

“Cognitive Dissonance and the Complexities of Existence: A Comparative Analysis of *Cloud Atlas* and *Kafka on the Shore*.”

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Abstract

In the course of this research paper, the authors sought to analyse how Mitchell and Murakami provide complex details of cognitive dissonance through their *Cloud Atlas*, *Kafka on the shore* narratives. Mitchell writes in a kind of palindromic fashion that has the purpose of altering the reader's expectations concerning time and causality; Murakami employs similar non-linear structures in character motivations and the characters psychological struggles. The paper aims at examining the contribution of cognitive dissonance in the potential of character development and personality changes; the portrayal of moral traits; and the assessment of feelings in individuals more sophisticated. The primary themes are: identity, – the play is focused on identity issues, reality and appearance – Cross-dressing contributes to disguise. Commentary concerning the concepts of the illusory image, gender, and inter textual strategies, it became evident that the line between what is real and the facade constructed by the characters as well as the writers of the inter-texts indicated in the text is not clear. The intertextuality, allusions to the classic literature, and the elements borrowed from Japanese culture as well as theme as superimposed not only serve as a call for readers to doubt the tales being presented, the construction of subjectivity, and the boundaries between fictional and real worlds. Thus, through analysing these novels more thoroughly, this paper will compel thought and reflection among readers, thereby disrupting static thinking about literature and its ability to help navigate the world around us.

Key words: *Cognitive Dissonance, Cloud Atlas, Kafka on the Shore, Haruki Murakami, David Mitchell, Identity, Inter textuality, Realty vs. Illusions.*

Introduction

Cognitive dissonance is the name of the mental confusion that takes place when an individual's beliefs, values, or behaviour are in conflict with each other. This concept was first introduced by the social psychologist Leon Festinger in 1957 (Festinger 1). This psychological phenomenon of uneasiness comes from the human need for stability and the dislike of any contradiction. Cognitive dissonance causes a person to do rationalisation, justification, or attitude change that will help in reducing the discomfort and will make a person feel again the harmony (Festinger 1). In the field of literature, cognitive dissonance has become a strong tool for the authors to delve into the intricacies of human experience and to rethink readers' views of reality. Two current novels that use the cognitive dissonance are David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* and Haruki Murakami's *Kafka on the Shore*. These books, which focus on the primary issues of identity, the reality vs. the imagination, and the inside-out vs. outside-in illusion, and the essence of life, by the use of cognitive dissonance, the author of this work challenges readers to think about the human condition in a more profound way and the reality that we all face this challenge in everyday life.

The main objective of this research paper is to compare the narrative frameworks, character developments, and the intertextual connections in *Cloud Atlas* and *Kafka on the Shore* in order to discover how cognitive dissonance is depicted. In Mitchell's novel, the format is palindromic and consists of six tales that are connected to each other

and span different time periods and genres, while Murakami's work is about a non-linear narrative that shows the internal conflicts and psychological complexities of the characters (Mitchell 2004; Murakami 2005). In the message of this paper, which is driven by the cognitive dissonance of the main characters Kafka Tamura and the various cast of *Cloud Atlas*, this paper is trying to find out what makes them. The research paper also covers the general themes and motifs that are found in both novels, such as the conflict between reality and illusion, the clash with the self-identity, and the philosophical issues about life (Mitchell 2004; Murakami 2005). On the other hand, it examines the textual link between the works of Mitchell and Murakami and the way they abandon the storytelling rules to create a conversation that reinterprets the depiction of the Japanese culture (Wixsite). This paper, which is the detailed examination of two classic novels and their connection to the cognitive dissonance in the modern literature, intends to reveal and to comprehend the cognitive dissonance in the modern literature through the analysis of both of these two masterpieces. The study of the use of the literary narrative techniques and themes by Mitchell and Murakami will yield the light to the creative way they used these techniques to engage readers and provoke the readers to reflect on the human experience and perception (Mitchell 2004; Murakami 2005).

