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Deconstruction of New Individualism Through *After Dark*  
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## **Dedication**

The ultimate appreciation is for Allah

My appreciation,

*To my loving parents and all my family*

*To all my dear friends*

*To my best friend Tedlaouti Kamel Eddine who was my support throughout this  
special journey.*

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## Abstract

In the postmodern world, capitalism promotes extreme individualistic norms under the name of development. New Individualism theory highlights the main issues caused by globalization which helped capitalist system enlarge all over the world. The aim of the present study is to demonstrate that the new individualistic values are imposed on the postmodern individual. The study at hand is conducted to help developing societies conceptualize new individualistic norms to prevent the deconstruction of social structure. The presented qualitative research was conducted through the analysis of Murakami's *After Dark* and Elliott and Lemert's theory of New Individualism. The study showcased that the early 2000s individuals do not maintain new individualistic values, but rather, they are imposed on them.

**Key words:** New Individualism, Capitalism, Postmodernity, society, relationships issues.

## **List of abbreviations**

**YA:** Young Adult .

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# **General Introduction**

The individual is the very basic unit of social structure since the early existence of societies. Despite the difference of one's appearance or thoughts, individuals constructed solid relationships since they are instinctively born social. By the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the development of rationality and critical thinking in Europe, accompanied with the industrial revolution, led to the rise of economic manifestations that demanded trade freedom from the government's monopolization. The success of the manifestation of free trade led to the nascence of Capitalism as a modern economic system. It promoted individual's economic independence. However, New Individualism' theory by Elliott and Lemert indicates that New Individualistic norms reshaped individuals' conception of relationships while they cope with the postmodern world advances. It argues that the continual development of technological capitalist values became cultural, people embraced one's freedom as a social behaviour, thus the latter has become a norm of developed societies under the name of individualism. By the first decade of 21<sup>st</sup> century, people have experienced extreme individualism to meet the postmodern standards of instant change and short-termism<sup>1</sup> in life. In contrast, individuals, who seek social attachment, are the victims of technological development that calls for innovation and instant self-modification, they experience detachment from one another and trust in individuals' perceptions about each other, which raises social anxiety and doubts about the groups' unity.

The present research is neither conservative, nor liberal, the interested in social structure development of the postmodern world and the way postmodernity reshaped human values motivate its undertaking. The engagement through conversations with others about one's sense of not belonging to society has significantly contributed to the understanding that all the individuals do experience the same struggle. However, the sense of differentiation appears to be the way one thinks about their identities, and about the way others perceive them thinking that they are misfits, and what a society could be if it is made of a group of misfits. Individuals seem to be longing for acceptance and the construction of intimate social bounds, which are goals depicted by capitalism as distinct and old-fashioned values that members of the postmodern world cannot relate to.

The objective of this study is to deconstruct the wrong conceptualization of New Individualism theory, which assumes that the 21<sup>st</sup> individuals are engaging through detachment.

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<sup>1</sup> The change of life pace from one long-term experience to a fast pace of experiencing time, work, and life in response to the rapid development and innovation of technology (Elliott, Lemert 6).

It also aims to prove that postmodern individuals seek social relationships despite the struggles of instant change, pressure of innovation and continual self-discovery.

The study targets the contemporary developing societies that aim to adopt New Individualism as a social value, to help achieve economic benefits and avoid social deconstruction. It aims to answer the following question,

How does New Individualism deconstruct social structure?

We hypothesize that the main reason of social deconstruction incited by new individualism might be the pressure of the continual promotion of one's freedom by the capitalist economic system. However, social deconstruction might be a consequence of individuals' will to separate from one another in order to achieve subjective well-being.

The dissertation at hand consists of three chapters that attempt to provide insight about the theory and its depiction in *After Dark* by Haruki Murakami, to answer the question raised at the start of the study.

The first chapter highlights the development of human thoughts from the ancient times to the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the rebellion against trade monopolization by the European governments that led to the emergence of capitalism and the promotion of individualism. It then discusses how by the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century, the emergence of new individualism emerged and led to extreme deconstruction of pre-existed social values.

The second chapter presents an overview about the fiction of the postmodern world, in which authors work as social critics and observers in concern of the world around them. The chapter provides an overview about the novel of *After Dark*, and the interest of its writer, Haruki Murakami who wrote it for the benefits of postmodern youth.

The third chapter presents the analysis of *After Dark* by Haruki Murakami through the lenses of New Individualism theory by Elliott and Lemert in an attempt to meet the set objective.

