



FROM ERNEST HEMINGWAY TO HARUKI MURAKAMI: PRESENCE AND ABSENCE DICHOTOMY, IDENTITY CRISIS AND THE SEARCH FOR MEANING THAT WOMEN CHARACTERS BRING ABOUT IN “IN ANOTHER COUNTRY” AND “KINO”

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Abstract

The stories “In Another Country” in *Men Without Women* (1927) and “Kino” in *Men Without Women* (2014) are two different but profoundly related short stories written by Ernest Hemingway and Haruki Murakami respectively. Although these two short stories differ by virtue of spatial and temporal variables producing the cultural climate in which the two novelists lived and created their works, by reading these two short stories closely and comparatively, this study aims to point out, prove and comment that both stories reveal the same themes in their narratives as the problematization of men’s relationship with the women together with the impacts of the presence-absence of women figures on men’s lives. The men in “In Another Country” and “Kino”, whose identity crises and search for meaning together with their conditions are analyzed critically, are either proved to be ostensibly indifferent and have some sort of purported stamina or they are implicitly fragile and emotionally imbalanced due to the sorrows they go through and are not able to overcome. Examination of the stories unearths the psychologies of the male characters who have either misunderstood women or misinterpreted their existential conditions. By examining the two short stories critically and comparatively, this study aims to demonstrate while both stories indeed closely revolve around such notions of identity, love, life, unhappiness, isolation and search for meaning in the middle of literal and metaphorical crises due to the presence and absence of one’s beloved, it provides a chance of scrutinizing the intricate dynamics of male and female relationships as well. Focusing on the way through which the dichotomy of presence and absence of female protagonists directs the male protagonists’ course of lives and how it leads them to identity crises and the search for meaning, a comparative analysis and close reading of the two short stories in question are thought to provide rich and evocative results.

Keywords: Hemingway, Murakami, “In Another Country”, “Kino”, the Dichotomy of Presence and Absence Presence, Identity Crisis, Search for Meaning

ERNEST HEMINGWAY'DEN HARUKİ MURAKAMI'YE: “BAŞKA BİR ÜLKEDE” VE “KİNO”DA KADIN KARAKTERLERİN NEDEN OLDUĞU VARLIK VE YOKLUK DİKOTOMİSİ, KİMLİK KRİZİ VE ANLAM ARAYIŞI

Öz

Kadınsız Erkekler'den (1927) “Başka Bir Ülkede” ve Kadınsız Erkekler'den (2014) “Kino” adlı öyküler, sırasıyla Ernest Hemingway ve Haruki Murakami tarafından yazılan iki farklı ama derinden ilişkili kısa hikâyelerdir. Her ne kadar bu iki kısa hikâye, iki romancının yaşadığı ve eserlerini yarattığı kültürel iklimi üreten mekânsal ve zamansal değişkenler nedeniyle farklılık gösterse de, bu çalışma, iki öyküyü yakından ve karşılaştırmalı olarak okuyup analiz ederek her iki hikâyenin de anlatılarında erkeğin kadınlı ilişkisinin sorunsallaştırılması ve hikâyelerin kadın figürlerinin varlığının-yokluğunun erkeklerin yaşamlarındaki etkileri bakımından aynı temaları ortaya koyduğunu göstererek bu öyküleri yorumlamayı amaçlamaktadır. İçerisinde buldukları koşullarla birlikte kimlik krizleri ve anlam arayışları eleştirel olarak analiz edilen “Başka Bir

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Ülkede” ve “Kino”daki erkeklerin ya görünüşte kayıtsız ve sözde dayanıklı oldukları ya da yaşadıkları ve üstesinden gelemedikleri acılar nedeniyle örtük bir biçimde kırılğan ve duygusal açıdan dengesiz oldukları ortaya çıkar. Hikâyelerin incelenmesi, kadınları ya yanlış anlayan ya da varoluş koşullarını yanlış yorumlayan erkek karakterlerin psikolojilerini gün yüzüne çıkarmaktadır. Bu çalışma, iki öyküyü inceleyerek, her iki öykünün de aslında kişinin sevdiği kimsenin varlığı ve yokluğu nedeniyle gerçek ve mecazi krizlerin ortasında kimlik, aşk, yaşam, mutsuzluk, yalnızlık ve anlam arayışı gibi kavramların etrafında nasıl yakından döndüğünü gösterirken kadın-erkek ilişkilerinin karmaşık dinamiklerini de irdeleme şansı verir. Kadın kahramanların yokluk ve varlık dikotomisinin, erkek kahramanların hayatlarını nasıl yönlendirdiğine ve onlarda kimlik krizlerine ve anlam arayışına yol açtığına odaklanan söz konusu iki kısa öykünün yakın okumasının ve karşılaştırmalı bir analizinin, zengin ve çağrışımcı sonuçlar sağlayacağı düşünülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hemingway, Murakami, “Bir Başka Ülkede”, “Kino”, Varlık ve Yokluk Dikotomisi, Kimlik Krizi, Anlam Arayışı

Introduction: Ernest Hemingway and Haruki Murakami and “Cherchez La Femme” as a Single Leitmotif

Men Without Women (1927) and *Men Without Women* (2014) are the two collections of short stories written by American novelist Ernest Hemingway and the Japanese writer Haruki Murakami, respectively. Although their cultures, the times and the atmosphere they write in and the perspectives from which they look at and perceive phenomena, and the way they comment on and reflect human relationships differ a lot, the problematization of men’s relationship with women and vice-versa in their collections of short stories is what dominates their narratives as an overwhelming theme. In the collections, presence and equally —and surprisingly— absence of women/woman first haunts and then perturbs the male characters to the extent of imbalance of every kind, existential nausea and void.