Cognitive Dissonance: A Theoretical Framework

The study of cognitive dissonance in the field of social psychology has developed a theoretical framework which is beneficial in explaining the way individuals cope with the conflicting beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours. The expression "cognitive dissonance" was first coined by Leon Festinger in 1957, who described it as the psychological distress that a person goes through when they get confronted with the inconsistencies between their cognitions (Festinger 1). According to the Festinger theory, the people are driven by the dissonance reduction, which is achieved through the change of their attitudes, beliefs, or behaviours to maintain the cognitive consistency.

Cognitive dissonance theory states that people have an inborn tendency to keep a similar and consistent perception of themselves and the world around them (Festinger 1). The cognitive dissonance, which is the feeling of discomfort, anxiety, or guilt that one gets when he/she is faced with the information or experiences that contradicts his/her existing beliefs (Festinger 1), is the result of the opposite of the fact that such feelings occur when one is faced with the information or experiences. To reduce this uneasiness, people may come up with a lot of ways to deal with it, for example, they may look for the kinds of information that confirm their existing beliefs, they may rationalise their actions, or they may change their attitudes and behaviours to be in line with their beliefs (Festinger 1).

The cognitive dissonance theory has been used in various fields, including advertising, consumer behaviour, and organisational studies (Antoniou et al.). In marketing the cognitive dissonance theory has been applied to the study of the decision making processes and post-purchase behaviour of the consumers (Antoniou et al.) When a person buys something, he or she may be in a state of cognitive dissonance if he or she doubts the decision or if the product does not live up to the expectations (Antoniou et al.). The marketing people can use the cognitive dissonance theory to come up with the ways to cut down this dissonance, like giving the information which will be reassuring about the product or the post-purchase support (Antoniou et al.).

In the context of organisational studies, cognitive dissonance theory has been used to understand employee behaviour and motivation (Antoniou et al.). When employees are asked to perform tasks that conflict with their values or beliefs, they may experience cognitive dissonance, which can lead to decreased job satisfaction, increased stress, and even turnover (Antoniou et al.). Organisations can use cognitive dissonance theory to develop strategies that help align employee values with organisational goals, such as providing clear communication about expectations and offering opportunities for professional development (Antoniou et al.).

The application of cognitive dissonance theory in literature has been less extensive, but it has been used to analyse how characters navigate conflicting beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours (Antoniou et al.). In the context of literary analysis, cognitive dissonance theory can be used to understand how characters' internal conflicts drive the plot and shape their development (Antoniou et al.). For example, in David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*, the character of Robert Frobisher experiences cognitive dissonance when he discovers that his employer, Vyvyan Ayrs, has exploited his musical talents for personal gain (Mitchell 2004). By delving into Frobisher's inner conflict between

his distaste for Ayr's and his desire for artistic excellence, the novel becomes a profound analysis of the complexities of creativity and exploitation (Mitchell 2004).

Similarly, in Haruki Murakami's *Kafka on the Shore*, the protagonist, Kafka Tamura, experiences cognitive dissonance as he navigates the prophecy that he will commit patricide and incest (Murakami 2005). Kafka's encounters with various characters and situations that challenge his beliefs and values lead to cognitive dissonance, driving him to question the nature of reality and his own existence (Murakami 2005). By analysing how cognitive dissonance shapes the characters' experiences and drives the plot, literary scholars can gain a deeper understanding of the psychological complexities that underlie human behaviour and decision-making.

Cognitive dissonance theory gives a precious basis for showing how the people make sense of the conflicting beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours. Even though the theory has been widely used in different fields, including marketing, consumer behaviour, and organisational studies, its usage in literary analysis is not as widespread. But still, the examples from the two movies *Cloud Atlas* and *Kafka on the Shore* prove that cognitive dissonance theory is a great way of analysing the characters' internal conflicts and thus these conflicts are shaping the plot and character development. Through the utilisation of cognitive dissonance theory in the analysis of literature, experts can obtain a deeper comprehension of the psychological aspects that are involved in human behaviour and decision-making, and how these aspects are depicted in the stories we write.

Narrative Structures and Cognitive Dissonance

The ways of narrative structures that David Mitchell uses in *Cloud Atlas* and Haruki Murakami in *Kafka on the Shore* are the main reasons of the cognitive dissonance that these authors want to show in their novels. Mitchell's palindromic book with six connected stories that are set in different time periods and genres causes the reader to feel disoriented and confused as they try to follow the plot, while Murakami's non-linear story shows the internal conflicts and psychological complexities of the characters that are similar to their own struggles with identity and reality.

