

***A Study of the Psychoanalytic Oedipal Concept as it Appears
in Haruki Murakami's novel 'Kafka on the Shore'.***

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INTRODUCTION

Few psychoanalytic concepts have received such vehement criticism as that laid at the feet of the Oedipus complex and yet it is ingrained in the very fabric of society. From William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1600) to Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds* (1963) it has been manifest in works of fiction and art for centuries and yet for many it is a concept that cannot be accepted. Some too will argue the point (Karlsson, 2010) that psychoanalysis itself is a product of the culture in which it was posited, namely European (though to which part of Europe debate continues), and this shall form the basis for this dissertation. Taking Haruki Murakami's *Kafka on the Shore* as a core text, evidence will be put forward to show the portrayal of the Oedipus complex in a novel born of a culture that until the mid-nineteenth century remained closed to Europe and which has evolved a collection of philosophies and understandings all its own.

In order to approach such a task this dissertation will be divided up into three sections, each applying Lacanian psychoanalytic understanding (rooted in Freudian psychoanalysis) to the story of the title character of Murakami's work. The first of these sections will pertain to a discussion of the Lacanian Mirror Stage concept and how it is represented in the opening chapters of the novel. What will emerge in this chapter is, not only the importance of the mirror stage in the formation of identity, but also the importance of metaphor in the Lacanian understanding of the psyche.

This study of the mirror stage will pave the way for the second chapter which will examine the Oedipus complex itself and link it to the events and emotions experienced by Kafka throughout his journey. Integral to this chapter is the understanding of both Freudian and Lacanian theories regarding the complex with particular focus on the role of the father (Lacanian Nom-du-Père) in proceedings. This

will ultimately introduce the contrasting oedipal (Freud) and structural (Lacan) models favoured by the two eminent analysts.

The final chapter will deal with what Freud termed it in 1924 'The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex.' An analysis of Kafka's actions after the realisation of his acts with his mother will offer clues regarding the psychical structure he will have taken up. Through a comparison of the ending of the novel and those elements of the story that run parallel with the castration idea with similar themes in the ancient *Oedipus Rex* myth, this chapter will put forward evidence to suggest a far from straightforward dissolution of Kafka's Oedipus complex.

CHAPTER ONE

Among the many theories on sexuality that Sigmund Freud put forward in his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* of 1905 was the concept of a structured pre-Oedipal formation that consisted of an oral, anal and phallic stage. These three stages of pre-Oedipal development, he outlined, are key to the future sexual position of the individual. This theory tied in well with Freud's own beliefs that the subject's future psychological health was defined through their experiences in the Oedipus complex. In the 1930s French analyst Jacques Lacan began to provide his own theories regarding that which occurs before the onset of the oedipal phase. In a presentation to the International Congress of Psychoanalysis in 1949 he described the importance of what he called the 'Mirror Stage' in the creation of identity, stating that "it suffices to understand the mirror stage in this context as *an identification*, in the full sense analysis gives to the term." The mirror stage acts as a transitory stage in the development of the child between its initial, chaotic, fragmented view of the world around it to a unified identification of itself and those around it.

What emerges, according to Lacan, is not just an identification with that which comprises the subject themselves but an identification with something beyond them, the image in the mirror. This mirrored image represents for the child something important, something that they seek to achieve and work toward. In this respect the mirrored image can be understood to be an idealised version of what the child seeks to become. This 'Ideal-I' "will also be the root stock of secondary identifications," (Lacan, 1949 p.76) against which the subject's future understanding of self will be judged.

It must, however, be understood that, in much the same way as Freud used 'common' terms to identify his concepts, Lacan's use of the term "mirror" does not necessarily

refer to a physical mirror but to that which offers the subject a reflection of themselves upon which to base their identification of themselves. A similar instance of this uncertainty of terminology occurs with Lacan's concept of "father" as it relates to the Oedipus complex, which will be dealt with in the second chapter of this work.

In Murakami's *Kafka on the Shore* the novel begins by introducing the reader to a young Japanese boy who, disillusioned by his relationship with his father, has taken the decision to run away from home; advising him in this pursuit is the character of Crow who, it is understood, is a friend of the central character. It would be prudent at this juncture to understand that at no point during the novel does Murakami offer the reader a real name for the main character, indeed the only reference to the character's true identity comes in the naming of his father in the newspaper story later in the novel. This is central to the parallel between the main character and the child before their experience with the "mirror." In both instances the subject does have a name, conferred upon it by the Other, but which is not understood or revealed. In both cases they will have to identify themselves, in the novel through the taking on of the assumed identity Kafka Tamura and, in the case of the child, recognising themselves as a completed being.