Fragility, perils and the sense of losing or not being able to communicate —in every possible sense of the word— with one’s beloved among the two novelists’ protagonists are the driving forces of the characters’ efforts which also direct the courses of the narratives. The havoc brought about either by foregone relationships or the ones that actually never happened often turns out to be so destructive that they drive characters to the edges and their holding on life gets tenuous. Right at this point, bearing in mind the French phrase “cherchez la femme” becomes a particularly apt term while analyzing the stories. Functioning also both as a latent and running leitmotif throughout in “In Another Country and “Kino”, the phrase, which simply translates into English as “look for the woman”, suggests the idea that when there is a mystery or a seemingly unresolvable enigma, one had better ponder the possibility that a woman might be the reason or she is somehow personally involved. Although the phrase is sometimes loosely used in a satirical or humorous manner to underscore the liability to condemn women for innumerable reasons and occasions,



considering it as a leitmotif for the close reading and comparative analyses of the stories proves that it is not an undue endeavor since men in the stories seem to stagger from one crisis to another in the middle of their existential anguish and desperation either triggered or maintained by all-existing and at the same time never-appearing female characters.

The strength of Murakami's male characters is flimsy and they are almost always feeble and mostly torn between "two worlds: the real and the spiritual one" (Dil, 2022: 13). One may expect this due to Murakami's style and characterization but strangely enough, it is also so much true for Hemingway's characters despite the widely acclaimed persona of Hemingway as the personification of dominant male values and *machismo* (Fantina, 2005: 1). Accordingly, it can be deciphered that in the face the perils of losing, loss, suffering and absence, the myth of manhood seems to be insufficient to prevail even when characters in Hemingway's narratives confront us as boxers, bullfighters or soldiers who are widely deemed to be the men of power, stamina and resistance.

While Hemingway explores the experiences of alienated and deserted men who have not been able to understood women or those who have been misunderstood by women, Murakami delves deep into his characters in investigating their unuttered motivations which are even unintelligible to themselves thereby Murakami subtly navigates through such kindred themes to desolation and alienation as resentment and misunderstanding. No matter how much Hemingway's male characters are deemed to be combative (Willingham, 2002: 47) they either try to suppress their feelings or they are even unaware that they are under the effect of women even when these women are absent. Characters of Murakami on the other hand are bitterly conscious that women have been playing a cataclysmic effect on their lives. Dealing with love, life, death, unhappiness and loneliness, both Hemingway and Murakami manage to compose collections of elegies, all of which convey the sense that men, metaphorically, either victimize themselves due to their choices and tumultuous life events or they are victimized by women; hence, women purported to be in the form of love, affection and sympathy have lethal effect on male characters of the two authors instead of providing a curative role in the lives of these men.

Ernest Hemingway is renowned for his emotively flat, objective and terse statements and he "mastered precision and economy in language because he strived to convey, through a constrained and stoic style, the sense of alienation and disillusionment of the times" (Garrigues, 2004: 62). Murakami is apparently inspired by Hemingway, not just because of the title he prefers for his short stories but by the themes which seem to be in the emulation of the American author's narratives. Although Masao Miyoshi is unsympathetic towards Murakami and antagonistic to his



literary talent, he points out that “fragmented they are, entirely easy [to] read - a smooth, popular item of consumption; [...] story-less stories of nameless characters [...] converting the 1960s to a mood, a sentiment, a style” (Miyoshi, 1991: 233-236). In addition to Murakami’s resemblance to Hemingway in terms of short expressions and sometimes through emotionally barren sentences, his style proves to oscillate between literary modernism to postmodernism, which repels Miyoshi. And thematically, neither Hemingway nor Murakami eulogizes or underestimates the role of love in the lives of the fictional characters they are portraying. While both stories in the two collections, which are chosen in this study for a critical and comparative reading, delve into the themes of love, loneliness, identity, and the impact that women have on the lives of the male protagonists, Murakami’s blending of realism and surrealism or more appropriately magic(al) realism provides more captivating and introspective reading experience.

Hemingway embroiders his stories from both a vast and major canvas of social realities of his own day and minor individual stories. The common point is that he allocates particular place to men without women or in Linda Wagner-Martin’s words “men with other men, [who] had become one of the stock narrative situations that he drew on in his work [...] his imagination privileged the *esprit de corps* among men: he remembered that the good part of his own past had been spent with male friends” (Wagner-Martin, 2007: 47, 74). In line with this point, Hemingway’s plots are populated with congenial friends. In “The Undefeated” in the collection, *Men Without Women*, Hemingway concentrates on an eminent bullfighter who left his glorious days behind. The bullfighter resolves to go into a last bullfighting which is actually an attempt to regain his bygone grandeur. The story probes the themes of bravery, determination, the inevitable passage of time, the risk and the sacrifices in the profession of bullfighting. In “In Another Country”, Hemingway recounts the effects of the First World War on the traumatized soldiers receiving treatment for their war injuries in an Italian hospital, where they try to find solace in the company of fellow wounded soldiers. In “Hills Like White Elephants”, Hemingway narrates the story of a couple who are in a serious negotiation by which they consider a difficult decision about an undesired pregnancy. “The Killers” relates the story of the two hitmen dropping in on a restaurant in an insignificant town. They are trying to find a man, and the waiter gets involved in the calculated assassination when he warns the man on who is on the target. “Fifty Grand” portrays the story of Jack Brennan, who is a boxer. He misses his wife and family while preparing unwillingly for the oncoming boxing match. Throughout the narrative, Brennan suffers from a profound yearning for his wife and sons which, influences his decisions and motivations about the fight in question.