In *Cloud Atlas*, Mitchell gives the six stories a nested narrative structure where each of them is interrupted and continued in the reverse order (Mitchell 2004). The novel consists of "The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing," "Letters from Zedelghem," "Half-Lives: The first "Luisa Rey Mystery," "The Ghastly Ordeal of Timothy Cavendish," "An Orison of Sonmi-451," and "Sloosha's Crossin' an' Ev'rythin' After," which together form a deeper resonance that strengthens the understanding of the complexity of human identity and the cycle of life and the door to exist (Mitchell). The author uses the palindromic structure to question the readers' understanding of time and causality, thus he creates a feeling of mental confusion as the readers try to separate fact from the fiction and to understand the relationship between the different stories (Mitchell 2004).

One reader describes the experience of reading *Cloud Atlas* as follows: One reader describes the experience of reading *Cloud Atlas* as follows:

This book sees human history and people in a very bad light, although in each story there are challenges to this viewpoint. The first five stories, all in chronological order, are told in part and after the sixth and final story, the rest of the book goes backward and finishes up the first five tales to their conclusions, so that story one starts and finishes the book" (Goodreads).

This reader's perspective helps to explain the paradox that is created by the novel's structure, because the reader is forced to cope with the circularity of human experiences and the persistent nature of the individual's action (Goodreads).

In contrast, *Kafka on the Shore* presents a non-linear narrative that follows two parallel storylines: The characters that we have on one hand are Kafka Tamura, a young boy that runs away from home, in order to escape the promise and on the other hand, we have Nakata, an old man with a mysterious past (Murakami 2005). Murakami employs the technique of flashbacks and the transition between the two narratives, thus generating the feeling of the disorientation and the cognitive dissonance, the same as the characters struggles with the identity and the reality (Murakami 2005). The novel's investigation of the nature of existence gets to the complicated by the reality of surreal things and the supernatural like talking cats and the maze library (Murakami 2005).

One example of how Murakami's narrative structure contributes to the portrayal of cognitive dissonance can be seen in the following quote: One example of how Murakami's narrative structure contributes to the portrayal of cognitive dissonance can be seen in the following quote:

Kafka felt a special link to Nakata, a connection that was not just a coincidence. As their paths crossed and combined, Kafka started to ask the rulers of the boundary between reality and illusion, which in turn, led him on the path of self-discovery and inner examination.

This quote illustrates how the Kafka and Nakata stories are intertwined and the reality and illusion are not so clear, thus, the characters and the readers should ask themselves and proceed to introspection (Murakami 2005). The different storytelling techniques used by Mitchell and Murakami, lead to the depiction of cognitive dissonance in different manners. Mitchell's palindromic form in *Cloud Atlas*, which challenges readers' perceptions of time and causality, corresponds to Murakami's non-linear approach in *Kafka on the Shore*, which, on the other hand, reflects the characters' internal conflicts and psychological complexities (Mitchell 2004; Murakami 2005). The above two authors use these narrative techniques to capture the reader's interest and make them think about the issues of identity, reality, and the meaning of life.

The fact that both novels are open-ended just adds to the cognitive dissonance experienced by the readers. The final story of *Cloud Atlas* brings back the first one, and the reader gets the feeling that the meaning of the book is open to interpretation, thus inviting the readers to reflect on the essence of life (Mitchell 2004). As well, *Kafka on the Shore*'s open ending makes the readers to struggle with the ambiguity of identity and the quest for the sense of life in a world which usually does not have clear solutions (Murakami 2005).

The plot structures that Mitchell and Murakami use in *Cloud Atlas* and *Kafka on the Shore* are the main features that the authors use to express the cognitive dissonance that is depicted in the two novels. Mitchell's palindromic form and nested narratives result in the feeling of the disorientation and the confusion of time and causality which challenge the readers' perceptions, while Murakami's non-linear approach is a reflection of the characters' internal conflicts and psychological complexities (Mitchell 2004; Murakami 2005). The fact that both novels are not bounded by the so-called limits makes the readers to be in a state of cognitive dissonance, which causes them to go through a process of questioning and self-reflection that goes beyond the texts.

