“She’s just not there”:
A study of psychological symbols in Haruki Murakami’s work
Summary

In this essay a novel by the Japanese author Haruki Murakami, *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, is examined through dreams as a psychoanalytical phenomenon or spectacle. The novel is a complex work but mainly circles around the main character Toru, a middle-aged man in modern Japan whose wife leaves him unexpectedly. The focus in this essay is on the dream symbols in this novel and how they have a narrative function, i.e., how the symbols can be tied to the main character Toru’s real life problems, more specifically, his problems with femininity. The psychoanalytical approaches used in this essay are Sigmund Freud’s and C G Jung’s theories on dreams. Material from another novel by Murakami, *Norwegian Wood*, which contains the same type of symbolic imagery as *The Wind-up Bird*, is also included.
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Introduction

A narrative is a story, not logic, nor ethics, nor philosophy. It is a dream you keep having, whether you realise it or not. Just as surely as you breathe, you go on ceaselessly dreaming your story. And in these stories you wear two faces. You are simultaneously subject and object. You are the whole and you are part. You are real and you are shadow. “Storyteller” and at the same time “character”. It is through such multilayering of roles in our stories that we heal the loneliness of being an isolated individual in the world. (Rubin quoting Murakami, 244)

In the above epigraph, Jay Rubin, one of the English translators of Haruki Murakami’s work, gives the reader a taste of what it means for Murakami to be a writer. Looking at this quote alone, it becomes clear that Murakami understands that what he writes will in some way or another reflect facts about his persona. Thereby he admits that he is undeniably connected to his stories. However, there are also features in his writing that Murakami does not admit exist. At the beginning of his biographical novel on Murakami, Rubin points out that Murakami has always been “stubbornly denying that there are ‘symbols’ in his writing” (Rubin 34). Psychological literary theory, however, argues that “fictions, like dreams, are fantasies, and they can be expected to contain a large amount of unconscious material” (Ryan 93). The works by Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung, and other distinguished psychologists paved the way for a new way to approach literature; an approach that traces a pattern of meaningful symbols in a literary work. And so, even though Murakami denies their existence, in this essay I will examine and discuss some recurring psychological symbols in one of Haruki Murakami’s novels, The Wind-up Bird Chronicle. My thesis is that dream elements such as the well and the water, the room and the key are all psychological symbols that have a narrative function in the novel. These symbols all appear in connection with Toru’s dreams and I will argue that this novel has connected and evolving dream imagery
and that, by looking at the imagery’s psychoanalytical interpretation, we can see the relations to Toru’s real-life conflicts. I will also argue that the narrative function of the dream symbolism is that it reveals the protagonist Toru’s problems with femininity.

In my essay I will account for how the symbolism works in *The Wind-up Bird* in relation to specific scenes in the novel. The main psychological theories I will be using are Freudian and Jungian psychoanalysis with special attention to their interpretations of dreams and fantasies, as the symbols’ psychological meanings are important to the understanding of their connection to the narrative. To be fully able to demonstrate my thesis, I am going to begin with a general overview of the story, since it is important to have the narrative to refer back to. The primary literature that I have chosen to work with is *The Wind-up Bird* in particular and the main reason for that is because much of the story in this novel takes place in the protagonist’s dreams and as a result it lends itself more readily to a psychological analysis. Aside from *The Wind-up Bird* I will give an example from one other novel, namely *Norwegian Wood*. The two novels were written far apart in Murakami’s authorship but the fact that they both contain similar imagery shows that Murakami has continued to use or at least come back to these symbols. With this essay I hope to show a way of interpreting one aspect of Murakami’s varied and complex writings. Also, I wish to inspire a curiosity regarding his authorship and a further analysis of the symbolism in his works, and I sincerely hope Murakami can forgive me for that!