Although Brennan is ambitious about providing a better future for his family, he loses the fight. Despite his loss, there is bittersweetness at the end of the story since Brennan has placed a bet on his opponent's victory at the cost of his defeat. Therefore, he wins a considerable sum of money out of his bet.

As for Murakami's *Men Without Women*, the author is able to uncover his male characters' psychologies with a tactful insight in the manner of juxtaposing his themes and style with the themes of loneliness, loss, war, love, and the complexities of human relationships conveyed in Hemingway's collections through a concise and evocative writing style. In "Drive My Car", Murakami depicts the condition of a middle-aged actor who hires a female driver. Throughout the story, they engage in subtle and philosophical dialogues while navigating through the intricacies of love, loss, and human connection. In the story titled "Yesterday", the male protagonist contemplates on his foregone relationship with a woman and the effect it had on himself and on his life. The story examines the themes of love, memory, and the lasting impact of the past. In "Kino", which is the object of the detailed analysis of this study, Murakami recounts the story of a man named Kino, who starts running a bar after having been betrayed by his wife. The author narrates the subsequent events characterized with the search for meaning in one's life, one's (in)ability to adapt himself to the changing life routine while pondering on his personal and career experiences. Upon the warnings of a mysterious man named Kamita, who haunts Kino's bar before its closure, he sets off wandering cities in trying to come to terms with his existence, identity and loss. In "Samsa in Love", Murakami ingeniously retells Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis* by reverting the surreal events of the famous story where Gregor Samsa this time wakes up as a human and fumbles around his existence and basic needs as a human being and finds himself allured to a hunchbacked locksmith girl who happens there supposedly to *unlock* the existential impasse of the awkward male protagonist.

It is striking, in the stories, particularly those by Hemingway, that the female characters are either absent in the lives of men, and as such in the plots or present in the past lives of the characters, and that their presence-absence have a lingering effect directing the course of actions of the protagonists. This is partly because man generally, in Hemingway's narratives, first try to uphold the code of *honor* and this "stoic manliness by which to define themselves in their relationship to women" (Sanderson, 1996:176) fires them back, let alone being helpful at all. In the intersection of the stories, which were written in different social, cultural, spatial and temporal milieus, both authors pose the same questions: Can men live without women? If they can, what



would their life would be like? Can one escape or be salvaged from its tormenting or at least directing effects? Even if they seem to achieve to remain indifferent, lingering existence and the poignancy turn out to be bitter since it is never the same as it was in the case of loss. Murakami compares this case to a stain on a Persian carpet; it might fade but never disappears completely:

Because you already know what it means to be Men Without Women. You are a pastel-colored Persian carpet, and loneliness is a Bordeaux wine stain that won't come out. Loneliness is brought over from France, the pain of the wound from the Middle East. For Men Without Women, the world is a vast, poignant mix, very much the far side of the moon (Murakami, 2017: 170).

Even Hemingway does not tell it explicitly and only hinting that his characters have been distracted even in their men-occupied worlds suffices him. It is apparent Murakami acknowledges that there is no such thing as “moving on” on the part of his characters when they lose a dear one or whenever there is no one out there to communicate with, both cases of which have the harrowing effects that looms over the male characters.

From the collections of stories *Men Without Women*, “In Another Country” by Ernest Hemingway and “Kino” by Haruki Murakami are chosen as sample stories for the analysis in a compare-contrast manner through the lenses of the effects of the presence-absence dichotomy, identity crises and the search for meaning. The effects of the absence of female characters on the male protagonists and how these effects shape men's experiences and create a sense of emptiness in them are particularly underlined. As the stories delve into the psychological and emotional impact of solitude, both Murakami and Hemingway's stories encourage and inspire contemplation on relationships and their complexities. The male protagonists reflect on past romantic connections, examine the dynamics, successes and failures of their interactions with women and themes of love and loss surface inevitably as recurring motifs in the stories. Close and comparative analyses of the two stories in the present study also uncover the latent problematization of the notions of masculinity and how it influences the characters' experiences. The protagonists navigate their identities as men in the absence of women and face (or unable to do so) societal expectations and stereotypes attributed to masculinity.

1. The Loss, Desperation and the Fear of Commitment in Hemingway's “In Another Country”

Hemingway's “In Another Country” traces the impacts of presence and presence-absence under the disguises of loss, desperation and the fear of commitment. It is the story of an Italian major, an American soldier as the fictional narrator and a couple of his wounded friends, all of



whom serviced in the First World War and are currently receiving an ostensible treatment in an old hospital in Italy. Throughout the narrative, it turns out that soldiers are injured not only in their bodies but also in their souls just as the American soldier points out: “We were all a little detached, and there was nothing that held us together except that we met every afternoon at the hospital” (Hemingway, 1955: 31). After tramping the streets of Milan, soldiers haunt the hospital to train with machines that aimed to heal their wounded organs. American soldier used to be a football player and he has been wounded to his knee and the Italian major had been an excellent fencer before he was wounded to his hand in the war. The doctor in the hospital consoles particularly these two soldiers as they have wounds on the very organs they used to practice their favorite sports.