Furthermore, the importance of the character Crow cannot be ignored in the story's parallel with the Mirror Stage in Lacanian theory. From the opening two chapters it is evident that the lead character, who for convenience will henceforth be referred to as Kafka, even though he has yet to assume the identity, puts a lot of trust in the suggestions and recommendations of his confidant. The confidence Kafka gains for running away from home he gets from Crow, seeing in him what he believes to be the ideal way a boy of his age should be. It is revealed in the opening chapters of the

novel that Kafka is, if not reclusive then, a boy who has separated himself from his peers. Throughout the novel the reader is given further evidence of Kafka's self-segregation from the world via descriptions of his daily routine. It is revealed that he enjoys the solitude of reading in libraries and the time alone he gets from working out in the gym. Upon reaching Takamatsu he falls into a similar routine of library and gym visiting but a new, more outgoing side to his character is portrayed. In Crow he has a friend who is the exact opposite of him, ultimately embodying everything that he wants to be himself. Crow represents for Kafka an outgoing personality that is imbued with a greater knowledge of the world and how it works. He is tough but compassionate, intelligent but daring; the very characteristics that Kafka will need to obtain himself if he is to survive once he leaves home. Crow represents Kafka's idea of the perfect way to relate to the world, a parallel with the Lacanian 'Ideal-I'. The revelation at the end of the novel's first chapter that Crow is in fact a creation of Kafka's imagination only strengthens the comparisons that can be drawn between this early relation and the mirror stage.

Later in the novel Crow returns to aid Kafka when he needs the courage to keep going along the path he has chosen. When Kafka regains consciousness outside the Shinto shrine after his blackout it is Crow who tells him "You did what's right, so don't worry. Don't be afraid. Everything's going to work out." (Murakami, 2005 p.75)

What emerges from the Lacanian concept of the Mirror Stage is that the object in the mirror is an illusion; it exists only insofar as the child relates to it. It is insubstantial and exists only in accordance with the existence of the subject. In the novel Crow acts as the mirror for Kafka, allowing him to draw together all the things that he will need to survive in his new identity: "I always paid close attention to what was said in class, though. Just as the boy named Crow suggested." (Murakami, 2005. p.8). Crow thus

embodies two key positions in the life of Kafka: he is the mirror through which Kafka can assess his own identity while at the same time offering Kafka an ideal standard to measure himself by.

The Mirror Stage provides the subject with more than just a means of identifying themselves, however. In order to accept itself as an individual the child must recognise and understand that there is something beyond itself. According to Lacan “the little man is at the *infans* stage thus seems to me to manifest in an exemplary situation the symbolic matrix in which the *I* is precipitated in a primordial form, prior to being objectified in the dialectic of identification with the other, and before language restores to it, in the universal, its function as subject.” (1949. p.76). This acknowledgement of an otherness beyond the confines of its own body allows the child to take on such properties as desire and demand.

According to Lacanian psychoanalytic theory desire and demand are based on the existence of the other. Simply expressed, in order to desire or demand something the conclusion must first be made that the subject is not in possession of it. Through the mirror stage the child comes to recognise not only that which comprises their own identity but that which is ‘outside’ it, that which they are not in possession of. For Lacanian psychoanalysis desire is primarily the desire of the other; it is only through the desire of the other that the subject takes on their own desires. In chapter 3 of *Kafka on the Shore* Kafka finds himself at a rest-stop on the bus journey from home to Takamatsu where he meets an unnamed girl. Initially his interactions with this interloper into his life are unsure and short; using only nods and one-word answers he negotiates their conversation awkwardly. However, by the time they return to the bus he is slightly more confident in his associations with her, eventually allowing her to

sit beside him and lay her head on his shoulder as she sleeps. Along with this newfound acceptance of someone beyond what he is comfortable with comes the emergence of desire for her, “I’m the lonely voyager standing on the deck, and she’s the sea. The sky is a blanket of grey, merging with the grey sea off on the horizon. It’s hard to tell the difference between sea and sky. Between voyager and sea. Between reality and the workings of the heart.” (Murakami, 2005. p.26).

