

## Toward the Sea of Death

Maryam Hoseinzadeh Shandiz<sup>[a],\*</sup>

<sup>[a]</sup>Editor, M.A Graduated Student. Faculty of Literature and Humanities, Khayyam University of Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran.

\*Corresponding author.

Received 8 September 2022; accepted 15 September 2022  
Published online 26 September 2022

### Abstract

In *Kafka on the Shore* (2002), Haruki Murakami's masterpiece, major characters die. This essay intends to investigate the reason for those deaths and Murakami's aim of omitting his creatures with the help of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's theory of death desire. In their point of view, there are two types of death instinct; the model of death which is the cause of a body without organs appearance in the state of zero degrees of intensity, and the experience of death which is the possibility for the body without organs to move on to the next level of intensity by the help of desiring-production. Moving from the model of death to the experience of death is called schizophrenized death which is the state the protagonist of the story, Kafka Tamura, and some other characters like Miss Saeki, Kafka's mom, have finally touched as an improvement in their mental state and soul.

**Key words:** *Kafka on the shore*; Death desire; Model of death; Experience of death; Zero Degree of intensity; Melancholia; Mourning; Schizophrenized death

Shandiz, M. H. (2022). Toward the Sea of Death. *Higher Education of Social Science*, 23(1), 63-68. Available from: URL: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/hess/article/view/12760>  
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/12760>

### INTRODUCTION

Sometimes fate is like a small sandstorm that keeps changing directions. You change direction but the

sandstorm chases you. You turn again, but the storm adjusts. Over and over you play this out, like some ominous *dance with death* just before dawn. Why? Because this storm isn't something that blew in from far away, something that has nothing to do with you. This storm is *you*. (Murakami, 2005, p.5, *emphasis mine*)

*Kafka on the Shore* was first published in 2002 in its original language, which is Japanese and was translated to English in 2005. This novel is a combination of fantasy, magic realism, psychology, and sociology. It grants the reader this possibility to enjoy being floated in the world of imagination and to find a safe zone that is completely his own. Murakami's novels have been receiving success both in Japan and internationally. Murakami is a famous contemporary Japanese writer. His books are mostly written in the genre of magical realism, as well as surrealism, "Haruki Murakami is one of the most prestigious Japanese novelists alive who gains a phenomenal readership around the world. One of the major discourses handled in Murakami's oeuvre is 'the other world' that is both coexisting with and beyond reality" (Yu, p.2). *Kafka on the Shore* is one of those samples. This "oeuvre" can be read both as the world of the dead and as the world of psyche and unconscious. In this essay, as mentioned before, the world of the dead is going to be discussed. Most of the samples of death that take place in this story and their reasons are going to be discussed in this paper with the help of Deleuze and Guattari's theory of death desire toward schizophrenized death.

In addition, at the beginning of October 2021, there opened a library in Tokyo that is devoted to Murakami's works only: "The library contains a variety of items and works donated by Haruki Murakami, including manuscripts, first editions of his novels, interviews, literary reviews, and essays, as well as overseas editions of Murakami's work in translation,..., and his record collection" (Staff).

## METHODOLOGY

In the world of Deleuze and Guattari, the experience of death is not something like an end for a body; it is rather like a transfer, a station. When the body dies, it moves to the next level. In addition, the reason for death is that the body is not functional anymore on the level that it exists. When the body is advanced for the level it is in, it dies and moves to the level that is beyond the previous one. The body does not fit into the world of alive and it goes to the world of the dead which is the advanced level of the real world: "...when we [Deleuze and Guattari] speak about death, we are saying that a body has reached the limit of its effects. The effects supported by a particular ratio of motion and rest cannot be exercised [anymore]" (Adkins, 2007, p.184). In other words, the effects that a body has is all its abilities. When its abilities are not practical and functional for the world of alive then it should transfer to the next level to become functional again because as mentioned before, its functions and options do not fit the potentials of the previous level. Furthermore, Deleuze and Guattari mention that death is not something that happens on the outside. It is something that occurs as a desire in the desiring machine. In addition, it always exists in its cycle: "Death then is a part of the desiring-machine, a part that must itself be judged, evaluated in the functioning of the machine and the system of its energetic conversions, and not as an abstract principle" (Deleuze and Guattari, p.332). The desiring machines are the model of Deleuze and Guattari for human goals, aims, and desires.