## **Chapter one**

### **Historical Background of 'New Individualism'**

### 1.1 Introduction

Humans are individually born different in accord to their personal acts and thoughts, despite belonging to any community, they are individuals in the way they think about themselves, how the others perceive them and about the world in general. Far earlier than the revolutionary 18<sup>th</sup> century, thinkers’ thoughts such as Aristotle and Yang Zhu were considered as exotic according to their societies, however, such thinkers held into the notions of being both effective and affected parts by their societies. Centuries later, Christianity developed strict norms that picture seeking wealth as an act of non-obedient people so the church remained the money’s controller. The British crown monopolization of trade highlighted the economic regulations by governours of European nations by the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century, these regulations led to the manifestations of business leaders such as *Laissez-faire* in France that was the flame of Capitalism’s rise. Business men demanded the non-interference of government in their businesses. The publicity of free markets led to the cultural adaptation of capitalist values through time such as, embracing the major belief of individual rights by Adam Smith and his contemporaries. Subsequently, the recognition of differences between social members enlarged as a value to undertake in the modern world. The early 21<sup>st</sup> century, drastic social changes occurred and led to the individuals’ beliefs that one should have a deep relationship with the inner-self, rather than the other social members, which were effected by their perception of social life. The present chapter provides an insight about the development of individualism as a concept through centuries.

### 1.2 Early Traces of Individualism

Individualism is the tendency to independently think and act without the restrains of the group, it is often a concept of debate, for it causes conflicts between its notions and the customs of society. Individualism comes from individuation that defines the individual as the basic unit of society. Individualism, taken from this concept, indicates that since the individual is a social unit itself, he is a separated unit in producing action and thoughts. The concept of Individualism traces back earlier than the 19<sup>th</sup> century, before it was brought to the world as a word in Alexis Tocqueville’s book *Democracy in America*. The concept of individuality emerged since the beginning of humans’ existence.

Centuries before any rational revolutions, ancient realists and naturalists allowed themselves to discuss social phenomena of that time despite the differences of their thoughts from their societies’ lifestyle simplicity, since it is innate for a human being to observe and

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criticize the surrounded environment. Stephon indicates that Master Yang Zhu (360BC), a Chinese naturalist, challenges the Buddhist norms that are based on the belief that the self is an illusion and the thought of self-sufficiency is near to the impossible. Master Zhu suggested that a human should live by cultivating and following one's innate tendencies rather than interfering in the others' lives, such claims led his thoughts to be described as egoism.

In addition, the Greek thinker Aristotle(322BC) dealt with more than one field, and questioned the truth of things around him. He generally discussed the principles of individuation of objects in nature as an explanation to the oneness of things based on both their forms and matters, through his theory of *Hylomorphism*, which conceives existence of species (Llyod 519). One of Aristotle's commentators, Cherniss, based his claim on the philosopher's theory, "all the particular of the same species have numerically different forms" (Regis 163), as an explanation, species such as animals and human are naturally different creatures in their forms and also purposes of existence. However, this theory might lead to the idea that even creatures of the same species are different, it might lead to the conclusion that each individual has not only a specific form and shape, but also a matter. For humans are physically different, in addition to their superiority of having brains, which allows them to perceive their environment differently.

The correlated relationship between the development of life conditions and thoughts increased through time. European people of the 16<sup>th</sup> century developed critical thinking, and so did societies that developed sophisticated civilizations. The development of independent thoughts and the fact of claiming their differences occurred as a conflict between one's individualism of thinking and the restriction of society, some of these thoughts are those like Montaigne's, "wherever I wish to turn, I have to break through some barrier of custom, so carefully custom has blocked all our approaches", that was to be taken by the people of that time as, "a dangerous incitement to any lunatic who wanted to shrug off all restrains or spread some rabble-raising gospel of his own (Minogue 258). As an illustration, Montesquieu who was named as 'The Aristotle of political thought', claimed that individualism is a moral agent, concerned not only by the right or wrong of acts but also what the acts reveal about the characters of the individual. Montesquieu illustrated that Viscount Orte's case, after Bartholomew massacre of 1572, was ordered by Charles IX to kill the Huguenots of Bayonne city Orte, as a response, he refused his king's order, for he believed there were no executioners in his army although obeying the king was the right thing for Orte to do, while killing innocent people was a wrong decision, based on his heroic sense (Minogue 260). Orte's case represents

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a remarkable moral practice that appeared during the 16<sup>th</sup> century, exemplifying that despite the strict social and religious values, standing out for one’s opinion and belief could occur. Montaigne describes individualism of that era as, “Individualism introduced to human life a significant moral complexity that was distinct from the custom and religion that determined the right thing in other cultures” (260).