**Background**

*The Wind-up Bird* is narrated by the middle-aged protagonist Toru Okada. A focal point in this novel is Toru's relationship with his wife Kumiko who leaves him at the beginning of the story. Toru is surprised and confused by Kumiko's decision since he thought they had a

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1 Referring to my comment in the beginning about Murakami denying any symbolic meaning in his writing.
functional and steady marriage. Also, Toru is unemployed and does not really know what he wants to do with his life. On top of it all, the couple’s cat has also gone missing. When Kumiko disappears without a trace, Toru starts to search for her frantically, but not in the actual world, in his dreams. He tries to figure out why she left, who she is and what he did wrong. An acquaintance of his, Lieutenant Mamiya, talks about his time trapped in a well during the Manchurian war between Japan and China. He explains it as if it was quite an enlightening experience after which his life has become different. After hearing the lieutenant’s story, Toru decides to climb down into a well that resides in the garden of an uninhabited house. While in the well he realises that it functions as a gateway to a dreamlike world. He is certain that in these dreams he will find the answers as to why Kumiko left him and, hopefully, something that will help to bring Kumiko back.

Toru realises that through the well he can step into another world, into a dreamlike realm: a lobby in a hotel and a dark hotel room. It is only in the well that this is possible, which is significant to remember, as this fact points to the well’s significance in the story. As he passes into this dream he realises that it is not really a dream he is having, as he remarks when he says that “Before dawn, in the bottom of the well, I had a dream. But it was not a dream. It was something that happened to take the form of a dream” (Wind-up Bird 241). However, I would argue that what Toru is experiencing is still a type of dreaming. What he is talking about indicates something that is reminiscent so-called lucid dreams. In his book Jungian Dream Interpretation: A Handbook of Theory and Practice, James A. Hall explains Jungian theory and he says that lucid dreams are when a person is not really sleeping and dreaming, as he/she can take control of many of the actions in the dream and he/she can think as if in a waking state, which means that the person is more in control than in normal dreams (91). The soul-searching that Toru is doing at the bottom of the well is also similar to meditation, which means letting the mind run free. Consequently, I would argue that although
Toru’s dreamlike fantasies are very hard to characterise as being fully dreams, they still are, just not the traditional kind as they are more like lucid dreams or meditation, and therefore I will continue to characterise them as dreams.

While in his dream Toru’s goal continues to room 208 in the hotel. In this hotel room he encounters a woman, but he cannot see her, he can only hear her voice. Furthermore, he recognises the woman’s voice. It belongs to a woman that he does not know and who has been making odd phone calls to him where she tries to arouse him sexually. Toru feels that this woman has the answers, whoever she is. As they are talking someone knocks on the door. Suddenly the woman is very eager to help Toru out of there. With the mystical woman’s help, Toru passes through a jelly-like wall back into the well. This is a strange sphere between the hotel room and the well. As the story goes on, returning to this dream and this hotel room remain Toru’s goal and, as already mentioned, he can only pass into that world when he is in the well. That her presence is only a voice is noteworthy and it is something I will discuss in relation to the symbolism of the room.

In dreams there is the concrete chain of events that the dreamer can account for but which cannot be understood. Many people can retell their dream but few understand why they dreamt the dream in question and what it means. Most of us know that when we dream we go through material in our mind but this does not necessarily help to make the dream experiences any less complicated and we still do not understand what it all meant. The meaning of dreams is what psychologists like Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung tried to figure out. They have theories on how the conscious and unconscious parts of the human mind work. Both Freud and Jung say that imagery in dreams has to do with association. We associate something with the well and the key for example. For Toru, the well and the hotel room in the dream have a meaning, and the woman’s voice in the hotel room also has a meaning. Now, Jung has a slightly more individualistic view on association, he means that
what we associate things with can depend on who you are, that is, it is dependent on where you are from, what culture you belong to, what religious symbolism you grew up with, and so on (Jung 35). Freud, on the other hand, has very set interpretations for every symbol, and when reading his works the reader quickly notices that the association of things is much more generalised. Even so, the interpretations they have lead to some very interesting, and quite similar results. With help from psychoanalysis I will in this essay try to interpret the dream symbols that occur in The Wind-up Bird. By doing so I hope to demonstrate how these symbols function in connection to the narrative since they reveal Toru's issues with femininity which are directly relevant to the problems he has in his real life. First, I will account for how the well is a symbol for the unconscious. I will go through Freudian and Jungian interpretations of the well and explain how I have reached this conclusion. Then, I will relate the well-symbolism to the other two symbols to show how this connection mirrors Toru's situation.