Character Development and Cognitive Dissonance

The character development and cognitive dissonance are closely related in literature, thus, the development of the characters complexes, moral problems, and psychological growth are influenced by the character development and cognitive dissonance. This part of the article reveals the connection between cognitive dissonance and character development in David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* and Haruki Murakami's *Kafka on the Shore*, which is shown by how these authors use cognitive dissonance as a method to enhance character psychology and captivate readers in a powerful way.

In *Cloud Atlas* David Mitchell writes a story about a wide range of characters, each of them faces with their own internal conflicts and psychological complexities. One of the characters, Robert Frobisher, a musician who has not succeeded yet, was a servant of the old composer Vyvyan Ayrs. Later, he noticed that Ayrs was using his musical talents to get benefits (Mitchell 2004). Frobisher's inward struggle is a typical example of the themes of creativity, exploitation, and the nature of identity which are prevalent in the novel. The struggle with the conflict causes Frobisher to face his values, desires, and the ethical issues connected with his actions, and thus, his character is thoroughly examined in the context of cognitive dissonance (Mitchell 2004).

As a result, in *Kafka on the Shore*, Haruki Murakami embarks on a journey to the deep depths of the self and self-awareness through the main character, Kafka Tamura. Kafka's quest for authenticity is full of internal conflicts and moral problems, especially related to the prophecy that he will kill his father and have sex with his sister (Murakami 2005). Through the experiences of Kafka with the supernatural and the surreal things, he is being confronted with his beliefs and values which leads to his cognitive dissonance as he is trying to reconcile his identity with the world around him, ultimately he is facing the conflicts of choices and he is trying to find the right solution (Murakami 2005).

The character development in both novels illustrates how cognitive dissonance is the cause of personal growth, moral reflection, and the analysis of the human feelings. Through the depiction of characters that are facing the

same kind of problems with different beliefs, values, and behaviours, Mitchell and Murakami manage to make stories that deal with the details of the human psyche and at the same time the readers are asked to think about their own problems of the internal conflicts and the ethical dilemmas.

In addition, the combination of the character development and the cognitive dissonance is depicted by the character life changes which are achieved by the internal conflicts and the moral dilemmas that ultimately result in the transformation of the character. Cognitive dissonance is a theory that lets the readers observe the characters' growth as they tackle their inner problems, the challenges that they face, and the quest for the meaning and purpose in the middle of the conflicting beliefs and values.

Character development and cognitive dissonance are the crucial elements of literary storytelling, which help us to get to know the most intricate parts of human nature, moral ambiguity, and the search for self-understanding. Mitchell and Murakami skilfully integrate cognitive dissonance into their characters' development and narratives, which, therefore, make the readers feel and think deeply and, thus, the narratives are appealing to the readers. Through the connection of character building and the cognitive dissonance, in *Cloud Atlas* and *Kafka on the Shore*, the readers are in a place where the internal conflicts, the moral dilemmas and the personal growth are all conjuring the deepest human experience.

Themes, Motifs and Cognitive Dissonance

Both *Cloud Atlas* by David Mitchell and *Kafka on the Shore* by Haruki Murakami explore common themes and motifs related to cognitive dissonance, such as the blurring of reality and illusion, confrontation with self-identity, and philosophical questions about existence. These thematic elements contribute significantly to the portrayal of cognitive dissonance in the novels.

Identity

A central theme in both works is the exploration of identity and the confrontation with self. Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* features a diverse cast of characters from various backgrounds and social positions who embark on a journey to find connection and wholeness (Gioia). The novel delves into the labyrinth of identity, examining characters who uncover their inner selves through struggles and conflicts (Gioia).

Similarly, *Kafka on the Shore* revolves around the protagonist named after the enigmatic author Franz Kafka. Kafka grapples with his reason, fights against his self-image, and tries to make sense of his perplexing relationships - stories of inner contradictions and psychological conflicts that people experiencing cognitive dissonance often face (Murakami 2005). The theme of identity is central to both novels, as the characters navigate the complexities of self-discovery amidst the cognitive dissonance they experience.