During the *Age of Reason*, the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, Modernity emerged along with the Industrial revolution that brought facilities to human life. However, trade was controlled by governments and crowns that implied regulations on the exchanges of goods, since people were used to be paid by food and lands. Such monopolization during the industrialization era led to economic manifestations as *Laissez-Faire* that started in France. Businessmen demanded the non-interference of governments in trade. These demands of free market were promoted by thinkers such as Adam Smith, who was influenced by the Enlightenment principles of natural, Smith outlined the belief of *Laissez-Faire* movement to encourage business leaders to seek their economic independence, so both profits and goods would be maximized. Smith claims, “It’s not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own self-interests” (117). Modern thinkers were in need of abolishing the doctrine of the ‘soul’ raising their doubts about Christianity and churches (Elliot, Lemert 20), so the concept of the ‘self’ came into existence, and the change in the language was needed for the word ‘individual’ to present a person rather than his soul.

Smith and his associates’ thoughts led to capitalist values in the European society. People began to imagine their new world. Thinkers and authors began to promote the belief of ‘working on my own interest’, and convince individuals that they are effective independent parts in the process of trade. The myth of Robinson Crusoe story is a great sample that shows the message Daniel Defoe tried to transmit by depicting the autonomy of an independent individual who creates his ‘own’ lifestyle from very basic material, the novel was believed that to be written by Crusoe himself as a real person who experienced rebuilding his life as a survivor of conditions, however, it was just a fiction character (Minogue 261). The beliefs that Defoe creates in Crusoe’s novel led people to believe in self-independence, consequently, egoism developed as an economic value and the concept of Capitalism emerged as a major influencer to both economic and social norms.

Human individuality developed from the early questioning of one’s existence, to the representation of one’s identity, for human mind, thoughts are instinctively meant to be formulated and shared, despite the restrictions of one’s surroundings. Thoughts’ development

followed the development of life condition which reached its peak at the 18<sup>th</sup> century, by the emergence of Industrial Revolution featured by the drastic changes in the rationality of thoughts including economic enlightenment principles that necessitated embracing egocentric values. Manifestations such as *Laissez-Faire* movement brought Capitalism that expanded to be transformed from economic beliefs to cultural ones.

### 1.3 Capitalist Values and The Rise of Individualism

The promotions for social ambivalence in the 19<sup>th</sup> century arose a rebellion of the bourgeois capitalist spirits against Christian values by eliminating the doctrine of the 'Soul' and calling for rationality of beliefs (Elliott, Lemert 85). The beliefs of a free individual were supported by the encouragement of Democracy and the reformation of society's structure allowed people to embrace capitalist values. A century later, the concept of differences recognition became a trend. Individualism, as a consequence, was promoted as a lifestyle, since its promotion of freedom was cohesive with Capitalism's norms. By the massive expansion of Capitalism around the globe, lifestyle shifted from traditional to new and free, for the urge of people for freedom was related to their innovation.

Capitalism developed by the end of the British Civil war, to become an economic system in the 19<sup>th</sup> century based on innovation and investment, guided by individual's encouragement to increase one's own profit. For Adam Smith, there was a revolution of moral sensibility alongside society. Economy brought a new structure of things, based on production and consumption. Smith believes that it brought its own moral structure (Minogue 264). This system, as Weber claims, "brought the modern world to a new milieu within which individual autonomy could and did raise" (cited in Seidman, Gruber), featuring Individualism as a concept. The latter was first observed by Alexis De Tocqueville, a French philosopher who brought the concept of individualism by observing the American society during his job on the embassy, to describe the individual autonomy as a man who removes himself from the masses of his fellows as an action of bourgeois individuals, like business and trade leader, an act that can be only observed by lower social classes (cited in Elliot, Lemert 10). The urge of seeking wealth increased technological and agricultural productivity, people of that era enjoyed leisure spoiled life.