What Deleuze and Guattari propose in *Anti Oedipus* (1972) about death desire theory is originally taken from Hegel and Heidegger's ideas about mourning and melancholia. In other words, Hegel's mourning and Heidegger's melancholia theory act as a base for what Deleuze talks about in his 1972 book. In addition, it must be taken into consideration that Brent Adkins is the writer, who connects these theorists and their theories in the most relevant way. He traces back Deleuze's ideas and illustrates and proves his ideas in Hegel's and Heidegger's theories related to death and the reasons which cause death wish. Adkins, in his book *Death and Desire in Hegel, Heidegger, and Deleuze* (2007), for making the theory of death desire more understandable firstly talks about Hegel's mourning and Heidegger's melancholia. These concepts can be improved with the help of Deleuze and Guattari's theory of death desire and make a reasonable conclusion; "Melancholia takes the model of death to be real, and mourning takes the experience of death to be real" (Adkins, 2007, p.188).

Both mourning and melancholia are about the process of loss. When you lose someone, you either mourn for his loss or not. When you mourn his loss and express your sadness for his absence, after a while you can move to the next step, which is putting another person in your life instead of him or doing something to let you forget

his absence: "There is a return from the experience of death to the model of death, in the cycle of the desiring-machines. The cycle is closed. For a new departure, since this is another?" (Deleuze and Guattari, p.331). On one hand, the same as a melancholic person who does not do anything and is depressed and whose days are always wasting and cannot be functional, the model of death is when the body does not function properly and its energy is always wasting. In other words, it cannot move to the next level of intensity. On the other hand, the person who mourns his sadness can move from sadness to the next level and find or replace someone else in the position of the lost one. Like the experience of death that the body moves from one level to a more advanced one and this act makes the way for the desiring-production to wish more and work better. Therefore, the model of death stands for melancholia, and the experience of death acts as mourning for the lost one and then moving to a more advanced level.

On the one hand, if you do not mourn and store all those sad feelings inside you, Heidegger believes that after a while you will become a melancholic person. Melancholia happens to those who do not mourn the loss of a loved one, "At the outset, then, Heidegger denies the experience of death, and it is precisely this denial of the experience of death that leads to his melancholic position" (Adkins, p.189). Because the body cannot move to the next level, its functions are going to be wasted. In the same case, due to the disability of the melancholic person to forget the loss and misery that happened to him, he cannot experience and enjoy a normal life. Death is modeled on the zero intensity of one's effects. Melancholia is the death from within and mourning is the death from without; "Deleuze and Guattari's model deals with converting the death that rises from within (in the body without organs) into the death that comes from without (on the body without organs)" (Deleuze and Guattari, p.330). The person that moves from the level of melancholia to mourning expresses his pain and can move to the next level of wishing and putting something else instead of the lost one: "The experience of death is the most common of occurrences in the unconscious, precisely because it occurs in life and for life, in every passage or becoming, in every intensity as passage or becoming" (Deleuze and Guattari, p.330).

On the other hand, moving from the model of death (melancholia) toward the experience of death (mourning) lets the sad person become active again. This is the process that Hegel believes in: "There is no zero degrees of intensity in Hegel's dialectic. There is only a steadily increasing intensity as each stage builds on the previous one. ... Each stage is taken up and preserved by the stage that follows it" (Adkins, p.191). By the way, this process of moving from the model of death to the experience of death is called schizophrenized death, "Always going from the model to the experience, and starting out again,

returning from the model to the experience is what *schizophrenizing death* amounts to, the exercise of the desiring-machines” (Deleuze and Guattari, p.331). In other words, this process is a movement of desire, a change in the intensity level, a movement from one affective state to another and it always goes on; “A schizophrenized death is a moment of desire, a shift in intensity, the movement from one affective state to another” (Adkins, p.187).

