

Reflection on “The Wind up Bird Chronicle” oral presentation

I found that learning about the Japanese salaryman really enhanced my sense of the characterization that Murakami offered of Toru. In Japan it is not considered appropriate to try to stand out as an individual and to be different. Toru exemplifies being different when he quits his white-collar job to stay at home. In the culture, Japanese men work long hours and provide for the family. In this novel the role is reversed as Kumiko supports the family through her work. It's likely that Toru might be viewed by a Japanese reader as strange or different. In addition his behavior is sometimes out of the norm in other ways. The salaryman is usually obedient to authority and custom and very close to his co-workers. Toru on the other hand has no co-worker friends and is open about his hatred of Noboru Wataya, who is a high-ranking government official. He stands apart from many of the conventional images of the men of his culture and I am sure that understanding his difference is important to understanding the plot of the novel. It makes me wonder if his oppositional character, Noboru Wataya, represents all the things that Toru wants to avoid or confront, and if part of that is the traditional role of men in this society.

Another issue that intrigued me was the healing work that is included in the novel. I found quite mysterious the para-normal material that is associated with Nutmeg and Cinnamon and the kind of healing that is done by Nutmeg. I want to go back and read over that section of the book in light of some of the material offered by the group who gave the interactive oral on Murakami, and possibly explore the way the writer uses Nutmeg and Cinnamon in my essay. I think it is possibly all connected to Toru's experience in the well.