The major is desperate and does not believe in the machine course supposedly training their organs to function as they did before the war. The young American seems to be more hopeful but at the same time he is afraid of going back to the war. In the beginning, the American soldier practices his Italian with the major and he finds it easier to develop but later it gets difficult when the major insists on the grammatical accuracy. The major is always seeming morose for he makes things harder as he looks at things from the gloomier side of the life, which heightens the tension of the condition he is suffering from. Later, it turns out that he has recently lost his wife and his suffering from bereavement has coupled with the feelings and thoughts of emptiness, absence and avoidance as an extension of fear of commitment to anybody or anything. To soothe the anguish that the major is suffering from, the doctor shows him the photographs of those who had been wounded and injured to their hands and how the treatment worked well for them:

The major held the photograph with his good hand and looked at it very carefully. ‘A wound?’ he asked.

An industrial accident, the doctor said.

Very interesting, very interesting’ the major said, and handed it back to the doctor.

You have confidence?

No, said the major (Hemingway, 1955: 30-31).

The major's question about whether the wound in the photograph was a result of an injury indicates his curiosity and interest in the subject matter but it is apparent that it is not a genuine interest in the possible success with the similar treatment he is receiving. His frustration, distrust and unrest accentuate the emotional and physical burden that the war and its outcomes can have on individuals pushing them to long for a sense of normalcy and the restoration of their former physical-emotional capabilities. This type of yearning or more appropriately nostalgia is the thing that can



be associated with various things alongside the definition of the term as a longing for a past period. In *The Promise of Nostalgia*, Sayers highlights that “The term nostalgia derives from the Greek roots *nostos* and *algia*. *Nostos* means homecoming, and *algia* denotes a painful condition” (Sayers, 2020: p.21). Thus; taken together, it means melancholic yearning to go back to one's home or country which is basically the feelings of caustic homesickness. The major's suffering can be argued to have been caused by not only his wishful and painful thinking to *go back to* his uninjured state but also his grief engendered as he is not in his native homeland but in a foreign country as the title of the short story indicates, he is away from his homeland.

Aside from the trauma soldiers have undergone, they can be overwhelmed by the inequalities among themselves in the matters of medals they are given out of their resilience, bravery and fortitude. American soldier as a narrator informs us that they are three close friends who have the same rank and the same medals except the one whose face is covered with a bandage across his face. Although his visage has been irreversibly damaged, he was not *honored* with a medal simply because he had not spent enough time in the battlefield. Although this does not cause disagreement and resentment among the surviving fellow soldiers, they feel that there is some kind of unexpressed favoritism among themselves even in such matters as life and death, determination and sacrifice. The narrator-soldier acknowledges quietly the fact that he was given a medal not because of his valor but simply because he is an American fighting in Italy.

Even if these discharged soldiers keep on using machines, they lost their belief in their benefit. The soldier-narrator indicates this alongside the major's grievance about the things surrounding him and of the soldier himself:

The major, who had been a great fencer, did not believe in bravery, and spent much time while we sat in the machines. [...] There was a time when none of us believed in the machines, and one day the major said it was all nonsense. The machines were new and then it was we who were to prove them. It was an idiotic idea, he said ‘a theory, like another.’ I had not learned my grammar, and he said I was a stupid impossible disgrace, and he was a fool to have bothered with me (Hemingway, 1955: 32).

The major's disbelief in bravery foregrounds a cynical outlook on the concept of courage and it is a disillusionment resulting from his own experiences in the war. Prior to the experience of the war, the major was interested in practicing fencing, which can be read as a symbol of a strategic combat; and his skill and expertise in it might be thought to have formed his perspective. The major's stance on the machines primarily renders the idea of a collective doubt held his fellow soldiers. Nevertheless, he goes through a change of heart and he dismisses the idea completely and considers the training machines utterly ineffective. The supposition, held by the major, that the machines are



being used for the first time nullifies the validity of the photographs of the recovering patients having been cured by the same machines. Once the major lost his hope and temper, he turns to be more emotionally aggressive as he attacks through his harsh criticism towards the soldier-narrator's lack of grammatical accuracy with his Italian, and the subsequent self-deprecating remarks indicate the major's frustration and impatience. It is clear that the American soldier and particularly the major feel an incurable sense of *detachment* (just as the title of the story implies) and he resists telling the trauma he has gone through and “dissociation manifests itself in forms as moodiness, silence, and feelings of isolation [...] the emotion behind the action is largely left unsaid” (Anderson, 2012: 19-20) simply because while actions and the regular lives of the soldiers could be related by the soldier-narrator, the emotions, which manifest itself in the major's acerbity, are unspeakable.

At first, the major's demeanors may suggest that he holds high standards and expects, from those around him, competence, which offers insights into his identity, character and his experiences in the military. The major maintains his assaults and the attacks peak when the discharged soldier expressed his views what he will do after he is released from the hospital:

What will you do when the war is over if it is over? he asked me. Speak grammatically!

I will go to States.

Are you married?

No, but I hope to be.

The more of a fool you are, he said. He seemed very angry. A man must not marry.

Why, Signor Maggiore? Why must not a man marry?

He cannot marry. He cannot marry, he said angrily. If he is to lose everything, he should not place himself in a position to lose that. He should not place himself in a position to lose. He should find things he cannot lose (Hemingway, 1955: 33).

