



The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle, Haruki Murakami, Random House, 2011, 1446499103, 9781446499108, 624 pages. Toru Okada's cat has disappeared. His wife is growing more distant every day. Then there are the increasingly explicit telephone calls he has recently been receiving. As this compelling story unfolds, the tidy suburban realities of Okada's vague and blameless life, spent cooking, reading, listening to jazz and opera and drinking beer at the kitchen table, are turned inside out, and he embarks on a bizarre journey, guided (however obscurely) by a succession of characters, each with a tale to tell..

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1Q84: Books 1 And 2 , Haruki Murakami, Aug 1, 2012, , 816 pages. The year is 1Q84. This is the real world, there is no doubt about that. But in this world, there are two moons in the sky. In this world, the fates of two people, Tengo and

1Q84: , Haruki Murakami, Aug 1, 2012, , 464 pages. Book Two of 1Q84 ended with Aomame standing on the Metropolitan Expressway with a gun between her lips. She knows she is being hunted, and that she has put herself in terrible

1Q84 , Haruki Murakami, 2012, Japan, 925 pages. The year is 1984. Aomame sits in a taxi on the expressway in Tokyo. Her work is not the kind which can be discussed in public but she is in a hurry to carry out an assignment

Mystic River , Dennis Lehane, Oct 13, 2009, Fiction, 496 pages. "There are threads in our lives. You pull one, and everything else gets affected." When they were children, Sean Devine, Jimmy Marcus, and Dave Boyle were friends. But then a

Dance Dance Dance , Haruki Murakami, Nov 17, 2010, Fiction, 416 pages. In this propulsive novel by the author of Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World and The Elephant Vanishes, one of the most idiosyncratically brilliant writers at work

The Elephant Vanishes , Haruki Murakami, Oct 10, 2011, Fiction, 336 pages. When a man's favourite elephant vanishes, the balance of his whole life is subtly upset. A couple's midnight hunger pangs drive them to hold up a McDonald's. A woman finds she

Memories of Altagracia , Salvador Garmendia, 1998, , 206 pages. A Venezuelan boy's education in the ways of the world at the hands of a shepherd. The shepherd takes him to town, exposing him to life's temptations..

Vintage Murakami , Haruki Murakami, Dec 18, 2007, Fiction, 192 pages. Vintage Readers are a perfect introduction to some of the greatest modern writers presented in attractive, accessible paperback editions. Murakami's bold willingness to go

What I Talk About When I Talk About Running , Haruki Murakami, Jul 29, 2008, Biography &

Autobiography, 240 pages. An intimate look at writing, running, and the incredible way they intersect, from the incomparable, bestselling author Haruki Murakami. While simply training for New York City

Sputnik Sweetheart , Haruki Murakami, May 22, 2001, Fiction, 210 pages. Haruki Murakami, the internationally bestselling author of Norwegian Wood and The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle, plunges us into an urbane Japan of jazz bars, coffee shops, Jack

In a Tokyo suburb a young man named Toru Okada searches for his wife's missing cat. Soon he finds himself looking for his wife as well in a netherworld that lies beneath the placid surface of Tokyo. As these searches intersect, Okada encounters a bizarre group of allies and antagonists: a psychic prostitute; a malevolent yet mediagenic politician; a cheerfully morbid sixteen-year-old-girl; and an aging war veteran who has been permanently changed by the hideous things he witnessed during Japan's forgotten campaign in Manchuria.

Bad things come in threes for Toru Okada. He loses his job, his cat disappears, and then his wife fails to return from work. His search for his wife (and his cat) introduces him to a bizarre collection of characters, including two psychic sisters, a possibly unbalanced teenager, an old soldier who witnessed the massacres on the Chinese mainland at the beginning of the Second World War, and a very shady politician.

Haruki Murakami is a master of subtly disturbing prose. Mundane events throb with menace, while the bizarre is accepted without comment. Meaning always seems to be just out of reach, for the reader as well as for the characters, yet one is drawn inexorably into a mystery that may have no solution. The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle is an extended meditation on themes that appear throughout Murakami's earlier work. The tropes of popular culture, movies, music, detective stories, combine to create a work that explores both the surface and the hidden depths of Japanese society at the end of the 20th century.