The Well

In his guide to reading The Wind-up Bird, Matthew Strecher brings up the fact that Murakami fell into a drainage ditch when he was a child:

The author himself insists that this has had no lasting psychological impact on him as a person, but the darkness of that underground waterway has manifested itself in his writing in a variety of ways, chiefly as a fundamental dichotomy between the world of light above ground, and a world of darkness beneath it. (Strecher 17).

The incident with the ditch might be Murakami’s inspiration for his wells. As Strecher points out, the symbolism of the well keeps occurring in Murakami’s writing, and whether he admits

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2 This is paraphrased from the Swedish version.
it or not, it plays an important role for him. However, in this essay my focus is on his work and its symbolic narrative, which is why I leave a closer examination of the author and his personal life here. I simply wanted to point out the importance of this object and open up the possibility for deeper psychological impact on the author as a possible continuation of this essay.

A reader of Murakami cannot fail to notice the well as a recurring symbol. In *The Wind-up Bird*, the well is where Toru enters the vision. The key scenes are possible because of the well. The fact that it makes the whole thing possible is one direct indicator that the well is important. In fact, a large part of the novel takes place at the bottom of the well. When sitting down there, Toru digs into his mind. In this quote below, he emphasizes how special the well is for what he is doing:

> Here in this darkness, with its strange sense of significance, my memories began to take on a power they had never had before. The fragmentary images they called up inside me were mysteriously vivid in every detail, to the point where I felt I could grasp them in my hands. I closed my eyes and brought back the time eight years earlier when I had first met Kumiko. (*Wind-up Bird* 222).

The well is his ideal place for contemplation. Toru says in this quote that the darkness in the well has a “strange sense of significance”, which indicates the well’s importance for his enterprise and therefore its functional significance.

First, let us have a look at what Freud has to say about wells. In this quote below, from his novel *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud talks about enclosed places that are connected to water:

> A large number of dreams, often accompanied by anxiety and having as their content such subjects as passing through narrow spaces or being in water, are based upon
Freud suggests that dreaming of narrow spaces and water is connected to the mother-womb. Dreams about water are either that or they “often point to a urinary stimulus” (Freud 322). Anxiety is the reason one seeks out a place of water or a narrow space, to protect oneself. Further interpretations of dreams of this kind are made in an article called *Art Symbolism and the Unconscious*, where Jacques Schnier presents a very Freudian interpretation of water and boats as artistic symbols of the womb and birth. In connection to his argumentation he states that:

> With some people when life becomes unbearable – when certain problems appear insurmountable – there is a tendency to escape reality by regressing in fantasy to the intrauterine stage. In that state problems do not exist and the restricting world of reality is avoided. This flight is characterized by a preference for dark rooms, long periods in bed, or in a warm bath, eating soft foods like those served a child, and an exaggerated craving to be nursed. (Schnier 73).

After reading this passage and thinking about the novel in relation to this statement, the reader realises that Toru’s circumstances could appear to fit with these statements, but I argue that they do not. Toru has an unbearable situation on his hands as the woman he has loved for a long time has disappeared and he does not know what he is meant to do in life. If one accepts Freud’s and Schnier’s theories that when life becomes difficult to bear we retreat to a place that is warm and dark to protect ourselves because that reminds us of the womb of our mothers, then Toru’s reasons for climbing down into the well would be based on his need to escape. However, to climb down a well, which is, as he says himself, the most significant
darkness, and then to pass into a dark hotel room, where he thinks the answers will appear, is not escaping in this case, but confronting. In addition, a well is not a very warm place at all, and Toru says nothing to indicate that this particular one is an exception, i.e. warm. Also, Toru often experiences instances of fear and of being uncomfortable down in the well, he even has a hard time climbing into it and he tugs at the ladder to make sure it is still there and secured to the tree, because he is afraid that it might lose its hold and he will be trapped (220, 229). Escaping down a well could be interpreted as fleeing to somewhere dark, warm and safe which we desire because we remember the safety of the womb, however, in this case, even though the place is dark and wet, the fact that it does not make Toru safe proves that this interpretation does not work.