The changes that occurred in the European society necessitated an urgent need to replace the irrational thoughts such as 'The Soul', which were associated with the Judeo-Christian theology as a reflection to the individual, to be replaced by a rational one named 'The

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Self'; a concept that is compatible with sophisticated modern world. The doctrine of the soul was considered too much religious for the secular company (Elliott, Lemert 32). The reformation of thoughts in European societies succeeded the elimination of all that has been thought as irrational factor that restricted the rational free labor.

For Minogue, a spiritual breakthrough arose the fear of worshipping the Mammon rather than God (262), Marx Weber claimed, "There was an end to the naïve piety and its repression of the economic impulse" (Seidman, Gruber 503). The ambivalence' promotion recommended the rational spirit and rationalistic economic ethics led to what has been believed as Europe's power and prosperity by mixing ambivalence with the social order (Minogue 258). The rise of individual's self-responsibility was the reason, after the spread of Capitalism, which up-roared private ownership, despite the hard conditions of lower classes in factories. Nevertheless, individuals practiced the trend of not caring for others, they thought society as another object to be managed and improved.

Capitalism is a cultural system rooted in the need of private investors to turn profits, the real changes needed a change of mind, people had to develop capitalist values (taking the risks and appreciating innovation). Weber explained that, "Capitalism demands specific individuals who value the hard work and believe in self-searching, ones who are willing to take the risks and invest their time and cash money for gaining profits" (cited in Elliott, Lemert 49). Capitalist norms boosted individualism in the direction of possessive rights of property and profitable economic relations

The political project held by the policymakers was involved to achieve what has been seen as 'more equal society'. They implemented Democracy's notions to the constitutional order in Europe to combine both the people expectations about freedom and politicians' thoughts about social justice, as it is shown by Adam smith,

A man intending to his own gain, is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention. Nor, is it always the worse for society that it was no part of it . . . I have never known much good done by the those who affected to trade the public good (Minogue 262).

A nationally equal society was cultivated in churches, universities, and non-governmental organizations (Minogue 263). Subsequently, traditions were underrated and the urge of all that is new increased. There was a belief that there is no better way for a nation to

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be managed as leaving the individuals seeking their own betterment. Capitalism became the 'Tremendous Cosmo' as it was described by Weber and Franklin, individuals were encouraged by freedom under the concept of Democracy and Social justice (cited in Elliott, Lemert 152). Individualism became their ideology and their philosophy of the 'I' that has its own value in the world, an 'I' that is irreplaceable. Jean Jacques Rousseau claimed, "Individualism is an infinite variety of individuals, each with their own peculiar tastes and philosophies" (cited in Elliott, Lemert 5). Individuals started to live as the judges of their own selves, since no one had the capability to grasp the interest of others better than they, themselves, do.

The global adaptation of Capitalism for its benefits affected individuals since they are shaped on the basis of the environment they belong to. Seeking wealth and success blinded people to the extent that they embraced individualistic values and sacrifice their social roles. By the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and early 21<sup>st</sup> century, it was no longer a matter of claiming one's difference but rather a notion of the modern self. Capitalism, as a result, encouraged Individualism and vice-versa. By the emergence of Globalization, individuals found themselves blindly embracing extreme individualistic values.

### 1.4 The Emergence of New Individualism

In the early 2000's, New Individualism invaded the postmodern world. It affected the way individuals perceive life and necessitated changes of identity that are controversial to human nature. The rise of individualistic notions resulted socially-ill individuals who suffer Short-termism, instant change and self-reinvention and majorly interpersonal relationship's issues.

Globalization boosted the continual development of Capitalism during the early 2000s, and reshaped the social structure of the postmodern countries. For both Elliot and Lemert, Individuality is not only important but also is the creation of individual's own identity, the concept of individualism changed due to the imbrication of technology that was mixed with information and communication (25). The sense of identity transformed, along with the emotional and social practice of individuality. The threat that individualization and Globalization would deconstruct society frightened people, for they both have negative effects on social cohesion. The sense of solidarity and communism decreased, since individualistic value is having the freedom of choice-making and directing one's life without social restrictions, Mohammed Akhtar Khan stated in his article,

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Individualism signifies a conviction in the dignity of the human individual whom it regards as the basic unit of society: the individual is the generating force for all social and political institutions. It is a conviction that each individual is the best judge of his own interests, that his act of making choices contributes to the development of his personality as well as to the welfare of the society (1).