If it were possible to isolate one theme in The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle, that theme would be responsibility. The atrocities committed by the Japanese army in China keep rising to the surface like a repressed memory, and Toru Okada himself is compelled by events to take responsibility for his actions and struggle with his essentially passive nature. If Toru is supposed to be a Japanese Everyman, steeped as he is in Western popular culture and ignorant of the secret history of his own nation, this novel paints a bleak picture. Like the winding up of the titular bird, Murakami slowly twists the gossamer threads of his story into something of considerable weight. --Simon Leake
--This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Amazingly long, incredibly pricey, wildly experimental, often confusing but never boring, Murakami's most famous novel has been brought to audio life with extreme dedication: by Naxos, a company that regularly wins prizes, and by a reader with an uncommon combination of skills. Degas is already a Murakami veteran, having read the audio version of A Wild Sheep Chase (Naxos), and has worked on radio, stage and even cartoon voice (including Mr. Bean). He catches the constantly changing mental landscape of Murakami's fertile imagination—which moves from detective story to explicit sexual fantasy, heartbreaking Japanese WWII historical flashback, everyday details of married life (cooking, shopping and pet care) and even the occasional burst of satiric humor. Degas treats it all with the clarity and calmness of a very deep, very still pool. Certainly not for everyone's taste or budget, but anyone interested in this important author will find something to enlighten them. Available as a Vintage paperback (Reviews, Aug. 18. 1997). (Nov.)

But what the previous reviews do not mention is that the American publishers, Knopf, forced Murakami and his translator, Jay Rubin, to significantly abridge the original Japanese text. The casual reader would have no way of knowing this, and, indeed, I only noticed because I was reading alternating chapters of the book in English and Russian translations. Half-way through the novel, entire chapters suddenly started disappearing from the English-language text. Puzzled, I went back to the copyright page of the English-language edition, where, for the first time, I noticed the cryptic

notation that the book was not only translated but also "adapted from the Japanese."

How much of the original text was "adapted" away? I don't read Japanese, but, based on a comparison with my Russian-language translation, which appears to be complete (no Russian publisher would commit such a travesty on an award-winning novel), it seems that something like 15-20% of the text has been cut. For those of you who find the English-language text of the "Wind-Up Bird Chronicle" choppy, or puzzling, or seemingly incomplete, at least some of the blame lies at the feet of the American publishers who decided, unilaterally, that American readers cannot handle a long book.

Another reviewer has mentioned that far from being a scattered collection of independent incidents strung together by the coincidence of the central character's involvement, Murakami's "The Wind-up Bird Chronicle" is unified by means of its insistence on the problem of evil and what to do about it. Surely this is moving towards a clear understanding of the novel.

Evil, though, is a such a culturally grounded concept. Is evil sin? Maybe in monotheistic cultures, but I think in Murakami's novelistic universe--and this is a recurring feature of many discussions of Japanese religion, culture, and art--a more insightful way of comprehending evil is as "defilement," and this is the term Jay Rubin uses in his translation time and again. Defilement is what ties every character together: some inner filth that each character is trying to purge in some way. May Kasahara's idea of the physical manifestation of death as an oozy gray thing is the clearest picture we have of that unrelenting ghost that haunts everyone intersecting with Toru Okada's life. It is not regret or guilt. It is not emotional scarring. It is a sickening tangible object poisoning a person's life and threatening to overwhelm it. It must be washed off, or it will destroy whatever it comes in contact with.

The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle begins with a pot of spaghetti about to boil over as the voluntarily out of work protagonist, Toru Okada parries an anonymous obscene phone call just in time to receive a call from his wife, Kumiko, who orders him to begin a search for the couple's missing cat, Noboru Watanabe, named for her politically important brother. If the above sounds pretty breathless and confusing, you'll be surprised to learn there's a lot, lot more. The lost Noboru Watanabe is simply the device Murakami uses to set this densely-layered, often bizarre book in motion.