Adkins defines a body without organs as the body that its organs are not important, their functions and working with one another to create a body that has different functions is their duty and gives their value. In addition, a body without organs is an in-between state: “Deleuze and Guattari are arguing that the passage from one state of intensity to another is the experience of death” (p.186). It is the zero degrees of intensity, at the time that the body cannot do anything because it is in the model of death. The model of death is the level at which the body and its organs cannot cooperate to make the body practical. And when the experience of death happens, the organs move to the next level and can be functional following the body. “Although the body without organs is the model of death insofar as it is the zero degrees of intensity for desiring-production, the experience of death is the passing through this zero degree of intensity to another affective state” (p.185). In addition, the zones of intensity and becoming circulate the body without organs as the zero degrees of intensity (p.203).

The body without organs as mentioned is a model and is not active. It is in the process of becoming and is waiting to move from the level of passivity to activity. Its intensity is zero. Moreover, the body without organs becomes active when it is experienced. This experience toward the zones of intensity is possible with the help of desiring-production: “The existence of a body without organs and the possibility of experiencing death as ordinary everyday life is a condition of the machine, but its running must always be renewed and performed” (Leites, p.244). Desiring production is a machine it has to produce desire. Different interconnected machines work together and let desires be produced; “The thesis of schizoanalysis proposes that desire is a machine, in fact, interconnected machines—desiring machines. This assemblage of machines represents the real and constitutes the production of desire” (Mijolla, p.98). In addition, the result that Deleuze and Guattari finally reach is that the body of a human is normally not made to be melancholic. The function of consciousness is to mourn and forget the loss and move to the next level which can be something like hope for the future: “The interior topography of consciousness is not organized around a refusal to mourn. Consciousness is continually reshaping itself as it loses one object and replaces it with another. The movement of consciousness is the unceasing work of mourning” (Adkins, p.190).

## DISCUSSION

By the same token according to Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of death desire, death may also be more important to Haruki Murakami than life. The way someone dies gives meaning to his life, “What’s really important for people, what really has dignity, is how they die. Compared to that, he [Hoshino] thought, how you lived doesn’t amount to much. Still, how you live determines how you die” (Murakami, 2005, p.380). The concept of death here may contain two meanings: the experience of death and the model of death. The model of death can be taken as someone’s life when he is in the zero intensity of being alive or being active more than this amount. When he is in the model of death, he cannot improve his life to the fullest. However, when he experiences death, his body without organs with the help of desiring-production can be active much more. It can transfer to the next level of intensity and be more advanced. So, the way someone lives and makes himself ready for the experience of death, his way of thinking about it, fear and escaping it, or seeing it as a progress of nourishment, gives his life meaning.

Five characters in the plotline of the story die due to these two causes; model of death and experience of death. Kafka Tamura, the protagonist of the story, is going to die. He wants to commit suicide because he finds no reason to be alive. Finn Janning mentions that there are two types of suicide the first type is “altruistic suicide” and the second is “Egoistic suicide”. The person commits altruistic suicide when he has so many social ties and is mingled in different social connections. He is in the web of social fame and wealth and this is the cause of committing self-murder. On the other hand, the opposite effects cause Egoistic suicide. The person is desolated and apart from society. He is an unwanted entity and is rejected by the mass as an abnormal thing: “This distinction can also be related to how advanced the society is. If in modern society people kill themselves because life is meaningless, in traditional society they do so because death is meaningful” (Janning, p.34). The condition that Kafka Tamura is in is the second type, Egoistic suicide. He is an unwanted child both by his mom and his father. In his father’s point of view, he is a cursed entity, which is the cause of his mom’s escape from home and rejection by him. His mom, as Kafka himself feels, hates Kafka because she believes that he contains a part of her husband, the one she escapes home from due to his tyranny and cruelty. Kafka also leaves school and in the plotline of the story, the only friends that he has are his imaginative bros, Oshima and Crow.