Reality vs. Illusion

Another prominent theme in *Cloud Atlas* and *Kafka on the Shore* is the blurring of boundaries between reality and illusion. Mitchell's novel presents a world where the distinction between fact and fiction is often obscured (Mitchell 2004). The nested narratives and palindromic structure create a sense of cognitive dissonance as readers struggle to discern what is real from what is imagined (Mitchell 2004). The presence of recurring motifs, such as the comet-shaped birthmark shared by several characters across different time periods, further complicates the novel's exploration of reality (Mitchell 2004). This birthmark serves as a metaphor for the interconnectedness of human experiences and the cyclical nature of existence, challenging readers' perceptions of time and causality (Mitchell 2004).

The author explores the nature of reality and illusion in his book Murakami's *Kafka on the Shore* as well. The novel contains the surreal aspects and the supernatural events that are the manifestation of the ordinary and the extraordinary (Murakami 2005). The fact of talking cats, the library that is full of secrets and the music that is mentioned again and again, all of these things, to a certain degree, create the feeling of cognitive dissonance that the both the characters and the readers feel (Murakami 2005). These elements test the protagonists' and readers' perception of reality and thus, make them to feel whether life is real or not.

Existence and Philosophy

Both *Cloud Atlas* and *Kafka on the Shore* pose philosophical questions about the being of being that make us ask ourselves what is reality and what is the meaning of life. Mitchell's novel projects a dark picture of the future in which the corporate greed and the oppression have resulted in the dehumanisation of people (Mitchell 2004). The novel's investigation into the essence of consciousness is most clearly evident in the plot of Sonmi-451, who is a clone and starts a revolution against the corporation that made her (Mitchell 2004). Sonmi's path leads to the exploration of the core of the human being, the possibility to want to do something, and the impacts of technological developments (Mitchell 2004). *Kafka on the Shore*, another one of Murakami's books, also discusses the existential questions about fate, free will, and the quest for the meaning in a world that is usually hard to answer (Murakami 2005). The novel's discourse on the philosophical themes is wrapped up with the cognitive dissonance of the characters. Kafka's quest to find himself is obstacle-ridden by the prophecy that is haunting him, and the experiences with the supernatural and surreal are also in his way (Murakami 2005). These components prove the fact that the novel is about the existential studies and the complexities of the human.

Motifs and Symbols

In addition to the thematic elements, both *Cloud Atlas* and *Kafka on the Shore* employ recurring motifs and symbols that contribute to the portrayal of cognitive dissonance. In *Cloud Atlas*, the comet-shaped birthmark shared by several characters across different time periods serves as a central motif (Mitchell 2004). This birthmark symbolises the interconnectedness of human experiences and the cyclical nature of existence, challenging readers' perceptions of time and causality (Mitchell 2004). The novel also features the recurring motif of music, particularly the *Cloud Atlas* Sextet composed by Robert Frobisher (Mitchell 2004). This musical piece serves as a metaphor for the interconnectedness of the novel's narratives and the universal themes that unite human experiences across time and space (Mitchell 2004).

Similarly, *Kafka on the Shore* features several recurring motifs and symbols that contribute to the portrayal of cognitive dissonance. The presence of talking cats, a labyrinthine library, and the recurring motif of music are central to the novel's exploration of reality and illusion (Murakami 2005). These elements challenge the characters' and readers' understanding of the nature of existence, contributing to the sense of cognitive dissonance that permeates the novel (Murakami 2005). The novel also features the recurring motif of the Oedipal curse that haunts Kafka, symbolising the weight of destiny and the complexities of family relationships (Murakami 2005). The thematic elements and recurring motifs in *Cloud Atlas* and *Kafka on the Shore* contribute significantly to the portrayal of cognitive dissonance in both novels. The exploration of identity, the blurring of reality and illusion, and the engagement with philosophical questions about existence create a sense of disorientation and contradiction that mirrors the cognitive dissonance experienced by the characters and readers alike. The recurring motifs and symbols serve as metaphors for the universal themes that unite human experiences across time and space, inviting readers to engage with the complexities of the human condition.