The major's reaction to the soldier's plans about marriage underlines a deep fear of loss and a distaste to commitment to relationships of these kinds. His angry response and the claims that a man should not marry suggest his deep-seated acceptance that initiating a devoted relationship exposes one to the likelihood of losing everything including the loved one. He perceives marriage as a liability or fragility and he fears that entering into an emotional relationship could result in profound pain and devastation when the relationship ends. His ardent argument to finding things one should not lose indicates a desperate search for stability and security. Afterwards, it becomes clear that the major's desperate mindset does not wholly stem from the emotional burden of war, as one may expect, but his recent loss of his wife: “The doctor told me that the major's wife, who was very young and whom he had not married until he was definitely invalidated out of the war,



had died of pneumonia. She had been sick only a few days ago. No one expects her to die” (Hemingway, 1955: 33). Consequently, the major desires to protect his fellow-soldier from the same kind of sorrow.

Ultimately, the major’s attitude —however unhealthy it seems to be— suggests a belief that by preventing a future commitment of the soldier, he can safeguard his friend from a potential loss and grief. The dialogue conveys the major’s internal struggle and emotional turmoil, as well as his desire to shield his friend from the vulnerability inherent in deep connections. It also explores the far-reaching themes of loss, fear of commitment and the desperate search for a sense of stability and security in the middle of the uncertainties of war and life.

No matter how much the major’s ingrained thoughts highlight a limited and potentially flawed understanding of women’s roles (*things* that can be *lost*) and their potential contributions to one’s life such as comforters, caregivers, and lifelong friends, his perspective cannot be condemned due to a deep fear of emotional pain and vulnerability, leading him to reject the idea of entering into a committed relationship. The major deliberately rejects the role of women as the sources of comfort, emotional support, the solace and the strength during challenging times. It is not surprising that “In Another Country” —like many others in the collection— does not include a palpable woman figure. However, their shadowy effects on the lives of men exemplified through at first bizarre and then perfectly understandable behaviors of the major prove the maxim of *look for the woman* of detective fictions or *whodunnit* stories since the cause of the unrest of the major turns out to be arising from the (non)existence (or once an existing) female figure in his life.

The major’s perspective is the reflection of his personal experiences and emotional wounds such as insecurity, resentment, fear of commitment, loss and desperation of the one who is situated in Hemingway’s world of *men without women*. It is better to leave behind a world class author —but not wholly forgetting him and his case, fictional world and arguments— and pass on another one who pays homage to him with the same title and similar cases.

2. Monumental Reverence to a Predecessor: Haruki Murakami’s “Kino” from *Men Without Women*

Kino, who is the eponymous protagonist of Murakami’s story, evinces a subtler inquiry into the intertwining obscure sorrows with presence-absence dichotomy, identity crisis and the search for meaning. It opens with a mysterious man who orders meal and drink, reads book, listens to the



music Kino plays in the bar and keeps his silence without intervening into what is going around himself. Kino feels a little uncomfortable with the man and his noncommittal demeanor.

Murakami haphazardly presents Kino's former career before he decided to open a bar. We learn that Kino worked, for seventeen years, for a company selling sports equipment. His job is to persuade stores to keep their goods. Since the company is not as popular as the well-known and prestigious companies, its motto "Do an honest job and it will pay off" (Murakami, 2017: 116) perfectly suits Kino's character that is taciturn and unsociable. Unlike Hemingway's seemingly bold male protagonists, those of Murakami, who are succinctly personified by Kino, are both externally and internally fragile and they "are as alienated as any in Albert Camus, and as lost as any in J.D. Salinger" (McAlpin, 2006: 1021). The reason why Kino quits his job does not arise from the fact that the pay is dissatisfactory but the unutterable feelings of resentment arising from his wife's affair with his friend working in the same company. He accidentally witnessed it while they were together when he had to come back home one day earlier from his business requiring travels across the country. Witnessing the scene in his own home, Kino tells nothing, let alone harboring anger, disappointment and protestation; he simply leaves the house and it is that day he quits his job and decides to take over his unmarried aunt's two-storey building, which was once a coffee shop. Kino transforms the first floor into a bar, names it after himself and he starts using the second floor for lodging.

He divorces his wife and he is not sure why he does not feel anger and resentment towards her and to his colleague, who sleep together. What Kino feels certain is that he has never been able to made anybody happy, let alone his wife and himself throughout his life. He comes to terms with that he has achieved nothing special and he is unproductive throughout his life. His heart is now devoid of any negative or positive feelings. By means of his self-exile, through which he becomes some sort of nomad, and particularly thanks to the bar, which embodies a kind of h(e)aven, Kino can now prevent his mind from wandering without any purpose. Returning to the same term of nostalgia, which is touched upon in the discussion of Hemingway's "In Another Country" by referring to the major's condition, it is sound to discuss it with a similar etymological root as it is required by a different (Japanese) cultural context. In *Postmodern, Feminist and Postcolonial Currents in Contemporary Japanese Culture*, Fuminobu points out the relational roots of the term nostalgia and its equivalent in Japanese as *natsukashii*, which roughly means emotional response arising from the sense "to get used to being with or to become attached to something/someone [...] a natsukashii person was someone with whom one felt comfortable [...] Therefore, 'natsukashisa' (nostalgia) in



a sense results in the decline of deep physical affections” (Fuminobu, 2005: 77-78). In Kino’s condition, since he is not only estranged from his old ways of life but also from his wife, the desires of nostalgia (longing for a particular place or condition) for a lost past has been transformed into the attachment to his new existence, ways of living and, of course, his bar. In the literal and connotative context of nostalgia, there has been an outstanding shift from subjects (the beloved one/s) to objects (the way he begins to live and the work he starts to run).