Toru's search for the lost cat introduces him to the novel's other characters, who move in and out of his life and lead him into an ever-enlarging labyrinth. There is the Lolita-like May Kasahara, Toru's neighbor, who regards the thirty year old Toru as "interesting" and calls him Mr. Wind-Up Bird. Even more bizarre, are the two sisters and psychics, Malta and Creta Kano, who invade Toru's dreams as well as his reality. (After having psychic sex with Toru, Creta later appears naked in his bed, and, as to how she got there, she doesn't have a clue.)

The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle (風立ちぬ, *Nejimakidori Kuronikuru?*) is a novel published in 1994-1995 by Japanese author Haruki Murakami. The first published translation was by Alfred Birnbaum. The American translation and its British adaptation, dubbed the "only official translations" (English) are by Jay Rubin and were first published in 1997. For this novel, Murakami received the Yomiuri Literary Award, which was awarded to him by one of his harshest former critics, Kenzaburō Ōe.

In English translation, two chapters were originally published in *The New Yorker* under the titles "The Zoo Attack" on July 31, 1995, and "Another Way to Die" on January 20, 1997. A slightly different version of the first chapter translated by Alfred Birnbaum was published in the collection *The Elephant Vanishes* under the title "The Wind-up Bird and Tuesday's Women". In addition, the character name Noboru Wataya appears in the short story "Family Affair" in *The Elephant Vanishes*. While having a similar personality and background, the character is not related to the one in *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* of the same name. Noboru Wataya is also used in Jay Rubin's translation of the title short story in *The Elephant Vanishes*.

Noboru Wataya: Noboru is Kumiko's brother. He is presented as a mediagenic figure; the public

loves him, but Toru cannot stand him. Noboru appears as an academic in the beginning, becomes a politician in the story, and has no apparent personal life. He is said to be hidden behind a façade "all style, and no substance." ("Noboru Wataya" is also the name Toru and Kumiko gave to their pet cat, whom Toru later renames Mackerel, like the fish; the character name also appeared in *Family Affair*, translated by Jay Rubin, of *The Elephant Vanishes* collection.)

May Kasahara: May is a teenage girl who should be in school, but, by choice, is not. Toru and May carry on a fairly constant exchange throughout a good deal of the novel; when May is not present, she writes letters to him. Their conversations in person are often bizarre and revolve around death and the deterioration of human life. Even more bizarre is the cheerful and decidedly non-serious air with which these conversations take place.

Lieutenant Mamiya: Mamiya was an officer during the Japanese military efforts in Manchukuo, and meets Toru while carrying out the particulars of Mr. Honda's will. He has been emotionally scarred by witnessing the flaying of a superior officer and several nights spent in a dried-up well. He tells Toru his story both in person and in letters.

Nutmeg Akasaka: Nutmeg first meets Toru as he sits on a bench watching people's faces every day in Shinjuku. The second time they meet she is attracted to the blue-black mark on his right cheek. She and Toru share a few strange coincidences: the wind-up bird in Toru's yard and the blue-black cheek mark appear in Nutmeg's World War II-related stories, and also Nutmeg's father and Lieutenant Mamiya (an acquaintance of Toru's) are linked by World War II. "Nutmeg Akasaka" is a pseudonym she chose for herself after insisting to Toru that her "real" name is irrelevant. Her real name is never mentioned in the novel.

Cinnamon Akasaka: Cinnamon is Nutmeg's adult son who has not spoken since age 6. He communicates through a system of hand movements and mouthed words. Somehow, people who've just met him (who presumably have never lipread or used sign language) find him perfectly comprehensible. "Cinnamon," too, is a pseudonym created by Nutmeg.

In a Tokyo suburb a young man named Toru Okada searches for his wife's missing cat. Soon he finds h...more Japan's most highly regarded novelist now vaults into the first ranks of international fiction writers with this heroically imaginative novel, which is at once a detective story, an account of a disintegrating marriage, and an excavation of the buried secrets of World War II.