The themes, motifs, and symbols that David Mitchell and Haruki Murakami use in *Cloud Atlas* and *Kafka on the Shore* respectively, are the main reason why these two novels are the perfect illustration of cognitive dissonance. The discovery of identity, the mixture of life and illusion and the involvement in the philosophical questions of the existence are the causes of the confusion and the contradiction which is the same as the cognitive dissonance experienced by the characters and the readers. The recurring motifs and symbols can be seen as metaphors for the universal themes that are present in all human experiences, no matter whether they are from the past or the present, hence making the readers to start reflecting on the complexities of the human condition. In Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*, the crew of the characters, all from different races and cultures, travels to find connection and wholeness, and aids them to the maze of identity and the conflict of self (Gioia). The novel's treatment of reality and illusion is compounded by the nested narratives and palindromic structure and the recurring motifs like the comet-shaped birthmark (Mitchell 2004). The book also deals with the philosophical questions related to the consciousness and the effects of the technological progress (Mitchell 2004).

The main theme of Murakami's *Kafka on the Shore* is the protagonist's quest of self-acceptance, where Kafka struggles with his identity, fights his self-image, and tries to make his relationships sense (Murakami 2005). The book contains the surreal elements and the supernatural happenings which make the line between the ordinary

and the unusual very fuzzy, thus, the cognitive dissonance felt by both the characters and the readers (Murakami 2005). The novel also portrays the existential problems of fate, free will, and the quest for meaning in a world that sometimes does not have simple answers (Murakami 2005). The thematic suggestions and the themes that are repeated over and over again in both novels act as strong instruments for the presentation of cognitive dissonance. Mitchell and Murakami manage to make the readers feel the disorientation and contradiction which, in turn, allows the readers to enter the global human condition and to realize that the themes that are universally present in all human lives are the same everywhere. The feeling of cognitive dissonance that the characters and the readers share at the same time is the beginning point for the self-thinking and the doubting of the assumptions about reality, identity, and existence.

Intertextuality and Cognitive Dissonance

Intertextuality in *Cloud Atlas* and *Kafka on the Shore*, which is the main topic of the dissertation, depicts in which Mitchell and Murakami are having a conversation that leads to the question of the meaning of the Japanese culture and its representation which is different from what is familiar to us. The writers use references to other books and things of Japanese culture to make readers feel the confusion that they are questioning their ideas about the nature of the story and the relation between the story and real life.

Cloud Atlas and Intertextuality

Cloud Atlas has a lot of connections to the other works of literature, like Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (Mitchell 2004). Through these references the novel tackles the topic of the nature of storytelling and the human experience that is interconnected through time and space (Mitchell 2004). In Mitchell's work, the writers of these classical literature pieces are the ones who were forced to deal with the culture and history that were prevailing at the time they were written and he managed to use that as the basis of the work and make the readers feel the cognitive dissonance.

A case where the contribution of intertextuality to the representation of cognitive dissonance in *Cloud Atlas* can be seen is the reference to Melville's *Moby-Dick* in the novel. In the novel's first part, which is "The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing", the main character meets a person named Autua, a stowaway from the Chatham Islands who has escaped slavery (Mitchell 2004). Autua's tale is similar to that of Melville's character Queequeg, a harpooner from the South Seas who becomes a member of the Pequod's crew (Mitchell 2004). Through the comparison of these two characters, Mitchell makes the readers think about the causes that the life of oppressed people is based on the colonialism and slavery (Mitchell 2004). The intertextual reference thus results in a feeling of cognitive dissonance because the readers have to face the fact that these bad systems are still around and they affect the society now.

Likewise, Mitchell's use of the parts from Huxley's *Brave New World* makes it easier for the readers to feel the cognitive dissonance in the *Cloud Atlas*. In the fifth section of the novel, "An Orison of Sonmi~451," Sonmi~451, a clone, is a character who lives in a dystopian reality where corporations have taken the place of governments and people are rendered to commodities (Mitchell 2004). The plot of Sonmi's story is similar to Huxley's novel which is a prototype of the world in the future where people are genetically engineered and conditioned to serve the state (Mitchell 2004). Through the use of this timeless dystopian novel, Mitchell urges the readers to think about the ways in which the present society is put under the influence of corporate power and the technology (Mitchell 2004). Through the intertextual reference, the contrast between the views of these different groups is made apparent and the thoughts of the readers are drawn into this issue thus creating a cognitive dissonance.