Globalization, as a consequence, had far reaching consequences on the way individuals perceive life. For Simmel, "A growing sense of personal rights and a growing opposition between self-interest and civil virtue" (cited in Elliott, Lemert 5). Freedom was used as a commercial issue, since technology invaded not only economic part of life but also their mental and psychological ones. The majority of products publicities called for innovation to direct individuals to new life facilities. Companies advertised their products as the following publicity of Apple computer in 1998 'Think Different' campaign reported,

Here it is to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The troublemakers. The round pegs in square holes. The ones who see things differently. They are not fond of rules. And they have no respect of status quo. You can praise them, quote them, disbelieve them, glorify them or vilify them. But the only way you cannot do is ignore them. Because they change things. They invent. They imagine. They heal. They explore. They create. They inspire. They push the human race forward. Maybe they have to be crazy. We make tools for these kind of people. Because while some see them as the crazy ones. We see genius" (Elliott, Lemert 53).

The advertisement was specifically directed for separated individuals represented as 'Ones' not a group nor a society, the ones that are unique and developed. For instance, such kinds of human mind's manipulation gradually introduced individuals to New Individualism as a trend, under which they seek their own interests despite the circumstances on their way. They regarded individualistic values as being neutral and ambivalent notions of a free individual. A revolution of the way people thought about being extreme individualists largely emerged and new features began to change the convenient social structure and the way people think about themselves, society, and others.

*Detraditionalization* is a term brought by Anthony Giddens, which highlights one major issue that occurred during the start of New Individualism. For various kind of individuals,

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nation and society started to appear less than a cultural resonance. Mass transportation media that call for free spirit had widely affected the way people expect and perceive their surroundings, a simulation that was identified by Jean Baudrillard stated, "The world of round-the-clock mass media is one in which people experience, struggle and try to cope with signs of the real" (cited in Elliott, Lemert 26). People of the early 2000's were exposed to unstable world in the televisual media which made them unsatisfied with the environment around them, they sought changes against restrictions of their old social traditions. One crucial way individualism changed the globalized world for both Elliott and Lemert is, "the undermining of traditions-and particular ways of living, as one might expect, enormously expanded the range of personal choice and opportunity for many people" (7-8).

Japan, as an illustration, adopted Capitalism and embraced the Western culture values that were new to Japanese individuals, who were used to solid social structure. However, the high demands on whatever is new was a reason to embrace Euro-American cultures, despite their contradictions with their own traditions. Individualism and traditions are two concepts that cannot co-exist in one society, for individualism was a call to one's identification rather than the group, the old way of social cohesion's practice and the tradition of solid structure were contradictory to individualistic notions, "Societies that remained with values of solidarity", argued De Beer and Koster, "were regarded as close-knit, ones that might seem as a comfort for individuals but at the same time suffocating and old-fashioned" (10). People with individualistic mentality were more likely to isolate themselves from social traditions and interactions to get in accordance with the new ones.

Furthermore, instant change of the postmodern world is represented through the short burst of events, new products, places and information. Society, affected by these features, seemed as a world that might be modified, it became characterized by cultural and ethnic diversities and the old ways of doing things seemed old-fashioned (Elliott, Lemert 84). The radical economic and political changes needed a social one, so the urge for changes began, for Elliott and Lemert:

The term individualism, conjures up an unusual, though sociologically revealing, diversity of associations. Ours is the era of identities individualized, and our current fascination for the making, reinvention and transformation of selves is in, so-and-so, integral to contemporary living (53).

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Life was sliced into episodes and divided periods, in accordance to the instant changes of technological life, and so was the individual's life. In addition, the self was under the pressure of instant change, the focus changed from the development of society to seeking one's own interest, as Simmel portrayed, "The individual seeks himself as if he did not have it yet" (cited in Elliott, Lemert 55).

The process of adapting with new rules under the cult of short-termism affected individuals' view about themselves and arose not only life-reinvention but rather self-reinvention and discovery to correspond to the new world, for Elliott and Lemert, "the cult of the ever-new and of short-termism has produced a code of self-searching and self-discovery riddled with contradiction" (99). In Japan, as an illustration, the demand for unique workers created pressure for universities and high school students had to apply for the largest amount of employment tests. Students maintained self-analyses tests to evaluate their abilities and their lacks that they should improve. Such analyses led to the idea that the self is an object that can be instantly changed, modified and reconstructed. Identities started to be fast consumed, individuals experienced hidden struggles of identity's loss, as Elliott and Lemert stated, "These are identities which have taken the modern individualist impulse for self-constitution and self-improvement and raised the second power, thus, giving radical post-modern slant on choosing, changing, transforming as ends of themselves" (97). Identity was in a conflict under the pressure of urban world, self-actualization meant a loss of trust in the competency and the value of the individual, both Elliott and Lemert added, "Living in an age of individualism requires individuals capable of designing and directing their own biographies, of defining identities in terms of self-actualization of deploying social goods and cultural symbols to represent individual expression and personality" (53). The process of New Individualism caused a massive threat in individuals' conceptions of their identities, society, and relationships.