I had been wondering where my cat was when the phone rang. It was a woman offering to have no strings sex with me. I made some non-committal remarks to her and put the receiver down. I hate those cold callers. I had nothing to do that day, or any other day, so I walked down the back alley and fell into a desultory conversation with a random 16 year old girl who had a wooden leg and a parrot on her shoulder. She suggested I help her make some easy money by counting bald people. That sounded about...more I had been wondering where my cat was when the phone rang. It was a woman offering to have no strings sex with me. I made some non-committal remarks to her and put the receiver down. I hate those cold callers. I had nothing to do that day, or any other day, so I walked down the back alley and fell into a desultory conversation with a random 16 year old girl who had a wooden leg and a parrot on her shoulder. She suggested I help her make some easy money by counting bald people. That sounded about as good as anything else to me, after all, as I have already explained, i had nothing to do. At all. And I was doing it. It was kind of a cool period in my life when i wasn't really doing anything. I didn't have a job, I had become estranged from my family and for some reason I could not quite put my finger on, i had no friends. So we counted the bald people for a while and then we stopped. We went back home, or should i say, she went back to her home, and I, of course, went back to mine, where I prepared a simple evening meal consisting of grated cucumber, a little olive oil, half a smoked mackerel and a pot of basil. I didn't put the tv on because I didn't have a tv because if i had had a tv i might have switched it on and seen something on it that was actually interesting. Then the cold calling sex woman rang again and this time she said that she couldn't quite tell me how she knew this but she knew something was going to happen to me but she did not say when it would. I decided to rehang the curtains in the front room. But not right away. Maybe later. I picked up the novel I was reading. It was a long one by a very modish

Japanese writer called Haruki Murakami. It was about this English guy called Paul Bryant. He was kind of dull but all these weird unexplained things kept happening like he was a magnet for all the weirdness around. I don't know how to explain it. Neither did he. Neither did Haruki Marukami. I read for an hour and found I was on page 303, which in my paperback edition, was the exact centre point of the novel. I put it down. I had a feeling that in this novel things would continue to happen but the things would all be made of blancmange, a tasteless gooey substance which looks a little like wallpaper paste but isn't. And the people in the novel would all be not really real but also not really not real, if you know what I mean. My arm felt slightly tired holding the book. I shifted to a different reading posture on my couch but it did not help. The strength went out of my arm. I do not know why. As you may have noticed, I do not know anything at all. I struggle to recall my name on most days. The novel fell from my hand. I had the feeling I would never pick it up again. I did not know why I had that feeling, but I was pretty sure that I had it at the time I was having it. Although later, I was almost sure I had no memory of it. When I looked up a completely naked woman was sitting at the table eating a slice of thinly buttered toast. I asked her who she was and she said she was not at that point in a position to be able to divulge that information. She asked if she could borrow my car. I explained it had been taken by my wife who had left me two weeks ago. This did not seem to phase her. I noticed that her body was almost the same as that of my wife. She had two breasts, two nipples, and although the table was obscuring the lower parts of her anatomy I was sure that the rest of her was also not dissimilar. She consumed three pieces of toast and told me in a cool voice that I would never see my cat again except possibly in a place that began with the letter H or has a H in the name somewhere. She borrowed my wife's smart summer coat and a pair of her stilettos and left after about 15 minutes. It began to rain but I did not notice. I thought about paying my electricity bill.

It is quiet difficult for me to describe what this book was like. It is surreal and psychedelic. It is mysterious, something out of this world. You just need to stop questioning things and let yourself get carried away. It begins with a seemingly ordinary day in the life of a very ordinary man. But things only gets strange and stranger from there - dreams spill into reality, lines between...more

Amidst all of this, Murakami addresses the themes of alienation, loneliness, an individual's search for identity. He questions the national identity as well while exploring some horrifying stories about the second world war. True he leaves a lot of questions to be answered, but it is one of those books where the journey matters more than where the story finally leads you. In a few places the prose is a bit too wordy and repetitious. May be it is a flawed masterpiece, but a masterpiece nonetheless.