The first thing one associates wells with is water. This goes for Freud’s interpretation as well, since he deals with the intrauterine stage and thus amniotic fluids. Toru also says while falling asleep in the well that “sleep overtook me, like a gradual rising tide” and thereby he uses a water-related simile (229). C G Jung says that water is a symbol that commonly represents the unconscious, for example, in religions like Taoism the water dragon is a unification of the yin and yang; some believe that in water the opposites become one (Jung 122). Thus we understand that water can be related to balance, which is what the yin and yang represent, and this is the type of association that occurs in Murakami’s work. Murakami says that he has always “been attracted by yin and yang … It’s a popular pattern: two worlds, one bright, one dark” and I will argue next that he has chosen to include this type of opposition as a connection to water and by extension wells in The Wind-up Bird (Interview with Murakami, Strecher 17).

In his work about archetypes and dreams, Jung presents an example of a dream that a theologian of water deep down in a cliff. Jung explains how the dreamer feels he has to dive into the deep darkness to confront it before he can rise to the light, because there is
something in the darkness that he must defeat to access some form of reward (123). Now, I argue that this scenario is almost identical to Toru’s situation in *The Wind-up Bird*. Just like the theologian, Toru has a yearning to be in a place with water, where he must go to find and defeat something that will help him come closer to Kumiko. The light and darkness opposition is Toru’s focus while he is in the well, apart from his memories of Kumiko. After some time in the well the first time, Toru experiences what he explains as a “tug-of-war” going on inside of him, “a contest in which my mind was slowly dragging my body into its territory. The darkness was disrupting the proper balance between the two. The thought struck me that my own body was a mere provisional husk” (231). When reading this quote Toru’s experience can appear almost religious. He mentions the darkness as that which disrupts the balance between body and mind; it is especially the darkness in the well that he needed to find for this to happen. His opinion that his body is just a temporary cover resembles epiphanies in Buddhism and the like, where mediation means purification from stress and suffering and trying to reach for the true understanding of the way things are. Shortly after his inner struggle has begun he commences a type of meditation:

> In the darkness, I pressed the fingertips of one hand against the fingertips of the other – thumb against thumb, index finger against index finger …. Ok, then, enough of this thinking about the mind. Think about reality …. The best way to think about reality, I had decided, was to get as far away as possible – a place like the bottom of a well, for example. (231).

Here he is trying to gain control over his body and mind and he has decided that the best way to grasp reality is to go far away, like him going to the bottom of a well. To confront the darkness is to become more in control and keeping things in balance, an approach very much resembling a religious mission, where one tries to find Enlightenment inside the densest
That the portrayal of the well in the novel fits so well with Jung’s explanations is the first indication that Murakami’s well is a symbol for the unconscious. To gain some perspective on how Murakami uses the well, however, I have decided to include a scene from another of his novels, *Norwegian Wood*. This is probably one of the few works that take place (for the most part) in actual reality. Still, Murakami has chosen to include the symbolic well in this novel. Toru Watanabe is the narrator (notice that the protagonist in this novel has the same first name as the protagonist in *The Wind-up Bird*, which could indicate a connection between them). As he hears the Beatles’ song *Norwegian Wood* he recalls the girl Naoko, who was his first love. It was Naoko who talked about the well, as Toru explains in this excerpt below:

I have no idea whether there was such a well. It might have been an image or a sign that existed only inside Naoko, like all the other things she used to spin into existence inside her mind in those dark days. Once she has described it to me, though, I was never able to think of that meadow scene without the well …. I can describe the well in minute detail. It lay precisely on the border where the meadow ended and the woods began – a dark opening in the earth a yard across, hidden by grass. Nothing marked its perimeter – no fence, no stone curb (at least not one that rose above ground level). It was nothing but a hole, a wide-open mouth. The stones of its collar had been weathered and turned a strange muddy-white. They were cracked and chunks were missing, and a little green lizard slithered into an open seam. You could lean over the edge and peer down to see nothing. All I know about the well was its frightening depth. It was deep beyond measuring, and crammed full of darkness, as if all the world’s darknesses had been boiled down to their ultimate density.

“It’s really, *really* deep,” said Naoko, choosing her words with care …. “But no one knows where it is,” she continued. “The one thing I know for sure is that it’s around here somewhere.”
“Then it must be incredibly dangerous,” I said. “A deep well, but nobody knows where it is. You could fall in and that’d be the end of you. (Norwegian Wood 4 and 5).