Within this detailing several Mirror Stage paralleling ideas are explored. Firstly the subject may be seen as a voyager, moving between their previous fragmented experiences and a new completeness that emerges with identity, while the Other is like a sea, washing around them, influencing the very path that they must take and the manner in which they take it. Secondly the reference to the blurred distinction between the sea, the sky and the voyager calls to mind the newly emerging separation of the subject and the world around them. While distinctions are emerging for the subject they are still at an early stage. It is only through their experiences in the Oedipus complex, which form part of the basis for the next chapter of this work that the subject comes to understand the division between themselves and the world (Other) that surrounds them. In chapter 7 Kafka illustrates the acceptance of his new identity with the thought “I’m safe inside this container that is *me*. With a little click, the outlines of this being – me – fit right inside and are locked neatly away. Just the way I like it. I’m where I belong.” (Murakami, 2005 p.58)

CHAPTER TWO

If the Mirror Stage of a child's psychical development is understood to be a time when they take on their own identity then the Oedipus complex and the resulting castration complex in boys, and its opposite respect in girls, may be understood to be the stage at which they begin their earliest psychical interactions with the world around them. Based on some of Freud's earliest theories, the term Oedipus complex refers to the psychical interactions that the child undergoes with its parents from the age of about three. In order to understand the role of the father in the Oedipus and castration complexes, the central aim of this chapter, it would be prudent to begin by understanding Freudian oedipal theory before advancing to the study of the alterations that Lacan made in the understanding of the concept.

In an 1897 letter to his close confidant Wilhelm Fliess, Freud first began to ponder the importance of the ancient myth of Oedipus and its relevance to the psychical development of children. He wrote that "we can understand the riveting power of *Oedipus Rex* [...]. The Greek legend seizes on a compulsion which everyone recognises because he feels its existence within himself." (Laplanche & Pontalis, 2006 p.283) This original Oedipus myth tells the story of a child, born to Laius and Iocasta, who is banished from his native Thebes as a baby due to a prophecy that he will kill his father and take his mother into his bed. After growing up as the adopted son of the king and queen of Corinth he learns that they are not his true parents and leaves Corinth in search of his true identity. While on his journey of self discovery he has an altercation with a group of travellers whom he meets at a place where three roads meet resulting in his slaying of all but one of his adversaries. Unbeknownst to Oedipus one of the slaughtered members of the other party was his birth father,

fulfilling the first half of the ancient prophecy, and he continues his journey to Thebes which is being plagued by the riddle of the Sphinx. After he defeats the Sphinx and she jumps to her death the people of Thebes take Oedipus in making him their new king and he takes the wife of the old king, his birth mother, to be his queen.

A number of years pass without note until Oedipus hears of the manner in which Laius died and decides that it is his duty to avenge his predecessor. In the course of his investigations he learns that not only was it he that killed the former king but that Laius and Iocasta are his biological parents. Faced with the horror of what he has done Oedipus gouges his own eyes out for

“such things have I
Done to them, death is no worthy punishment.
Or could I look for pleasure in the sight
Of my own children, born as they were born?
Never! No pleasure there for eyes of mine,
Nor in this city, nor its battlements
Nor sacred images. From these—ah, miserable!—
I, the most nobly born of any Theban
Am banned for ever by my own decree.”

(Sophocles, 1998 p.95)

This ancient legend offers a fine basis for the understanding of the Freudian Oedipus and castration complexes while simultaneously offering a contrasting story to that presented in *Kafka on the Shore*, a comparison that will form the latter section of this

chapter. For now, however, the focus of this work must return to the Freudian understanding of the events that occur during the Oedipus complex.

In their encyclopaedic work *The Language of Psychoanalysis* Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis reveal that “In its so-called positive form, the complex appears as in the story of *Oedipus Rex*: a desire for the death of the rival - the parent of the same sex - and a sexual desire for the parent of the opposite sex. In its *negative* form, we find the reverse picture: love of the parent of the same sex, and jealous hatred for the parent of the opposite sex.” (2006, p.283) For Freud the parts played by the mother and father of the child and the relationship that the child had with them during the Oedipus and castration complexes were of great importance to its future psychopathology; that is, whether it would exhibit evidence of neurosis, psychosis or perversion in later life.