Individualism, as Triandis Stated is, "a social pattern that consists of loosely linked individuals who view themselves independent of collectives" (cited in Ogihara et al, 213). The focus on the self-development blinded individuals from the importance of their psychological states affected their relationships. While everyone was adopting the individualistic mentality (I am the best judge of myself), a deep struggle of maintaining inter-relationships between individuals occurred. Relationships became leisure because of the uncertainty about the future that was considered as open-ended, as it is represented in Giddens quote,

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In a world of stunning technological change, people continually revise the settled patterns of their relationships and question the established certainties of their private and public lives because no one can any longer be sure of what the future holds (cited in Elliott, Lemert 125).

Basically, individuals engaged through their detachment from each other. Kinship became less valuable, independency from family occurred as a sign of responsibility and maturity of individuals who found themselves facing life's struggles at early age. Sense of belonging to a group did not necessitate kinship anymore, but people with the same interests who would collaborate to achieve them rather than stick together and fulfilled the needed emotional support.

In the postmodern world, relationships became guided by desires or goals, not emotional or social interaction. Alexis Tocqueville defined the social consequences of the individualist principles of the modern world as following,

Individualism is a novel expression; to which a novel idea has given birth, individualism is a mature calm feeling which disposes each member of the community to sever himself from the mass of his fellow-creatures, and to draw apart with his family and friends" (cited in Elliott, Lemert 159).

The world of solid structure deconstructed due to the new values of seeking one's interests. People with high individualistic tendencies had fewer friends, acquaintances and less familial interactions. Family was influenced as well, work conditions separated parents from their children, which resulted emotionally ill-formed youth that found technology as an escape and created more anti-social individuals and techno-kids that are ill-equipped (Elliott, Lemert 24).

Systems and environment of developed countries embraced individualism values, like japan, which led to the suggestion that their individuals' tendencies and behaviours became more individualistic. Social studies showed that family size decreased, while divorce rate increased and independence in children lives was prioritized. These relationships became hard to maintain since social anxiety arose between that was created as a result of social interactions' lack between individuals who became anxious about their positions in society.

New Individualism theory indicates that human life was reshaped by the instant changes and short-term conditions. Traditions, as the very basis of societies started to dissolve in the trend of 'New World'. Modern people were pushed to actualize themselves to correspond

to technological advances. The continual development of individual's self, brought another threat that is detachment, and developed struggles of perceiving healthy interpersonal relationships or making them. The individual appears to be the most harmed because of the new individualistic trends.

### 1.5 Conclusion

Individuality was never a matter of rationality's development, it existed equivalently with human existence. However, the continual advances of economic and political thoughts against traditions and social restrictions in the European societies led to the spread of one's individuality as a concept of living. New individualism theory by Elliott and Lemert suggests that, since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century people held into the notions of what had been named "Individualism" to cope with globalized world. The financial balances of the individual were not the only modern struggle, but also mental health conditions were also influenced by the drastic changes of social life, which were undertaken by individuals. The postmodern world's individual suffer severe social anxiety and obstacles to maintain and create interpersonal relationships. Thus in the light of this, this study aims to demonstrate, through Murakami's novel *After Dark*, that the postmodernist people are being brainwashed by media publicities, and the changing rules of economic systems promotions of free individuals highlighting New Individualism norms as the key of surviving developed world.

## **Chapter Two**

**New Individualistic norms and Postmodernist  
fiction through Murakami's After Dark**

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter showcases the relation of the technological development with the development of the critical rationality of human minds and an overall explanation of the influence of innovation on the literary movement. The shift from modernism to postmodernism encouraged authors to be independent thinkers and social critics criticized and contribute in the correction of the world around them. Murakami had always been interested in the contribution to his society, and especially, in the process of individual's identity creation in instantly transforming world. *After Dark*, is a novel by the global author, that sheds light on the postmodern adolescents' life conditions. The chosen novel aims to correct young reader perception of relationships' creation, re-connectedness, and the process of shifting to adulthood. Characters represent young people lives, struggles, and positions in the postmodern world.