Therefore, he is a separate part of the social ties and intends to leave this barren land of kindness and attention, an unwanted entity both by family and by society. There is a Greek dictum about this concept that says you can know yourself by knowing your position. When you know your position, you can be acknowledged about your place in time. If you do not have any position and therefore any

place in time, you can omit yourself, and commit suicide, because that is the only positive and possible activity at hand at the time. If you cannot do any positive activity in this world, the last choice is suicide that condition is more positive than living aimlessly:

A life worth living is a life that has the power to actualize its will to will. Concerning this definition, a happy death might be seen as the equivalent hereof, i.e. when life no longer has this will, or simply accept that it no longer can act as becoming worthy of what happens. (Janning, 2005, p.35)

The second death happens to Nakata, the most important help to Kafka Tamura. He dies when his agencies are over in the world of alive: “He [Nakata] stopped breathing completely. In this world, at least, he was never going to wake up again” (Murakami, 2005, p.379). He experiences death but because of his strange and abnormal nature cannot make sense of an abstract idea like death and so is not afraid of that, “The concept of death was beyond his powers of imagination. In addition, the pain was something he was not aware of until he actually felt it. As an abstract concept pain didn’t mean a thing” (p.113). As mentioned before, Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of experience of death is a possibility to move on to the next level, to become more advanced. Therefore, it may be concluded that the ill functions and problems that human beings must deal with in the world of alive will disappear in the next world.

Hoshino, Nakata’s friend, while in their apartment and gazing at Nakata’s corpse, thinks about the fact that, “Maybe death would take Nakata back to the way he used to be. When he was alive, he was always good old Nakata, a not-so-bright, cat-talking old man. Maybe death was the only road back to being the normal Nakata” (p.380). The normal Nakata would be a normal human being who has his desires, fears, and future aims, exactly the opposite of what Nakata was in the world of being alive. Furthermore, as the Greek dictum, mentioned above, claims, when you finished your agency and cannot do any positive activity, death is the best choice in comparison with being passive. Hoshino thinks about the same idea about Nakata and maybe all human beings when one’s agency is over, it is not so bad to die: “Hey, Cramps, Hoshino said. Maybe I shouldn’t say this, but if you gotta die, this isn’t such a bad way to go” (p.380).

The way that Murakami created Nakata is metaphysical. He is a creature who is beyond social norms. There are no ideologies that he is forced to follow. He would not obey any rules. Moreover, when he dies, he is only dead. It seems that there is nothing that can conquer his feelings or mind process, even death. There is nothing fearsome about death from his point of view. It seems that he only no longer exists in this world and continues his discipline of life in another world: “Nakata had passed away calmly in his sleep, most likely not thinking of anything. His face was peaceful, with no

signs of suffering, regret, or confusion. Very Nakata-like, Hoshino concluded” (p.380).

It should be taken into consideration that, Nakata’s agencies are killing Kafka’s father and opening the entrance stone, which is a tool and circuit board for moving between the world of the alive and the dead. Hoshino, Nakata’s friend, closes the entrance at the end of the story because Nakata is dead already and completes his agency instead of him. In one part of the story, Nakata faces Johnnie Walker who stabs cats to death to make an instrument for the resurrection day. Johnnie Walker forces Nakata to kill him to stop him from murdering cats. Nakata loves cats deeply, his only friends and companions with whom he can talk, so he cannot tolerate their murder and kills Johnnie Walker (Yu, 2013, p.59).

The first time that the cruelty of war, a big killing machine, is mentioned in the story is at the time that Kafka faces two soldiers who escaped from WWII to the forest that is the limbo, the world between the dead and the alive. They are in limbo because they could not decide whether to kill someone or to be killed. This situation exists also for Nakata and this is the second time that the cruelty of war is explained in the plotline of the story. He cannot choose between killing Johnnie Walker or watching the cats being killed by him. In addition, Johnnie Walker mentions that what he wants Nakata to choose is the same as the nature of war, cruel and outrageous. In war, you must decide to kill or to be killed. You do not know your enemy and do not have any personal problem with him but the law of war the same as a cruel patriarch must be obeyed. As Johnnie Walker tells Nakata: “Either I kill the cats or you kill me. One or the other. You need to make a choice right here and now. This might seem an outrageous choice, but consider this: most choices we make in life are equally outrageous” (p.68).