According to Freudian theory children experience their Oedipus complex between the ages of three and five, a suggestion that appears to be validated by a number of Freud’s case histories. At this time of their sexual development the child has already experienced the Lacanian Mirror Stage and is aware of the world around them as something that is separated from themselves. Moreover they begin to exhibit a psychosexual curiosity for those around them, particularly toward the nurturing mother figure. Freud’s ‘Little Hans’ case in particular provides evidence of the seduction attempts that result from the child’s newfound desire for the mother, offering numerous accounts of Hans’ fascination with his ‘widdler’ and his attempts to seduce his mother with it.

While the mother remains passive to the advances of the child it is the father's role, in Freudian theory, to be the aggressor – standing between the child and its desires toward the mother. It is also the father that delivers the castration threat to the child bringing about the end of the Oedipus complex. The manner in which the child reacts to this threat of castration has a great influence on their future psychopathology.

French analyst Jacques Lacan suggests in *Family Complexes in the Formation of the Individual* (1938) that “Freud presents this psychological entity [the Oedipus complex] as the specific form of the human family and subordinates all social variations of the family to it” (p. 25). Lacan's criticism of Freud's formulation of the Oedipus complex lies in its basis in the physical/biological family. For Lacan the important positions in relation to the Oedipus complex, that is, the father and the mother, are filled on a psychological level. In his 1938 essay he suggests that his research, ...is directed towards the facts of ‘the family as a psychological object and occurrence (p. 1).

For the child, however, it is not simply the mother but the mother's imagined phallus that holds the key to the desires. As with the case of Little Hans, the child imagines that, because they have this penis, the mother must have one too.

Lacan, in a later text, illustrates this through the formulated schema ‘Schema-R’ (1955-6/1993). The child believes the mother to have what is not so much a phallus as an imaginary phallus that she desires and it is this belief that causes them to desire the attention of the mother. Lacan further postulates that the child perceives the focus of the mother's desire to be the phallus and Evans (1996) explains that “the mother desires this object and the child seeks to satisfy her desire by identifying with the phallus or with the phallic mother” (p. 141). For Freud, when it emerges that the

mother does not have a penis, the child experiences what Freud has called the castration complex.

In Lacanian theory the role of the paternal father is diminished in favour of what he calls the Nom-du-Père. This 'name-of-the-father' carries the same castrating threat that the father of Freudian theory does but with the exception that there is no need for it to exist in the body of the paternal father. Lacan's interest in this new concept of the paternal position was so great that in 1958 he devoted three weeks of his seminar to the discussion of the topic suggesting several key factors and characteristics exhibited by the Nom-du-Père.

Firstly, as has already been mentioned above, Lacan was keen to emphasise that there was no need for the Nom-du-Père to reside in the person of the biological father. It is an imaginary function that offers a challenge to the child's incestuous desire toward the mother figure. In the case of 'Little Hans' which has been referenced above, there is evidence of Hans' mother taking on the role of Nom-du-Père during one of the youngster's early seduction attempts. In one particular scene Hans asks her to touch his widdler while she is drying him after his bath and she responds by informing him that to do so would be "piggish". This refusal to become involved with Hans' sexual wishes forces the child to acknowledge the idea that he may not be in a position to satisfy the object of his desire. Furthermore the now rejected child is forced to re-evaluate the worth of his penis, further igniting his envy and aggression toward his main rival in the pursuit of her affection, namely the father.

Lacan continues, in his 1958 seminars, to suggest that even when the father fails to take up the role of Nom-du-Père he still has an important role to play in the structure of the child's future sexuality. Speaking of a father who shows a great deal of

affection towards the mother, resulting in his failure to take up the Nom-du-Père position, Lacan suggests “I am not telling you that the result is always the same, but that in certain cases it is the same. What is involved, is not to differentiate what happens when, because the father loves the mother too much, that gives a result other than homosexuality.” (p.150-151) Lacan is thus putting forward the theory that, should the mother take up the position of Nom-du-Père (as she might if the father’s attention is focused solely on her) then the aggression that the child feels toward the position will be transferred onto her. The father in this situation retains his position of competition with the child only through his possession of the penis.