Kino plays various kinds of music pieces that fit his mood. His bar is empty in its first days of its opening and it is not populated by people. Later on, the first visit is paid not by a human being but by a cat which takes to the place and prefers to nestle there as a sort of home to itself. It brings good luck and Kino’s bar becomes popular among the customers. Almost four months later, Kino learns the name of the mysterious man: It is Kamita, which means “god’s field” (Murakami, 2017: 120). When upset by two rough men having potential for creating trouble in the bar, it is Kamita who brings succour to Kino’s helplessness. When Kamita is asked about his name he explains it thoroughly:

My name is Kamita’, he said. ‘It is written with the characters for ‘god’- *kami*- and ‘field’: ‘god’ field.’ But it isn’t pronounced ‘Kanda,’ as you might expect. It’s pronounced ‘Kamita.’ [...]

I’ll remember that, the large man said.

Good idea. Memories can be useful, Kamita said. [...]

What a cheap joint, the larger man said again sneeringly.

Correct. A cheap bar with cheap customers, Kamita said. It doesn’t suit you. There’s got to be somewhere else that does. Not that I know where.

Now, aren’t you the wise guy, the large man said. You make me laugh.

Think it over later on, and have a good, long laugh, Kamita said (Murakami, 2017: 122-123).

Kamita invites the men to outside and possibly as Kino suspects, he beats them away not to cause further trouble anymore. Kamita’s explanation of his name and his joking manner with the mention of memory are the very things that will resonate all through Kino’s mind later. All the while, Kino remains as a keen observer and passively looks on and tries to understand what is happening and who Kamita really is. Kino ponders the idea that he can be an enigmatic yakuza fighter. Kamita’s character is in stark contrast with that of Kino, which will also trouble him in an unconscious juxtaposition with his own ways.

Kino has had his first intimate relationship after the divorce, about a week later when he gets rid of the men with the help of Kamita. It is a woman who frequents the bar with the company of an expressionless man. One night the woman comes to the bar alone and wants to drink and



listens to the records Kino has been playing since the opening of his bar. As if addressing the cat while stroking it gently, she tells the man accompanying her is away and they are thinking to stop seeing each other as their relations are definitely not a typical one. The woman shows the scars and bruises and the cigarette burns apparent under her dress. Even if Kino is a cautious person and he has heard his inner voice telling him not to get involved, they ultimately sleep in the upstairs. Kino could not make any meaning of the mind of a man who could do such things to a woman and he had also difficulty in understanding the mind of a woman that endures such a relationship: “It was a savage scene from a barren planet, light-years away from where Kino lived” (Murakami 2017:128). During the intercourse, no words of intimacy were exchanged, they do not need or have no time to turn off the lights as they were as if “starving animals [...] devoured the flesh they craved over and over again (Murakami, 2017: 128). When Kino wakes up, he thinks that what he experienced might be a realistic dream; since it turns out that he can still smell the intense scent of the woman and feels the lines of scratches on his back.

Kino's character is depicted as a man who has experienced deep sorrows and struggles to find meaning in his life. His divorce from his unfaithful wife and his unproductive job have left him feeling empty and devoid of both positive and negative emotions. Kino's encounter with Kamita, the mysterious man, brings a sense of intrigue and possibility into his life. Kamita becomes a source of support and protection when Kino faces trouble at his bar. There is a hint of admiration and curiosity in Kino's perception of Kamita; therefore, Kino finds himself drawn to Kamita's wisdom and resilience, which contrasts with his own feelings of impasse and confusion. For Kino, Kamita promises a possibility of becoming a man as self-assertive as Kamita, which turns out to be nothing but a wishful thinking. When Kino involves in a brief liaison with the woman frequenting the bar, the happenstance leaves him inquiring the depths of human conducts and the aptitude to withstand in abusive relationships without any good reasons. Kino's experience of the relationship is almost ghostly or esoteric, as if it is more appropriate to a distant universe far away from Kino's own life, perception and empathetic powers.

Throughout the narrative, Kino's emotions and mindset reflect a sense of resignation and a search for meaning in a world that seems devoid of it. His encounters with others, be it Kamita or the woman, highlight the complexities of human connections and the struggles one faces in understanding and navigating ordinary events as well as intricate relationships. As Kino is a reserved and unsociable person, his encounter with the woman is portrayed as intense and animalistic as Kino tries to surpass his isolation, failed relationships, unrequited loves and



emotional numbness. Despite knowing the potential risks he is taking and its possible consequences, his initiation may reflect his longing for connection and intimacy, which he has not been able to find throughout his life.

Murakami intentionally leaves the woman frequenting the bar nameless. She is simply *nobody* to Kino but she can play a significant role in the story; she represents a kind of connection and shared experience of emotional and physical *scars*. Both Kino and the woman have scars, not only on their bodies but also in their spirits, which serves as a common point of understanding and empathy between them. Despite her seeming indifference and resilience, the woman's physical scars and bruises indicate that she has been in an abusive relationship. She reveals her vulnerability and the pain she has endured by showing recklessly her scars to Kino. In an ironic way, the woman's indifference resembles Kino's numbness and/or lack of certain feelings such as anger, frustration and resentment that he should have harbored due to his wife's betrayal. This act of frankness of the woman creates a connection between Kino and her since Kino can now empathize with the woman's misery and anguish by being able to perceive the profundity of her emotional wounds. Correspondingly, Kino has his own emotional scars due to his wife's betrayal. And the failure of his own marriage may be compounded with the realization of his actually ever-present flimsy connections with the people he has met throughout his life. Although, Kino's scars are not visible, they have left a lingering impact on his soul leaving him with the senses and inabilities of distrust and disconnection with others. The mutual experience of scars —not only physical but also emotional— lets Kino and the woman to grasp the other's grief-pain thus they can relate their grief to each other in their *brief encounters*. After their relationship, even if the woman comes to the bar several times in the company of the same man who is supposedly to be perpetrator of her abuse and misery, she behaved as if nothing had taken place between Kino and her on that night.