The third character, Miss Saeki, experiences death in two stages. The first one is when her boyfriend, Kafka, at the age of fifteen, is killed in an accident during the 1970’s student strike. By a mistake, some superficial revolutionists kill Miss Saeki’s boyfriend. They take Kafka as someone else. Here, a problem of a revolt is discussed; it does not follow any rules and order and lots of accidents and mistakes may happen at its pace. As Oshima talks to Kafka and explains to him: “... college was on strike during the period of student unrest and shut down”. Then one night that Kafka, Miss Saeki’s boyfriend, wanted to take up something from his room for his friend, “... the students occupying the building mistook him for a leader of an opposing faction” (Murakami, 2005, p. 145). In addition, the more he explained about their mistake, the more they hit him. Kafka is killed and “... they tossed his corpse out on the street like a dead dog” (p. 146). Two days after this incident, the National Guard took action and in a few hours, the students’ revolt was stopped. The students were arrested and sentenced to death, “...but since it wasn’t

premeditated two of them were convicted of involuntary manslaughter and given short prison sentences. His [Kafka's] death was totally pointless" (p.146).

After this incident, Miss Saeki felt extremely disappointed and found no point in continuing her life: "When she went back to the real world, she has only half of her shadow and has split into the head librarian fifty-year-old Miss Saeki and the fifteen-year-old ghost-like girl Saeki" (Yu, p.60). Both of these are not the appearances that Miss Saeki loves and in these two shadows, she is in the model of death. She cannot move to the next level, forget her beloved and continue her life normally. She is trapped in melancholic status. After that incident, "Miss Saeki never sang again. She locked herself in her room and would not talk to anybody, even on the phone. She didn't go to his [her beloved, Kafka's] funeral, and dropped out of college".

The melancholic person lives in his world, which is a depressed, hopeless one deserted from everybody's sight. The melancholic person lives in her past and cannot make friends with new people: "After a few months, people suddenly realized she was no longer in town. Nobody knows where she went or what she did. ... She vanished into thin air". Maybe Miss Saeki's absence means her spiritual and mental rather than her physical existence. Even her best friend, Oshima's mother, did not know where she was. People of the town made some guesses: "Rumors flew that she'd been committed to a mental hospital after a failed suicide attempt in the deep forests surrounding Mount Fuji" (p.146). Someone even saw her in Tokyo and stated that she was working there as a writer. Some others talked around the fact that she is married and has a child but all were just rumors, not more.

As Miss Saeki herself while talking to her son states, "Kafka, I've worn away so much of my own life, worn myself away. At a certain point, I should have stopped living, but did not. I knew life was pointless, but I couldn't give up on it" (p.273). She is in a melancholic state and cannot move on to the next level of intensity. In addition, she tells Kafka that after that loss, she lost everything and just wasted her time by following the aims that were absurd to her. She did not follow that Greek dictum. Oshima while talking with Kafka explains to him that, Miss Saeki suffered from a kind of psychological disease like melancholia: "[Oshima:] For all I know she might be saddled with a disease like that. I think it's more of a psychological issue. [Kafka:] The will to live - something to do with that. You're saying she's lost the will to live?" (p.310). It can be concluded that the melancholic person loses her will to live and is not motivated by happy incidents, what Deleuze and Guattari name the model of death. Miss Saeki's body without organs is in its zero intensity and cannot move any further.

The second death of Miss Saeki is when her agency is over about her son, Kafka Tamura, and she shows him

an appropriate way of finding a meaningful life by letting Kafka drink her blood. She comes back to the library to show Kafka the way toward truth and grants him the portrait of himself and then she experiences death to move to the next level: "[Kafka:] So you did come back to this town to die. ... [Miss Saeki:] To be honest about it, I'm not trying to die. I'm just waiting for death to come. Like sitting on a bench at the station, waiting for the train" (p.273). Before this time, she is not ready to mourn the loss of her beloved and is in a melancholic state. However, after meeting Kafka, his son and beloved, she can forget that misery and transfer from zero degree of intensity to active intensity. Kafka, Miss Saeki's boyfriend, is killed. Therefore, he encounters the experience of death. He moves to the next level of intensity and his body without organs may change into Kafka Tamura to help his beloved to move from the melancholic estate to mourning his loss. (Murakami, 2005, p.146)

Murakami's world of the dead is the town that appears after the forest, which is the other world. In the town, Kafka Tamura meets his mom and also his beloved. His beloved, fifteen-year-old Miss Saeki, tells Kafka that in the plane of the dead, maybe paradise, everything is ready-made. Kafka loves that place and does not want to leave it behind and return to the real world (Murakami, 2005, p.146). However, his mom asks him to do so. He replies that no one is waiting for him in the world of reality; he is an unwanted persona by everyone. His mom tells Kafka that she aims to let herself be alive through Kafka's memory. If Kafka remembers her then she can be alive and move beyond her body. Therefore, Kafka returns to the real world, takes care of the memory of his mom, and saves his painting on the shore granted by Miss Saeki to him (pp.409-410).