In *Kafka on the Shore* we see Kafka’s father take up a new position entirely. In contrast with the ancient Oedipal legend and the Freudian understanding of the Oedipus complex the prophecy of killing the father and bedding the mother (and sister) comes directly from him. It must be questioned now whether or not he can take up the position of Nom-du-Père for Kafka, barring him from going through with the acts of patricide and incest? Kafka himself, in discussing his namesake Franz Kafka’s *The Penal Colony*, offers an explanation that summarises the importance of the Oedipus complex to Freud just as much it does the importance of the torture machine to Franz Kafka – “I think what Kafka does is give a purely mechanical explanation of that complex machine in the story, as sort of a substitute for explaining the situation we’re in. [...] his own device explaining the kind of lives we lead. Not by talking about our situation, but by talking about the details of the machine.” (Murakami, 2005 p.61)

Throughout the novel it becomes apparent that, far from dissuading Kafka from partaking in these acts, the knowledge of the prophecy has had the effect of

desensitising Kafka to the idea. When he meets Sakura on the bus (Chapter 3), the girl at the hotel reception (Chapter 7) or Ms. Saeki (Chapter 5) he immediately begins to equate his attraction toward them with the possibility that they might be his mother or sister. Far from being repulsed by the association, he has come to accept the prophecy as an inevitable occurrence.

Later in the novel, in chapter 31, Kafka reveals to Ms. Saeki that he is both in love with her and that he believes her to be his mother. Once more a Nom-du-Père fails to materialise to cut off his incestuous desires toward his 'mother'.

What does emerge from his actions in the novel, however, is that he understands the taboo that surrounds the act. Unlike the small child as it undergoes the Oedipus complex, Kafka is aware that his actions, should he kill his father and bed his mother, are unsavoury to the world around him. Indeed it is only in chapter 21, after reading of the death of his father in the newspaper, that Kafka informs his closest confidant Oshima about the prophecy. Finally able to unburden himself on Oshima, Kafka breaks down revealing "I don't want to do those things. I don't want to kill my father. Or be with my mother and sister." (Murakami, 2005 p.220)

This scene with Oshima suggests that, even though Kafka is aware of the negative implications of the act he is 'destined' to perform, he does not see anything that will prevent it from happening. In Lacanian terms he does not recognise the position of the Nom-du-Père and its ability to administer the castration threat. The result of this stance now provides the main material for the final chapter of this work, namely the effect that the Oedipus complex has on the future psychopathology of the subject.

However, it may be considered at this point that Kafka himself, or more specifically his wish not to fulfil the prophecy may provide him with a derivation of the Nom-du-Père. As Leonardo Rodriguez explains "the father operates as a signifier, that is, in the

name of a symbolic, ideal position; and he also represents the law and its prohibition – more specifically, in the context of the Oedipal normative structure, the prohibition of incest.” (2001, p.120) What differentiates Kafka from Oedipus and the child during the Oedipus complex is that he finds himself in a position to stop himself from committing the ill desired acts. It has already been mentioned above that Oedipus in the original legend blinded himself so as to avoid looking upon those that he soiled through his actions. Would it not be safe to suggest that Kafka has not only the compulsion but the means to prevent himself from fulfilling the prophecy?

Earlier in the novel, after he has given up his lodgings at the hotel, Oshima drives Kafka to a secluded lodge where he resides for a number of days until a room at the library can be arranged for him. Could it not be concluded that this solitary dwelling may offer Kafka the means to avoid fulfilling both parts of the prophecy for if he is away from society then he will not have the opportunity to kill his father or bed his mother?

Indeed this postulation brings new meaning to Kafka’s thoughts as he settles down on the third night in the cabin. He contemplates his predicament as “like beasts that never tire, tracking you everywhere you go. They come out at you deep in the forest. They’re tough, relentless, merciless, untiring, and they never give up.” (Murakami, 2005 p.148) The evidence suggests that even in such a place as he might find solitude from his Oedipal longings they are there to hound him. It may be observed that his time at the cabin provides an instance when he finds himself fighting a losing battle between his longings toward his sister and mother and his own ability and desires to stop himself from doing so.

Later in the novel, in chapter 31, Kafka reveals to Ms. Saeki that he is both in love with her and that he believes her to be his mother. Once again a Nom-du-Père fails to

materialise to prevent Kafka from partaking in the primal act with his mother. Instead of being repulsed by the revelation, Ms. Saeki asks Kafka to leave so that she has time to think over what he is suggesting that they do. Even the reality that he is a fifteen year old boy and that she is over fifty does little to cause her alarm and, unlike Sakura, she doesn't put forward the suggestion that perhaps Kafka is experiencing little more than a school-boy crush.