The breaking point of Kino's stability or his becoming more aware of his emotional instability takes place when he welcomes his wife for finalizing the divorce. It is not because the pain of separation exacted on him but because his realization that he could not feel the things he should have felt and he could not tell what he should have told upon her wife's betrayal. Although Kino still struggles to voice out his feelings, it is clear he becomes relatively successful in doing so when his wife tells him that she needs to apologize as she hurt him. Even if Kino tries to keep himself to himself, he acknowledges that he is human after all and he was hurt. After that, he again surrenders the unjust excuses that he should not have come home a day earlier. Against the submissive behavior and self-condemning statements of Kino, his wife plucks her courage in telling



him that he can find someone new for himself and it should not be hard to find her. However, for a person like Kino it is difficult to find somebody from then on even if the case is not of finding or not being able to find. He has been traumatized by the fact, which is coupled with his existential anguish and even he himself has been gradually realizing.

After the end of the summer, Kino observes that things begin to change for worse. Firstly, the cat disappears then snakes begin to appear, which is unusual for the environment Kino has been living since the snakes have never appeared there as his aunt informed him. Kino's aunt further informs him that the appearance of snakes —if it ever happens— can be an indication of a disaster, possibly an earthquake. Kino's aunt's prediction is true not in a literal sense but in a metaphorical one as Kino starts immersing with his own world when he is warned by Kamita, who for a while, disappears without any overt reason, that he must close the bar, set out to leave the city and travel around without coming back for some time. Kamita reservedly tells that Kino must go away without expecting further explanation:

[...] I was very happy when you opened the bar here. Unfortunately, though, there are somethings missing.'

Missing? Kino said. He had no idea what this could mean. All he could picture was a teacup with a tiny chip in its rim.

That grey cat won't be coming back, Kamita said. For the time being, at least.

Because this place is missing something?

Kamita did not reply.

[...] Mr. Kino, you're not the type who would willingly do something wrong. I know that very well. But there are times in this world when it's not enough just not to do the wrong thing. Some people use that blank as a kind of loophole.

[...] You're saying that some serious trouble has occurred, not because I did something wrong but because I didn't do the right thing? Some trouble concerning this bar, or me?' (Murakami, 2017: 134-135).

Kamita is authentically a mysterious man who later turns out that he was indeed a friend of Kino's aunt and he, most of the time, was there to take care of Kino because of his aunt's request. Is Kamita not (only) a mysterious man who latently underlines his association with esoteric connections as in the case of the meaning of his name as *god's land* but (also) the lover of Kino's aunt, Izu? Is he the one who banishes the cat to trigger further events? Does he know Kino and the woman had an intercourse and could it be possible that the woman was *sent* even by Kamita himself just to untangle or even worse to tangle Kino's entwined condition? The simple answer to these questions is that there is no way to say or know answers for certain. But what is hinted about Kino's situation by Kamita, who is or represents a vessel of a power beyond human agency, is that



the missing might be a genuine person/woman or/and the genuine feelings Kino must have felt and acted upon in accordance with but he has *missed* throughout his life.

To the end of his travels when he stays in cheap hotels and spends time in covering himself with the blankets in the beds of these ordinary lodgings away from his haven-like bar, he has to confess that “I wasn’t hurt enough when I should have been [...] When I should have felt real pain, I stifled it. I didn’t want to take it on, so I avoided facing up to it. Which is why my heart is so empty now. The *snakes* [my emphasis] have grabbed that spot and are trying to hide their coldly beating hearts there” (Murakami, 2017: 140). The memories resonate through Kino’s mind whether they are meaningful and timely befitting to his torturous situation or they sound at first incongruous but somehow they still prove relevant:

It’s written with the characters for ‘god’- kami- and ‘field’ - ‘god’s field’ - But isn’t pronounced ‘Kanda,’ as you might expect. It’s pronounced ‘Kamita.’ I live nearby. ‘I’ll remember that,’ the large man said. ‘Good idea. Memories can be useful’ Kamita had said. [...] Under the covers, Kino curled up like a worm, shut his eyes tight, and thought of the willow [...] She apologized right to my face, and I accepted that, he thought. I need to learn not just to forget but to forgive [...] Yes, I am hurt. Very deeply. He said this to himself. (Murakami, 2017: 141-142).

Either consciously or unconsciously Kino’s unuttered sentiments and blocked thoughts surface later in the form of a merciless torrent of memories and they hit back when he is utterly defenseless. Stephen Snyder rightly argues that “Memory cannot redeem the unredeemable, Murakami’s novel suggests, but it might offer a way of clearing away the structures of repression and alienation to open a space for rebuilding” (Snyder, 1996: 92). In the case of Kino, memories do not and cannot redeem the opportunities and missed chances of sound relations but worse than that they also do not provide a rebuilding; they are just there and of little avail to his well-being except that they keep on coming incessantly and without any therapeutic benefits. There is no bar to take shelter and there is nobody around like Kamita to shield the danger away from Kino. It is actually Kamita who sends Kino to his quasi-quest. It is perhaps why Kamita drives Kino away; to disarm him and face himself in his stark existential nakedness. Though defenseless, unguarded and vulnerable, Kino is now ready to embrace the wisdom and courage to come to face to face with his existence and fragility woven by the fact that he is the fellow character to Hemingway’s protagonists, who willingly or unwillingly try to step out their impasse as *men without women*.