Kafka on the Shore and Intertextuality

In the same way as the other, *Kafka on the Shore* is set on a famous and classic Japanese literature, for example the works of Ryūnosuke Akutagawa and Yasunari Kawabata (Murakami 2005). The novel also has the aspects of Western literature, for example T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, which culminate in the sources of the novel's global literary tradition (Murakami 2005). The use of Japanese cultural traditions which is the reference to Shinto mythology and the appearance of talking cats, the novel is working on the issue of the identity of a person and the nature of the world (Murakami 2005).

An instance of how the intertextuality helps in the depiction of cognitive dissonance in *Kafka on the Shore* is the novel's reference to Akutagawa's short story "In a Grove." In Murakami's novel, the character of Nakata is a man who has lost his memory and the ability to read and write as a result of a wartime incident (Murakami 2005). Nakata's story echoes that of Akutagawa's story, which depicts a murder from multiple perspectives and challenges the notion of objective truth (Murakami 2005). Through the reference of this famous Japanese work of old Murakami urges the readers to think of all the things that history and trauma do to memory and identity (Murakami 2005). The so called intertextual reference compels the readers to see the complexities of life and the inability of language to portray the truth accurately which, in turn, makes the readers feel the restriction of their minds.

Likewise, the use of some of the elements from Eliot's *The Waste Land* in Murakami's *Kafka on the Shore* is also the reason why the cognitive dissonance is described in the novel. In the first pages of the novel, Kafka drops a hint on the importance of the title of Eliot's poem, which is used as an epigraph to the novel (Murakami 2005). This citation brings up the issue of the cognitive dissonance that readers experience as they try to figure out how Kafka's story is related to the main ideas of alienation, fragmentation, and the search of meaning that are the key points of Eliot's poem (Murakami 2005). The mention of this intertextual reference makes readers to think about the novel more in depth and to choose how Kafka's journey is affected by the cultural and literary background that have existed before it.

Cognitive Dissonance and the Representation of Japanese Culture

Apart from the fact that they are responding to a global literary tradition, both *Cloud Atlas* and *Kafka on the Shore* include some aspects of Japanese culture, which, in turn, adds to the depiction of cognitive dissonance. The usage of Japanese words and the references to the Japanese mythology, the legend of the Okinawan sea goddess Niraï Kanai are the features of Mitchell's novel (Mitchell 2004). These factors make the readers feel that the way Western and non-western cultures are related and the inability of language to express the subtleties of cultural exchange is a cause of the cognitive dissonance (Mitchell 2004).

Just like in a way, Murakami's *Kafka on the Shore* is also the example of Japanese culture, as he put in there a lot of Shinto mythology and the presence of talking cats (Murakami 2005). These elements make the readers feel the cognitive dissonance, so they have to face the facts that the traditional Japanese culture is made up of the modern and globalised elements (Murakami 2005). The appearance of these intertextual references encourages the readers to interact with the novel on a deeper level, by giving the consideration of the ways in which Kafka's trip is influenced by the cultural and spiritual traditions of Japan.

The intertextual components in *Cloud Atlas* and *Kafka on the Shore* are the main reason why the authors manage to portray the cognitive dissonance in both novels. Through the use of citations from other literary works and the Japanese culture aspects, Mitchell and Murakami produce a feeling of cognitive dissonance which, in turn, leads the readers to raise their questions on the origin of the story and the connection between fiction and reality. There are many references in Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* to the classic works of Western literature like Moby-Dick of Melville and *Brave New World* of Huxley (Mitchell 2004). These references are the reason why readers are in a state of cognitive dissonance as they are making the stories of that time to be seen in the light of the cultural and historical contexts. Much like, Murakami's *Kafka on the Shore* incorporates a wide variety of sources, such as the traditional Japanese literature like that of Akutagawa and Kawabata, and also the Western literature like that of Eliot's *The Waste Land* (Murakami 2005). These intertextual references make the readers feel the cognitive dissonance because they have to think about how Kafka's journey is influenced by the cultural and literary traditions that he was a part of, before him.