### 2.2 Postmodern Fiction and New Individualized World

During the 21<sup>st</sup> century, modernism did not seem correspondent to the continual advances to technology that continually brought changes to the world. Postmodernism felt more accurate to authors who wanted to manifest their uniqueness and differences from just previous modernism. Authors created a freer atmosphere through writings to express their interests and transmit their messages to readers who are in continual urge for new contents and styles.

In new individualistic world, fiction is called to be unique. Postmodern authors rebellion against just 'Modernism', since a new world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century necessitated new concepts and styles of expressing arts. Life changes from modernity to postmodernity, that is extremely featured by new individualistic values, equivalently meant new taste of demand on literature. For John Gardner, "In a world that values progress, "post-modern" in fact means New! Improved!" (cited in McHale 4), it seemed impossible to keep an old concept borrowed from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century authors. It can be said that the postmodern world instant change needed a concept that is convenient to its development.

For the postmodern people who are obsessed with 'The New', it had often been a conflict matter between the ones who think that postmodernism is a continuation of modernist movement and those who believe it is a new revolutionary fiction. It has been conceptualized various times, by some alternatives such as, Federman's *Surfiction* or *Post-Contemporary Fiction* by Klin Kowitz (cited in McHale 4). However, the passion about a concept that suits artists' urge of claiming their own unique movement made it almost impossible to avoid using

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Postmodernism to reflect to their arts. Charles Newman stated, “An even more pungently, the term “postmodernist”, inevitably calls to mind a band of vainglorious contemporary artists following the circus elephants of Modernism with snow shovels” (cited in McHale 4). However, for Jurgen Habermas, Neoconservatives are the ones against calling the 21<sup>st</sup> century’s literature as Postmodernism (cited in Lyotard 72), which is a strong statement that indicates how extremely old-fashioned such thinkers and others seem in a world that calls for only ‘The New’.

The postmodernist authors ambition of creating their unique movement was the reason they added “Post” to the previous movement, which was a bit confusing for thinkers to perceive the combination between “modern” and “post” which together indicate “futuristic-now”, McHale explains the confusion,

“Postmodern”? The term does not even make sense. For if “modern” means “pertaining to the present”, “the post-modern” can only mean “pertaining the future”, and in this case what could postmodernist fiction be expect fiction that has not yet been written? Either the term is solecism, or this “post” does not mean what the dictionary tells us it ought to mean, but only functions as a kind of intensifier (4).

McHale explanation indicates that it is not a fiction of after the present but rather a fiction of after modernist movement, that represents the creativity of the 21<sup>st</sup> century authors but not the writings of the future.

However, others may define it as a literature of the contemporary and a shrink from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Modernism. Postmodernism followed modernism the same way postmodernity did, as Lyotard defines it, “Postmodernism thus understood is not modernism at its end but in the nascent state and this state is constant” (79). In other words, it is the continual development of modernism movement, for McHale explains, “Postmodernism is the posterity of modernism this is tautological, just as saying that pre-romanticism is the predecessor of romanticism would be tautological” (5). It is a movement that links the past with future by the use of innovative artists of futuristic insights.

The postmodern world became saturated with thoughts, new ones, that are considered as original and credible, freedom of life voices automatically means freedom of expressing thoughts through literary art or other forms of arts. The truth did not necessarily have just one source, since new individualistic norms encouraged innovation of bringing new thoughts. If

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modernist fiction is writing for the one's own sake, then what could postmodern literature be more than an extreme interest in the author's pleasure of writing. Democracy can be considered as a major reason why postmodernists are not only writers but also sociologists, politicians, psychologists and scientists. Writers are free thinkers who can defend their principles out of their freedom to express their thoughts, they rely on their own observations of life and try to transmit not only political or sociological issues but even psychological ones by themselves. Lyotard gives further explanations,

Postmodern artist or writer is in the position of a philosopher: the text he writes, the works he produces are not in principles governed by pre-established rules, and they cannot be judged according to their text or to the work. Those rules and categories are what the work of art itself is looking for. The authors and writers themselves are working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what will have been done (8).

Postmodernist writers allow themselves to be the ones who highlight issues and provide solutions according to their interests whether they were for their own sake or for their surroundings. Authors often try to correspond to their readers' wants and needs by detecting what are the current trends and the new subgenre in continual nascence.

