in translating Fukaeri's direct speeches. Fukaeri is a dyslexic character, and her speeches are distinguished by an absence of ornaments, inflection, punctuation and a limited vocabulary (Zielinska-Elliott and Holm 13). The peculiarities of her speech are displayed in the original text through specific techniques to induce the reader to understand the communication difficulties of the character. For example, Murakami mainly used the characters of the syllabic alphabets and rarely the Chinese ones (Holm 131–32). The translators had to deconstruct this technique to recompose it in their own language by formulating original solutions.

Zielinska, for the Polish version, has completely avoided capitalization and punctuation. Holm followed her colleague. Other European translators have used ellipses at the end of each sentence. Kovalenin decided instead to recreate an impact for the eye, as it happened in the original version of the text, therefore he reported Fukaeri's lines completely in italics by separating the words with a dash (Zielinska-Elliott and Holm 13). For the Italian version, rather than on the visual side, Amitrano focused on the content of the dialogues, making a careful selection of the lexicon so that it appeared unusual.

However, the translation experience does not remain solely external to the novel, in fact it could also be identified within the story. In his essay, Jenkin Suen debates the rewriting of *Air Chrysalis* in *1Q84*, calling it "a self-reflective metaphor of the role of *1Q84*" (Suen 40), and more generally of fiction writing. On the one hand, he claims, *Air Chrysalis* imposes itself as a likely account of Fukaeri's experiences, a testimony of events that really happened, while:

On the other hand, as Tengo rewrote *Air Chrysalis*, he added details with his own imagination to make the novel more lively and appealing. Whilst Fuka-Eri mentioned the existence of two moons, it was Tengo who fleshed out the details. Remarkably, when Tengo later saw the second moon in the

sky, it has exactly the same features and attributes as invented by him [...]. What Tengo had imagined in his fiction became part of the reality in 1Q84. Dialectically, whilst *Air Chrysalis* was published as a fiction, it was a factual account of Sakigake – hence history became fiction. On the other hand, the fictional details inscribed by Tengo are imagines and change reality – hence fiction became history (Suen 40).

Comparing this reflection to the contributions examined so far, it is not difficult to associate the figure of Tengo, the protagonist, with that of a translator. The rewriting of *Air Chrysalis* is in all respects the transfer of a message from one code to another, which the protagonist takes on by reshaping the world of the original writer. In addition to being an ambiguous character whose humanity is being questioned (Pasha 58–59), Fukaeri is characterized by a problematic language that requires constant attempts at interpretation. Furthermore, *Air Chrysalis* justifies the birth of a new terminology (Hong 167). Tengo's rewriting is therefore not far from that of the other translators who have so far managed to work on the *1Q84* universe. Consequently, the distance between the events of the protagonist and Kovalenin's past is short:

Plowing through all these echoes of our trip to Sakhalin, I was struck by a peculiar feeling: *Hey, what's going on? Am I living in a story within a story within another story, within just another story, and so on forever?* My real memories were now turned into someone else's fiction, which in turn had become a world bestseller. And now the stories of my homeland, which I retold or translated for the author into Japanese, have to be translated by *the same myself* back into my own tongue?

(Kovalenin 120)

Both found themselves rewriting and living stories to which they made a contribution for, confirming that in imagination begin responsibilities.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, *1Q84* constitutes an ideal text for an analysis, as it embodies a suitable candidate for a critical reading on several fronts.

Starting from his editorial history that allowed for consideration of his peculiar launch strategy on the market, and the reception of the novel both in Japan and overseas, up to the disputes on the author's style, which marked a change in the literary canon of some countries, or its translations abroad hampered by cultural and linguistic differences.

The first chapter essentially analyzed the plot and characters of the novel. Next, through the contributions of translators Amitrano and Kovalenin, it reviewed the publishing history of *1Q84*, identifying some of the events that led the author to give birth to the story and by extension its themes.

The second chapter examines the genre and themes of the novel. By investigating the possibilities that writing opens up in reality, *1Q84* could be discussed in relation to the responsibilities of the act of writing in general. Through the contributions of Pasha, Suter, and Strecher, the chapter also analyzed Murakami's social commitment, and its representation through a fracture of the normative and binary systems in his novels, giving access to a space of liquidity where a negotiation of the self is possible. Writing

thus becomes a weapon to create liminal spaces and suspended times, leading to a reinterpretation of identity as Pasha's queer rereading suggests. The direction of reality following this redefinition remains inscrutable, therefore depicting this as one of the next issues to be possibly addressed in future research.

Ultimately, the third chapter, underlining the author's *mukokuseki* style, draws a profile of Murakami's identity examining the reception of his language in various countries. The controversies related to his figure initially developed around the search for alleged canons of Japanese literature absent in his writing, a practice that has lost energy over time, probably thanks to the writer's stay in the same markets, as well as readers' progressive acceptance of the new canon. However, Murakami's success led to the urgency of translating his writings to other codes, thus giving rise to problems of adaptation to the target cultures. Some obstacles have been identified through the comparison between the voices of Holm, Hashimoto, and Zielinska and have incarnated: in the intertextual richness, which for translators has turned into a work of delicate research beyond the spaces of the novel; in the repetitions of his novels, they later became cuts to history accused of undermining the original message of the author; in Fukaeri's dyslexia, visually identifiable in the original text according to artifices that

the writer used and who required an effort of flexibility of the translators, forced to re-explore the possibilities of their own language and come up with original solutions.

The analysis ends by examining the editorial history of the novel, inquiring about how Kovalenin's retrospective was not only a pretext for writing *IQ84*, but also a reflection on the intertextual nature of the novel and its translation.

When, in the last chapter of *IQ84*, the main character Aomame climbs the same ladder from which she came down at the beginning of the story, there is a significant difference: she is not alone. Tengo retraces with her the pegs that gradually led her towards an amorphous reality in which she managed to meet the protagonist. Going back on one's steps, however, as highlighted by Pasha or Suen, does not correspond to going backwards, but to proceeding to a further stage of events.

This thesis wants to be placed in the same perspective: although the ladder has been descended by merely a few rungs before already being ascended, the road to be followed for the research is still long. However, thanks to the words of the novel "At that time nobody knew what would happen", it is worth proceeding, since the next stage could be closer than it seems.

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