

Two Reflective Statements

Response to the discussion of Murakami's context (*The Wind Up Bird Chronicle*)

Initially I was struck by the discussion catalyzed by Rosalyn and Shruti's "confrontation." It seemed quite clear and valid Murakami would be accused of dismissiveness of Japanese culture and history. His works often celebrate Western cultures, especially musical references to jazz and opera, reflecting an idealizing that seems very un-Japanese. However, as the presentation continued, I found myself challenged by what Guojun and Landon were saying. They discussed Japanese historical elements included in the novel. As they went over his references to historic Japanese icons, often expressed in the characters' names, I began to understand Murakami's angle a little more. Rather than utilize a more classical approach to the incorporation of Japanese culture in his novels, he strives to find that subtle balance between Western criticism (seen in many of the characters' war stories) and acceptance of Japan's rich and often dark history. His references to both cultures are sometimes clear and sometimes subtle. Overall I found the presentation quite enlightening, and my perspective is both altered and broadened, seeing Murakami's endeavor to blend Japanese and Western culture.

Response to the discussion of Kadare's context (*Broken April*)

An interesting proposition brought forth by this context presentation was the nature of Kadare's rhetorical agenda. After presenting examples of abominable practices around the world, the group was able to show that peoples' views on others' traditions, laws, and cultures are highly subjective. This position evolved to suggest that perhaps Kadare uses this novel to expose what seem appalling practices to force us to look at our own cultures and their practices about such things as death sentences, stoning women for adultery, and the like.

I feel this possible impulse is further supported by how Kadare shapes the characters in the novel. Gyorg seems like a helpless, sensitive individual. Kadare forces the audience to sympathise with those affected by the Kanun's devastating effects. Furthermore he

makes relatable characters of Diana and Bessian in that he pulls us out of a city culture and has us enter the culture of the Kanun along with them, making for culture shock for both characters and audience. By these methods, Kadare forces reflection and conclusions that are suggested by this presentation.