Conclusion: “In Another Country” and “Kino” as Non-Idyllic Narratives

The male protagonists in “In Another Country” are the men of military, supposed to be the men of physical and mental power, who have experienced the traumas of war at first hand and



undergo both physical and emotional toll. After having been wounded, they find themselves in a hospital that gives treatment for their corporeal injuries. The general title of the collection of the short stories *Men Without Women* suggests that these men are lacking the concrete presence of women in their lives but this absence has had a strong looming effect on their emotional state.

The emotional impasse experienced by the protagonists is evident throughout the stories. They are detached and they lack a sense of unity: They seem to be finding solace only in their daily meetings at the hospital. Especially the major personifies a sense of emotional detachment and despair. He is doubtful about the treatment procedures and machines and he exhibits a lack of belief in heroism and courage. The recent loss of his wife increases his feelings of desolation, barrenness and above all, avoidance. Existential anguish is also a theme that can be traced in the narrative. The characters, who are *in another country*, are faced with the grave realities of war; they have to carry the physical and emotional wounds and bear the uncertainties of their lives and futures. They have to confront and find answer(s) to the questions of purpose, meaning, and the challenges to reconstruct their lives. The major's terror of loss and his consequent rejection of commitment foregrounds an unfathomable existential angst about the potential emotional pain and vulnerability. Hemingway manages to delve into the inner lives of these men, examining their struggles to have an identity, purpose and their struggles against the complexities of human connection in a world characterized by suffering and loss.

In a similar way, Murakami's character Kino experiences emotional estrangement and he struggles to form meaningful relations with others. It becomes clear that Kino carries a sense of resignation and emotional void. His marriage has collapsed by witnessing the betrayal of his wife. His divorce has made him review his life and understand himself as someone that cannot make others happy or find fulfillment for himself in his relationships. This brings him into the lines of the all-encompassing theme of *men without women*. Moreover, Kino's impasse and existential anguish highlight the internal struggle he faces in finding meaning and purpose. He had a job that he found unfulfilling but had to keep working there for seventeen years which resulted in the absence of the sense of productivity; thus, he feels trapped in a cycle of unremarkable existence. This sense of inactivity results in anguish align the combination of Kino's emotional detachment, and his impasse in life. His existential anguish creates a complex depiction of a man who feels detached and drifting.

Both Hemingway's and Murakami's characters exhibit emotional detachment and a sense of isolation. This detachment stems from in their experiences, such as the traumas of war in Hemingway's characters and the emotional turmoil caused by personal betrayals in Kino's (His



wife's betrayal and more conspicuously than that his own betrayal to himself in the form of living an inauthentic life). The major in Hemingway's story and Kino in Murakami's both question their purpose, grapple with their emotional and physical scars and they sense a feeling of emotional void and evasion. They both face existential dilemmas and confront the uncertainties of life. They also exhibit a fear of loss and vulnerability. They are cautious to the extent of fragility tenting towards an easy crisis and they turn out to be noncommittal to human bonds. Due to the mishaps he experienced in and out of the war, the major intimidates his fellow soldier that he may lose everything through marriage. Likewise, Kino avoids promising relationships and ponders upon his life. He ends up of being incapable of committing to anyone and sufficing himself with volatile relations and conditions, which ultimately and terribly fires back. Kino's story suggests the absence or limited influence of women in his life; and his indifference, negligence or slumber towards his authentic feelings and thoughts have had a deep traumatic impact on his life and partly on the lives of those whom he knows.

While Hemingway and Murakami approach their single leitmotif as *(the) men without women* in different ways, they share common ground in exploring the experiences of these men. Both authors delve into the emotional struggles, existential dilemmas and complexities of human connection faced by their male characters in the literal absence or metaphorical presence of women in their lives. While elegizing the conditions of their major characters, Hemingway and Murakami neither underestimate nor overestimate the men without women in their narratives. Both authors are able to give tactful insights into how their characters sense the lingering effect of losing a beloved one, (in the case of the major who loses his wife) not being able to re-commit oneself to an intimate relationship (valid both for the major and Kino) or even the rejection of such a commitment altogether have a lingering effect on these male characters leading them to existential angst and interrogation of their identities and choices.

Although they may seem to include hackneyed subject matters, Hemingway and Murakami's stories in their particular collections of short stories are observed to be non-idyllic narratives. The two chosen short stories, via their protagonists and the plots, reveal how men consciously or unconsciously ostracize themselves in one way or another and why they cannot get off with their innocence or sins. The interplay of the ironic absence and the presence of female character(s) in the stories impinges upon male characters and the caustic reciprocity of absence-presence disequilibrium has trammled characters' flickering personal developments. Hemingway was writing when literary modernism was beginning to catch on and Murakami, who paid



monumental homage to Hemingway, is still active in the times of (post)postmodernism or in digi(post)modernism. Hemingway is laconic and Murakami is evocative. Hemingway's characters are resistant to their vulnerabilities and those of Murakami on the other hand struggle with subtler concerns plagued with existential angsts and the quest for meaning. The common ground is that they both struggle against a noxious *missing* as referred in Kino's story. As the stories of these different characters and life paths bifurcate, the *presence of what is absent* would possibly not a sort of panacea to their cul-de-sacs. What the two novelists, as the denizens of fictional world of the embittered men, achieved is to dovetail the same theme with their divergent styles and characterizations.

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