If it were to be taken that her sending Kafka from her sight is tantamount to her offering some opposition to his seductions then it is immediately found to be lacking in conviction. Before he leaves the office Kafka turns back to her and by the simple act of touching her hair causes her challenge to come to nothing. With nothing present to mediate in the relationship between Kafka and his supposed mother they later fall into each others arms and, it is presumed, fulfil the prophecy outlined by Kafka's father.

What does emerge from this scene between Kafka and Ms. Saeki is a profound similarity of thought with the Lacanian concept of individual relationships. It has already been mentioned above that Lacan theorised that the most important factor of the Oedipus complex arises not from the biological father but from the Nom-du-Père, a symbolic function of the father. He named this concept the Paternal Metaphor and it "involves the substitution of one signifier (Name-of-the-Father) for another (the desire of the mother.)" (Evans, 1996 p.137) Through the Paternal Metaphor the threat of castration is made to the child by the Nom-du-Père.

In this particular scene of the novel Ms. Saeki has already been equated with the Nom-du-Père for she is in a position to stop Kafka from fulfilling the prophecy of sleeping with his mother. As a result it is fitting that Kafka, in attempting to seduce

her (she is at this point both the object of his desire and Nom-du-Père,) that the following dialogue occurs

“At any rate, you – and your theory – are throwing a stone at a target that’s very far away. Do you understand that?”

I nod. “I know. But metaphors can reduce the distance.”

“We are not metaphors”

I know,” I say. “But Metaphors help eliminate what separates you and me.”

(Murakami, 2005 p.316)

It thus becomes apparent that the characters may understand their relationship towards each other much better than they realise.

CHAPTER THREE

While the events that psychoanalysis understands to comprise the Oedipus complex pertain to a specific time in a child's life, "between the ages of three and five years," (Laplanche & Pontalis, 2006 p.283) their effects have a far reaching influence on the psychopathology of the subject. According to psychoanalysis the child reacts in one of three ways when confronted with the threat of castration. In this chapter each of these structures will be outlined in relation to their possible application to the original Greek myth of Oedipus and to the text of *Kafka on the Shore*

The first of these potential options is the acceptance and subsequent repression of the act of castration leading to a primarily neurotic psychopathological structure, as evident in the cases of 'Little Hans' and 'Dora'. Neurosis, as it is understood by psychoanalysis, is a psychological structure synonymous with the act of repression. When faced with the threat of castration the subject finds it difficult to retain the traumatic information in their conscious thought. The understanding that they must choose between the object that they desire and the loss of their phallus provides a striking blow to their ego and they react by forcing the idea back into their unconscious, the act of repression.

Repression, however, is not a perfect act as Freud revealed in his discussion on the forgetting of proper names in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* of 1901. In this text he outlines an incident when he accidentally forgot the name of a particular artist, Signorelli, and instead drew upon two other names, Boltraffio and Botticelli. He suggests that he repressed the name Signorelli because it drew upon some idea that was too traumatic to be held in conscious memory. As a result his unconscious linked the replacement names to the repressed name so that the initial trauma might be

uncovered even though it was not directly remembered. In outlining the story he suggests “by a sort of compromise they remind me just as much of what I wanted to forget as of what I wanted to remember; and they show me that my intention to forget something was neither a complete success nor a complete failure.” (p.4)

The imperfection of the act of repression defines the neurotic structure as it leads to the symptomatic occurrences that Freud acknowledged in his work on the psychopathology of everyday life. For Freud a neurosis was an affliction that could be cured through psychoanalytic treatment and numerous examples of his attempts at curing neurotics emerge throughout his works. Lacan by contrast believed that neurosis was an unalterable structure that persisted within the psychical life of the subject. He understood that “the aim of psychoanalytic treatment is therefore not the eradication of the neurosis but the modification of the subject’s position *vis-à-vis* the neurosis.” (Evans, 1996 p.123)

By the Lacanian structural model neurosis is understood to be something separate from both psychosis and perversion (the other two focuses of this chapter) insofar as a subject cannot be both neurotic and perverse/psychotic. Accordingly he also suggested that the psychoanalytic treatment of psychosis could not make a patient neurotic, Neurosis, as with perversion and psychosis emerges through the subject’s earliest experiences in life, after which the structure becomes fixed and unalterable.