Toru says that it was “as if all the world’s darknesses had been boiled down to their ultimate density” in this well. He also states that if you fell in “that’d be the end of you”. In addition, no one knows where it is. When you fall into it, it is by accident, and then you fall down to the darkest of darknesses. Now, if we bring up Freud’s theory concerning dark, enclosed spaces and why we are attracted to them, we can see that Murakami has chosen again to connect the familiarity and interest in the well to a character that has severe difficulties in life. However, there does not seem to be any comfort or longing for the well. Here the well more clearly seems like a symbol for drowning in your mind; a kind of falling into your own personal darkness. The fact that nobody knows where it is and that you could fall in by surprise indicates that this state of mind is not something you necessarily search for. Rather, it could just happen that you are suddenly down at the bottom of the darkness.

Furthermore, in this quote the protagonist claims it is not he that is drawn towards the well but the female character Naoko. As we have seen, the well is described in detail and whoever gave this description knows it very well. Jay Rubin says about Toru’s love affairs in Norwegian Wood that “Toru is attracted both to the lively, life-affirming Midori and the death-obsessed Naoko. Midori is frequently associated with elevated locations such as a laundry deck or a rooftop, while Naoko thinks of wells” (157). As this quote affirms, Naoko suffers from depression. Her sister and her boyfriend, who was Toru’s friend as well, killed themselves inexplicably and after that Naoko’s mental health suffered. The dark, unending well seems like an adequate description of her troubled mind. The quote rules out the Freudian interpretation completely as it is not at all described as a necessarily comfortable place, it is no place that one longs for. And so, rather than being a symbol for the womb, the
well in *Norwegian Wood* seems to symbolise some part of the mind, the unconscious to be more exact. However, this excerpt from the novel, is it really Naoko’s notion of the well? I would argue that it is not, even though she might have been the one to suggest it to Toru. Toru does not realise or does not want to admit that he has seen the well too. However, this does not change the fact that we are dealing with the unconscious; in fact it just strengthens this statement. Consider the first sentence of the quote where Toru says that he has no idea that such a well existed and then he says, just a few lines down, that he could describe the well in “minute detail”, meaning that he knows exactly what this place looks like into its tiniest facets. Also, Toru says he knows that “nothing marked its perimeter”, that is, he even knows what is not there. How can he describe it so well and how does he know what is not there? How is this possible, when he claims to not have seen it? This all proves that Toru knows about the well and that for him it is also a symbol for his troubled mind. What marks the unconscious is that it contains that which we do not always know that we know. That Toru so clearly contradicts himself when saying that he knows nothing and then takes over what he claims to be Naoko’s impression of the well must indicate that somewhere he knows what the well is, or to be more accurate, that there are associations with the well as a symbol for his unconscious as well.

The way the well is portrayed in *Norwegian Wood* fits Jung’s interpretation of the well as a symbol, that is, the well as a symbol for the unconscious, and as we have also seen, Jung’s theory also works with the portrayal of the well in *The Wind-up Bird*. As a matter of fact, I would say it works much better than Freud’s idea of the womb. Have a look at this quote below from *The Wind-up Bird*:

I am no longer one of them, however. They are up there, on the face of the earth; I am down here, at the bottom of the well. They possess the light, while I am in the process of losing it. Sometimes I feel that I may never find my way back to that world. (*The
Toru talks about being in another world and we understand that this world is only his, and that the only world that is entirely yours is the one in your mind. Freud talks about going down narrow, water-related places as some form of escape to something protective. As I see it, Toru is not escaping, he is confronting something not at all easily beat, and defeating this will solve Toru’s problems, which fits very well with Jung’s speculations and with Murakami’s.

The Room and the Key

Now that we have established what the well is and we also know that he is down there to confront something, the question is what is it he is confronting? By looking at the next symbols, the room and the key, we will see a connection between them and the well and begin to understand Toru’s behaviour. I will begin with the room as a dream symbol, since it has a specific symbolic meaning that is connected to femininity. Again I will begin with Freud’s views.