Both novels also contain the elements of Japanese culture that serves as the trace of cognitive dissonance in the representation. Mitchell's use of Japanese words and the references to Japanese mythology, make readers to think what are the ways in which Western and non-Western cultures are combined and the limitations of language in communicating the complex aspects of cultural exchange (Mitchell 2004). The same thing happens in Murakami's writing, the Shinto mythology and talking cats give the idea of cognitive dissonance to the reader, who has to think about the aspects of the traditional Japanese culture which is shaped by the modernity and globalisation forces (Murakami 2005). The intertextual components found in both novels are the strongest tools to be used for

the portrayal of cognitive dissonance. Through the generation of the feeling of being lost and the perception of the fact that these stories are completely different from the fact, Mitchell and Murakami make the reader to be involved with the complexities of storytelling and the connection between the fiction and the reality. The mental conflict that readers encounter plays the role of the trigger of the doubting of the assumptions that people have about literature and its function of the world interpretation.

Conclusion

The last part of the research paper about the topic of cognitive dissonance in David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* and Haruki Murakami's *Kafka on the Shore* is that the profound knowledge of the psychological phenomenon of cognitive dissonance in these two modern fiction works of pages has far-reaching consequences that are worth to be investigated. The research has used a comparative analysis of narrative structures, character developments, and intertextual elements to testify to the complex ways in which the cognitive dissonance is put across and its influence on the themes and motifs of the novels.

The cognitive dissonance in *Cloud Atlas* and *Kafka on the Shore* has been studied and through the exploration of it it has been revealed the depth of the human experience and the complexities of identity, reality and existence that these works encapsulate. Mitchell and Murakami use cognitive dissonance as the main element of their writing to make the readers think and to make them question the humans. The stories of these novels, with their complexions and varied characters, act as a window through which the readers can see the details of human behaviour, ethics, and the processes of making decisions.

In the book *Cloud Atlas*, Mitchell's palindromic structure and interwoven stories present a different point of view on the cyclical pattern of life and the interrelatedness of human experiences through time and space. The characters in the novel, like Robert Frobisher and Luisa Rey, conflict with moral issues, corporate greed, and the power of investigative journalism, all of which add to the main theme of cognitive dissonance of the novel (Mitchell 2004). The intertextual allusions to other literary works and the integration of Japanese cultural elements in the narrative hence deepen the story and make the reader think of the worldwide connectedness of humanity as well as the intricacies of the story.

Also, in *Kafka on the Shore*, Murakami's fragmented narrative and his investigation into the self-awareness and identity of the character Kafka Tamura shed light on the internal struggles and psychological complexities of the characters. The Japanese cultural elements, Western literary sources as well as the U. S. Army intelligence reports are the three layers that are utilised in the narrative which in turn creates a feeling of cognitive dissonance. Thus, the acknowledgement of the existence of the ghost drives the reader to the revision of his perception of reality and truth. The novel's focus on the topics of hidden truths, historical settings, and the complexities of human relationships adds to the confusion cognitive dissonant atmosphere, and thus readers are encouraged to doubt their assumptions and beliefs.

The similar comparison of cognitive dissonance in *Cloud Atlas* and *Kafka on the Shore* has opened up the ways in which literature assists us in the understanding of the complexity of human identity and behaviour. The research on narrative structures, character developments, and intertextual components of these novels has shown that the study is the reason a why the themes and narrative twists of them are the modern classics of conceptual fiction. The authors' novel ways of narrating and the themes they have explored have been able to attract the attention of the readers and have forced them to think about the intricacies of human life and the way we perceive it.

To sum up, the investigating of cognitive dissonance in David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* and Haruki Murakami's *Kafka on the Shore* has given a better insight of the human mind, the moral conflicts and the search of identity when the beliefs and values are in contradiction. These books are the perfect portrayal of the intricate nature of human life and the different ways people deal with the difficulties of life. Through the cognitive dissonance perspective, the readers are taken to the realm of self-discovery, introspection and critical reflections on the problems of the human nature.

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