In Chapter 2 of this work the importance of Oedipus in the original myth blinding himself has already been mentioned. However, one detail has yet to be explored in relation to the scene and that pertains to a question brought up in relation to Kafka’s scene with Oshima which was also mentioned in the second chapter. When Kafka revealed his sorry story to Oshima and expressed his desire to avoid sleeping with his

mother it was questioned as to whether or not this could be viewed as him taking on the position of Nom-du-Père. It is possible in a similar manner to place Oedipus in the position of Nom-du-Père when he discovers that it was he who killed Laius, his father, and further took his mother Iocasta to be his wife. In this instance then it may be plausible to take Oedipus' own revulsion toward his actions as tantamount to the threat of castration. Effectively the realisation of what he has done is the traumatic effect that he wishes to 'forget.' Where Oedipus differs from Kafka at the stage of the castration threat is that he makes the decision to accept the negative connotations of what he has done. As a result it is understandable to relate his self blinding as his recognition and acceptance of castration. Ultimately the Oedipus story is one that parallels the onsets of neurosis.

What emerges too is a parallel between the blinding of Oedipus and the act of repression. As mentioned above, repression is not a complete forgetting of events but merely a temporary measure that hides the memory from conscious thought. Oedipus' blinding is also an imperfect reactionary operation for the acts don't cease to have happened simply because he can no longer see their consequences.

The contrasting stories of *Oedipus Rex* and *Kafka on the Shore* have already been mentioned above so it comes as no surprise to learn that an answer to the direction taken by the dissolution of the Oedipus complex in Murakami's may be found elsewhere. At this juncture it would be wise to understand the events that provide for the formation of perversion and psychosis before applying them to the study of *Kafka on the Shore*.

In his 1905 work *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* Freud theorised that all previous studies on human sexuality were erroneous because they failed to account

for the role of the unconscious, what he deemed psychosexuality. He understood the psychosexual concept to be integral to the understanding of what he called the sexual aberrations – those sexually charged activities that deviate from the ‘normal’ aim of copulation with a member of the opposite sex.

What distinguishes perversion from neurosis and psychosis is the act of disavowal at the castrating stage of psychosexual development. While the subject recognises that the mother is not in possession of the phallus they refuse to accept this information. Instead, as in fetishism, they attempt to take on another object as a symbolic substitute for the missing phallus of the mother. The object of the fetish is of great importance to the subject as it in some way relates back to the traumatic moment of the realisation of castration.

Unlike Freud, Lacan believed that, like neurosis, perversion was a structure taken on by the subject in relation to their earliest life experiences. He believed that perversion “is not simply an aberration in relation to social criteria, [...] nor is it an atypicality according to natural criteria. [...] It is something else in its very structure.” (Evans, 1996 p.138) This understanding of a perverse structure allowed Lacan to formulate that a perversion was not simply an act that contravened the socially acceptable but that every act affected by the perverse structure was perverse.

In Freud’s study of Leonardo da Vinci in 1910 he theorised that the artist sublimated his sexual libido into the intellectual pursuits of art and science, thus disregarding the act of copulation altogether. On the surface, by a strictly social understanding, this enthusiasm for learning is considered laudable. Lacanian psychoanalysis, however, understands sublimation to be a product of a structure rather than a subjective occurrence. Whereas the structure is defined by the youthful experiences of the subject, sublimation (and fetishes etc.) is the result of the structure itself.

The third and final structure outlined by Lacanian psychoanalysis is that of Psychosis. Once more it is a concept that emerged in the work of Freud, most notably in his Schreber case history. Integral to the understanding of the formation of the psychotic structure is the concept of foreclosure “which designates the exclusion of the phallic signifier and the failure of primal repression” (Hecq, 2001 p.71) In the instances of neurotic and perverse resolutions to the castration threat it emerges that the subject recognises the mother’s lack of a phallus, however; fundamental to the psychotic structure is the refusal of the subject to accept the loss of the phallic mother.

Psychosis is further distinguishable from neurosis and perversion not, as Freud initially theorised, through its intensity but through the possibility of the delayed onset of psychotic symptoms. In Freud’s most famous case of psychosis Dr. Schreber does not display any evidence of psychotic symptoms until after the age of fifty while “Lacan argues in *Le Sinthome* (1976) that there are a number of indications suggesting that James Joyce was probably [...] a psychotic who was able to use his writing as an effective substitute that prevented the onset of psychosis.” (Grigg, 2001 p.153)

While neurosis and perversion manifest themselves clearly in the life of the subject psychosis may lie un-triggered within their psyche. Returning once more to the example of Schreber there is evidence to suggest that his psychosis lay idle until such a time as he was forced to revisit the instance of castration that he had previously foreclosed upon.