As I said at the beginning of this essay, and as most who study psychology know, Freud’s interpretation of dream symbols is very fixed. There is an unswaying focus on female and male sexuality. Freud says that “Boxes, cases, chests, cupboards and ovens represent the uterus, and also hollow objects, ships, and vessels of all kinds – Rooms in dreams are usually women (Freud, 471). Reading this, I came to realise that to see the room as a symbol for a woman becomes fascinating if this is applied to The Wind-up Bird. Not because I think that a room necessarily always is a symbol for a woman in dreams, but because the way Toru talks about the room in The Wind-up Bird suggests a connection with femininity. For instance, in this quote below, Toru is trying to reach the room when he is sitting in the well:
I concentrate on my mark and think about the room. I try to separate from myself, just as I do whenever I am with a woman. I try to get out of this clumsy flesh of mine, which is crouching here in the darkness. Now I am nothing but a vacant house, an abandoned well. (*The Wind-up Bird*, 393).

Let me first mention, in connection with the well which we studied just a moment ago, one can see that Toru says that he is a “vacant house, an abandoned well”. This is a metaphor for emptying your mind, much like you do when you meditate, to be able to reach the part of your mind that stores whatever you are after – this quote also strengthens the interpretation that the well is a symbol for his mind. Moreover, Toru also compares being in the room to being with a woman in this quote; he is just as separate from himself when he is in the room as when he is with a woman. The fact that he compares these objects like this indicates that they have a symbolic or an associative tie for him. This means that in his dream the hotel room could very well be a symbol for a woman. Another quote that becomes significant in this context appears just a few pages later:

> At some point, I’m going to break through the barrier and get “inside”. I will slip into the room and be standing there, ready, when the knock comes. But how long is it going to take for this to happen? And how much time is there left?  
> At the same time, I am afraid that it really is going to happen. Because then I will have to confront whatever it is that must be there. (*The Wind-up Bird*, 395).

What we can establish from this quote is this: the knock is made by whatever is in-between Kumiko and him; it is made by whomever or whatever it is that Toru has to defeat to reach her. Toru wants to get “inside” this room, in other words, does he want to get inside a woman?
And what is it that he has to defeat? Well, we have to remember that Toru is struggling with himself all along. He is struggling with his interior reality, his unconscious. The room could absolutely be a woman, if he associates the two. Now that we have seen that he does associate them, what does that mean? If the room is a symbol for a woman, to get inside her does not necessarily mean to have sex with her, it could also mean to understand her. The confrontation that Toru is afraid of could be the truth, understanding what is wrong and then having to deal with it. To reach a more conclusive opinion on this matter I will consider the key symbolism and the Jungian interpretation.

After looking at the interpretation of the room, the symbolic meaning of the key becomes noteworthy. In the story, Toru names himself “the Wind-up Bird”, a little metal attraction that has a key in it, something you have to twist to make it work, as one has to turn a key (62). Toru identifies himself with a key. Freud mentions that “whether the room is open or locked is easily intelligible” meaning that whether the dreamer in question has access to the woman and her secrets is symbolised through the room being open or locked (471). In Murakami’s novel it is a female that Toru is trying to understand, or as Strecher puts it: “The critical failure of Toru to understand this about his wife, or indeed, much of anything else, is the root cause of their problems as a couple … he has no idea how deep the problem lies, nor how alienated he really is from his wife” (25). Strecher reaches the conclusion that the Wind-up Bird is a symbol for time and history, a conclusion that makes good sense but which I think is too extreme when it comes to Toru’s reason for using it as a nickname. When Kumiko disappears, Toru is trying to understand why. Symbolically speaking, one could say that Toru is trying to unlock Kumiko. This is his main goal. He takes on the name Wind-up bird because it symbolises what he is trying to do: unlock her so that she becomes open to him instead of closed inside of herself. One conclusion is that Toru is possibly the key and the room is his wife or essentially femininity in itself. It looks like Freud’s interpretation of the room as a
woman works very well with *The Wind-up Bird*, and the conclusion that we reach when looking at the Jungian interpretation, which I will show next, is very similar to Freud’s, even though the explanation is different.