Or, somewhere in between, I could speculate that it's because Murakami sits over the top of modern culture like a thin gossamer web, intersecting with and touching everything ever so lightly, subtly expropriating what he needs, bringing it back to his writer's desk or table, and spinning it into beautiful, haunting tales that fail to stir some, but obsess others like literary heroin.

Wordsmith Now you have me thinking back...to the, well, not SO distant past. Was it really only 8 months ago I was standing in The Noble Barn and holding two Mu...more Now you have me thinking back...to the, well, not SO distant past. Was it really only 8 months ago I was standing in The Noble Barn and holding two Murakami's, one in each hand? And my indecision led me to Despair? Now, I'm not knocking Nabokov, not me, no way. Still, out of all the hundreds of fine offerings for my hands to clutch, I did discover, sadly, Despair was a very apt title. Not his best. Just sayin... BTW, Hi lan.(less)

I absolutely adored the book upon starting out. It is exquisitely crafted, with each seemingly casual word chosen to illustrate the world into which we have entered. It is a lonely world full of half finished stories, abrupt departures, missed connections and deep silences. "Poor Mr. Wind-Up Bird," lives on an alley with no exits, in a borrowed life that he could never afford to live without the kindness of his uncle. He's just quit his job, as he has no idea of where to go with his life, but is...more I absolutely adored the book upon starting out. It is exquisitely crafted, with each seemingly casual word chosen to illustrate the world into which we have entered. It is a lonely world full of half finished stories, abrupt departures, missed connections and deep silences. "Poor Mr. Wind-Up Bird," lives on an alley with no exits, in a borrowed life that he could never afford to live without the kindness of his

uncle. He's just quit his job, as he has no idea of where to go with his life, but is dissatisfied with its current course. He lives with a wife that he never seems to really speak to, in a routine existence in which she is often late or absent, or spends her time repressing everything she chooses to say to him. Murakami meticulously illustrates this quietly painful existence in all of Mr. Wind-Up Bird's movements, whether it is missed phone calls, a wasted dinner, or a frozen statue of a bird never able to take flight. This sort of language kept me going throughout the book even when I lost my patience with other things.

Mr. Wind-Up Bird's relationship with May Kashara was my favorite part of the book. She is something of a wise child character, able to distill what Murakami is only hinting at into a more obvious, if odd and seemingly quaint statement. She is a wonderful character who brings light and movement to the pages, and pushes the plot along, if only in Mr. Wind-Up Bird's head. I kept looking ahead, if only to find out how long it was until she appeared again.

What I did not like? The endless repetition of the spiritual mumbo-jumbo, of the prophets who "just know," when something is going to happen, of the endless discussion of the "flow," and various other points of odd zen claptrap that really pushed me out of the story, and the reader entirely out of the reality. I think a part of the book's charm is that it hovers so close around the edges of reality, and gradually, this book just seemed to leave that behind. I appreciated the message of a bundle of stories all being woven together, stories that stop and start as people pass through them, are read and discarded as they are of use. But this went far beyond the borders of surreality into quite a confusing fog. Perhaps I missed something, but it became very difficult to push myself through this seemingly unrelated part. That entire middle section with the extended stories of Cinammon and Nutmeg, and the increasing weirdness of Creta Kano, the side stories of Lieutenant Mamiya, etc... I lost patience with the book and almost gave up several times, because that's how I thought the rest of the book would be. The introduction of random characters and tales that are really not material to the plot or necessary to the points that Murakami is making.

There are certain scenes in this one (along with the ferris wheel section of 'Sputnik Sweetheart' and the entirety of Super-Frog Saves Tokyo from "after the quake") that are among my favorite Murakami moments. It is the stuff of phantom memories -- a wet fever dream that lingers yet is constantly threatening to vanish. And you'll think twice about searching for things you've lost. I'll leave you with my favorite quote

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