It has already been made clear in Chapter 2 of this dissertation that on numerous occasions in the story of *Kafka on the Shore* there is a failure of the Nom-du-Père to

materialise to stop Kafka from committing the prophesied patricide and incest. This provides an interesting question in relation to the budding structure of Kafka's future psychological formation – if there is no Nom-du-Père to offer opposition to the Oedipal desires of the subject then might it be assumed that this equates to the taking on of a psychotic structure?

Central to the formation of the psychotic structure as has been mentioned above is the subject's absolute refusal to accept that the mother is not in possession of the phallus. The realisation that the object of their desire is a lie is too much for them to accept and they foreclose on the idea altogether. In the case of Kafka, however, there was no apparent initial desire for his mother (or what she represents.) Instead his desire toward Ms. Saeki emerges out of his own submission to what has been pre-ordained for him. It may be questioned then as to whether or not he would have felt the same strong attraction to her had he not speculated that she might be his mother. Perhaps his confidence in his attempted seduction is backed by his knowledge of the prophecy – he can't possibly be turned down.

This then opens up the possibility of equating Kafka with the perverse structure. It has already been mentioned above that there were moments within the novel when the position of Nom-du-Père was filled, if ultimately unsuccessfully, but filled nonetheless. At each juncture that opposition to his seduction of his mother was made Kafka turns it aside and instead continues on the path outlined in the prophecy. It could thus be argued that Kafka recognises the unacceptability of what he is prophesied to do but has chosen to ignore it to pursue that which he desires. Ultimately his actions appear to contradict how he claims to feel on the matter.

Lacan, in his 1958 seminar, contributes to this speculation when he suggests that there must be a father, a Nom-du-Père, in order for there to be an Oedipus complex. It has been mentioned above that the key relationship within the Oedipus complex and the one that has the greatest effect on the child's future psychopathology is that between it and the Nom-du-Père. Without the Nom-du-Père there is nothing to stop the child from achieving their aim of taking on the phallic role for the mother. Furthermore there would be no potential of castration resulting in the child's inability to take on any of the psychical structures outlined by Lacan.

CONCLUSION

From the beginning the aim of this dissertation was to analyse the novel *Kafka on the Shore* as an example of a non-European text that shows the influence of Oedipal ideas offering a challenge to the belief that psychoanalysis was a predominantly European philosophy. In order to do this it was important to show that aspects of the novel closely mirrored not only Freudian psychoanalysis but also the theories put forward by Jacques Lacan.

In chapter one focus was put on the parallel between Kafka's relationship with the boy named Crow and the Lacanian concept of the Mirror Stage. It was suggested, with reference to Lacan's *The Mirror Stage in the Formation of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience*, that Crow provides Kafka with both the confidence to construct for himself a new more unified identity while also offering him an ideal to strive toward. The illusionary existence of Crow was also shown to be of importance in the comparison of the character with the mirror stage.

Subsequently chapter two formed the basis of a discussion of the Oedipus complex itself as it emerges in both *Kafka on the Shore* and the original Oedipus myth. The importance of this literary comparison was such that it allowed for a better understanding of key events in Murakami's novel as they relate to the Freudian and Lacanian Oedipal understanding.

The Lacanian study of the novel offered a greater opportunity to analyse the position of the father in Kafka's life. Understanding that the father – in the guise of Nom-du-Père – need only be that which presents the threat of castration allowed for a deeper

study of Kafka's relationships with some of the other characters in the novel as well as with his own emotional state in relation to the prophecy.

Finally, chapter 3 featured an important contrast between the final scenes of the novel and Freud's theory on the dissolution of the Oedipus complex. By equating the original Oedipus myth with the formation of the Lacanian neurotic structure the question was posed as to whether *Kafka on the Shore* suggested a psychotic or perverse structural outcome. This question ultimately marked a successful outcome of this dissertation for it suggested that this key element of the novel provided an outcome that was beyond the common. This deviation lends support to the importance of the psychoanalytic model of human psychopathology.

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