In addition, there is a woman lying in the room Toru dreams about. He knows that she is lying on the bed but Toru cannot see her, only hear her. In dealing with the unconscious and women in dreams, Jung presents what he likes to call the *anima*. An anima is personified in dreams by images of women, but is “the unconscious feminine side of a man’s personality …. the archetype of life itself” (Hall 120). According to this interpretation, the woman whom he can hear but not see would be Toru’s anima in *The Wind-up*. The fact that the woman in Toru's dream knows the mission is an indicator of this, because an anima in dreams has information that the dreamer wants to figure out. Furthermore, Jung means that when the dreamer figures out the meaning of it all, the meaning of the anima or the dream, the anima disappears. She is an aspect of the unconscious, an archetype in the objective psyche (Jung 135).

The anima can appear in several female forms, but what they have in common is that they hold a mystery, and the woman in Toru’s dream is mystery embodied. When Hall explains the Jungian anima he says that “a man’s anima development is reflected in how he relates to women” (120). That she is just a voice in Toru’s dream displays a very weak understanding of women, as he cannot even see her, and mirrors his real life problems with understanding Kumiko and femininity. Now, the room is related to this woman. In fact, I argue that the room and this woman are connected as a united goal for Toru, they are one. One indicator of this is because together, the room and the woman hold the answers that Toru is looking for. The fact that we cannot see her makes her fluid and drifting and she and the room merge. The room and the woman hold a common sense of mystery as the riddle that Toru has to solve. Since the room and the woman are basically one, I argue that it is the room-woman
combination in this novel that together gives the impression of being one of Toru’s animas, but foremost, it reflects his relation to femininity. Above, I asked how come Toru associates the room with a woman and also what it is he has to defeat in that room. Well, if we go back to the storyline in Toru’s life it becomes quite evident, as Toru’s goal is Kumiko and he is searching for her inside himself because that is the only place he can look. She has totally disappeared and Toru is trying to connect memories and characteristics that Kumiko has as his only option. The only place he can think to look for her is in his unconscious, symbolised through the well. Furthermore, the problem they always had was that Toru did not fully understand Kumiko, and now he is trying to. This is what he is searching for in that room, this is why he steps into the well and this is why he encounters a mysterious room-woman combination. His troubles with Kumiko, and his overall confusion with understanding women, take the form in his unconscious of an unseen woman in a room that he, as the key, has to unlock.

Whether it is an anima or not, both psychoanalytical views say basically the same thing as far as the room and symbolism are concerned. Both the Freudian and Jungian readings arrive at the “mysterious woman”, and when one knows this, the key symbolism is easily established as Toru is trying to act as a key in unlocking this incomprehensible woman. Freudian and Jungian theory brings us to the conclusion that what Toru confronts in the dream-room is femininity, as the room is a symbol for a woman, and when we look at Toru’s real life and the problems he faces we understand that the dream and the dream symbols mirror those issues; Toru has problems with femininity in life which then becomes the object of his dreams.

Finally, I would like to point out that the ending makes more sense if what the above interpretation of the symbolism is accepted. Many critics and other readers say that the novel feels like it has a beginning and a long middle, but hardly any ending in terms of
solving the conflicts. Kumiko does not come back and Toru is still alone. He has defeated something in his dream in the darkness but things will not go back to what they were. In my opinion, that is because the symbolism we have looked at clearly points to how this story is about a struggle with oneself and one’s problems inside. Toru still has the real world outside himself to deal with next but he has resolved at least part of the issue internally.

**Conclusion**

To sum up, in this essay the psychoanalytical reading of the dream symbols in *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle* has led to the conclusion that for Toru the well and the water are symbols for the unconscious and the room and key are symbols connected to femininity and Toru’s problems with it. Also, although he only stretches the issues as far as Kumiko, I think that Toru has issues with femininity as a whole, which would explain why most women in the novel are portrayed by Toru as very mysterious and often supernatural. An even more Jungian reading would say that Toru has problems with his own feminine side, which is also represented by the anima in his unconscious which is something you struggle with your whole life. And so, though not apparent at first glance, the symbolism in *The Wind-up Bird* tells us what conflicts Toru faces inside; a psychoanalytical reading confirms his struggle with femininity. Also, the ending becomes logical when one understands the symbolism. We realize that everything cannot be solved at the end because the work Toru has done has all been inside his mind and therefore that is the only place that is affected.
Works Cited