The last death that happens in the novel is Johnnie Walker's. Nakata kills him because Kafka Tamura cannot do so himself. Johnnie Walker is the symbol of the law of the father and Kafka wants to destroy him as a symbolic act to become a free person. Johnnie Walker is killed so he faces the real experience of death. His body without organs which he names as a formless soul in transition can change into a more advanced entity, by experiencing death: "I'm a soul in transition, and a soul in transition is formless" (p.403). When he experiences death, he is transferred from the real world to the limbo that is the forest and tells Crow that the transfer made him more powerful because the experience of death lets the body without organs become active again.

Limbo is the melancholic life in the state of the model of death with no aims, goals, or happiness. The person is dead already because he is not active and productive. His body without organs is in zero degree of intensity. As Johnnie Walker while talking to Crow, the deformed model of Kafka Tamura, says: "Do you know what limbo is? It's the neutral point between life and death. A kind

of sad, gloomy place. Where I am now, in other words- this forest". The body has not the ability to move on to the next level and forget its sadness or problem like what is done in the state of experience of death; Johnnie Walker: "I died, at my own bidding, but haven't gone on to the next world" (p.403). Johnnie Walker cannot change his mood from the melancholic state to mourning. Maybe his sadness is about being unwanted as a tyrannical husband and father. Alternatively, not being loved by his wife and children. He tries to make a strange flute to resurrect the souls on judgment day. This can mean that he is trying to compensate for everything and change the way his family looked at him into a better mood but was unsuccessful in this case until now.

Furthermore, Haruki Murakami not only discusses the way of death of the main characters of the story, but he also represents the three stages of the world of alive, the world of the dead, and the estate between these two. The real world or the world of alive is Kafka Tamura's home and the library. These are the places where the characters decide what to do and complete their agency or even like the protagonist of the story commit suicide. The next stage is limbo and Johnnie Walker explains it as the place between the world of the dead and alive, which is the forest. The characters transfer from this labyrinth to the next step, which is the town. The town is the symbol of paradise and the other world. As the fifteen-year-old Miss Saeki tells Kafka Tamura that everything is ready-made in this plane.

## CONCLUSION

Death, therefore – the most dreadful of evils – is nothing to us, since while we exist, death is not present, and whenever death is present, we do not exist. It is nothing either to the living or the dead, since it does not exist for the living, and the dead no longer is. (Adkins, p.198)

The whole paper can be summarized, as a concluding point this way: Kafka Tamura feels the model of death when he is repressed and feels that nobody in his life pays attention to him; his being or not being is not important to anyone. He intends to transfer toward the experience of death for achieving a schizophrenized death estate. The second important character of the story who is Nakata dies and enters into the experience of the death realm because his agency is finished. When Miss Saeki acknowledges her boyfriend's death, she moves toward the model of death. Her life loses meaning and she has no hope and

goal for the future. Then when her agency for helping her son is over, she experiences the experience of death.

As an ending, there are different factors for each of the characters of the novel that causes them to change and intend to move on to another estate in their lives. Nakata loses his wit and status as a normal persona. Kafka fails to be a social individual loved by family, and friends. Miss Saeki's boyfriend dies and she loses the will to live and wish. Johnnie Walker misses his family and this causes him to feel distasteful about his tyrannical behavior. By the following sentence, it can be concluded that Murakami himself prefers the experience of death, which means mourning the lost object and moving to the next level to the model of death that is being stocked in the melancholic state of passivity and living in the zero degree of intensity:

You have to face death, get to really know it, then overcome it. When you're down in that whirlpool you start thinking about all kinds of things. It's like you get to be friends with death, have a heart-to-heart talk with it. (Murakami, p.429)

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