### 2.3 Young Adult Literature

The Enlightenment of thought brought new values to the world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Intellectuals were the first line to get affected, especially postmodernist artists such as authors who developed new writing styles and concepts that met the social and rational development. Authors followed specific standards that match contemporary life conditions, Young adult literature fiction works as a literary escape of youth's daily pressure, an instruction of dealing with life obstacles, and a preparation for the future.

Fiction developed what is called 'Young Adult literature' that differed from children or early adolescents' stories such as *Mary Poppins* or *Stuart Little*, the lower end of its readers is 14 years old (Campbell 67). Adolescents were paid attention through literary works since they were considered as an economic and social power. They consist of students who are on the stage of being formed to employees, intellectuals as writers felt the need of enlightening them as the next generations who need to be reshaped and prepared for the future instant changes, Woodson stated,

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When you control a man's thinking you do not have to worry about his actions. You do not have to tell him not to stand here or go yonder. He will find his 'proper place' and will stay in it. You do not need to send him to the back door. He will go without being told. In fact, if there is no back door, he will cut one for his special benefit. His education makes it necessary (cited in Campbell 95).

The New Individualism's project influenced thinkers to work on forming a generation that adapts with the new norms and values of the postmodern world in response to the instant changes of life, and enlightening them of the expected struggles that a young adult might experience in the new world. Young Adult literature emergence was related to the authors' consideration of the wide ranges of readers, it was directed for the young adult who suffer particular issues in individualistic societies. According to Campbell, YA literature was created to be relevant to the scopes of teenagers' interests, in forms of novels that highlight the process of realization of the adolescents' new maturity, in which the authors claim the limited viewpoints of young adults through his writing.

In fact, YA fiction considers adulthood as the most challenging stage of growing. Young adults are the mostly affected part of individualistic society, since they sense abandonment and social isolation. The 21<sup>st</sup> century YA literature, mainly as Gracia defined it, as a set of dystopian books that represent an escape from the daily pressure to the young readers who can identify with protagonist's journey who often suffer the feeling of isolation, identity's discovery, and the yearning of exceptionalism in a world that is pictured (70-71). Gracia explains,

Perhaps even more than in other types of YA books, the protagonists of the post-apocalyptic are of a singular variety: they don't fit the mold of the society they are placed in (often excelling beyond the expectations of tests and trials through which they are played) (72).

Such identification of the readers to the protagonists and the relation between their real lives and the world they read from the novels lead them to overcome the feeling of living in an isolated world, and gives them the impression of being close to someone who can understand them, which is a feeling of acceptance that they often long. For Campbell, the author in this

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case, includes internal actions that are related to the psyche of the adolescents (70). Salinger explains such feeling in his book *Catcher in The Rye*,

What really knocks me out is a book that, when you are all done reading it, you wish the author that wrote it was a terrific friend of yours and you could call him up on the phone whenever you felt like it. That doesn't happen much though (cited in Gracia 109).

The main considered theme of YA fiction is the process of becoming an adult (despite the different event that might the book is dealing with), which comes along with the journey of finding answers to both eternal, and internal question as Campbell states them, "Who am I? And what am I going to do about it? A task that ought to be accomplished by the end of the novel that is the resolution of the conflict by the realization of shaping an adult identity (70).

In a postmodern world, authors, who work as observers, are aware of the social conditions around them. YA subgenre depicts society and people, even if they were futuristic societies or non-human characters, in specific standards that reinforce the cultural practices and the supposition of how the current young adult, who are mainly the readers, who should live and perceive the world they live in. In general, YA literature shapes young people through the relativity it creates between the novel and the reader's life. For Gracia, the strong transmitted messages of responsibility transfer through YA novels lead the readers to the understanding that they own the present, since the past is not their responsibility and so it is the future, as Gracia states, "Youth ways of being and the 'emerging-self' are subjective experiences that are shaped by guidance and personal reflection" (132). It is up to the young readers to perceive the lessons they learn from this fiction's subgenre to transform the society they live in for the better and shape the future (132-133).

The responsibility that is held by the postmodern authors, as social observers and philosophy thinkers, allows them to consider the daily struggles of their readers. For youth is an essential part of the postmodern society that the future of nations relays on, authors direct the readers to acknowledge their life struggles and help them overcome the adolescence life in the healthiest possible way, as a preparation for adult's life.

### **2.4 Murakami's Interests through his Writings**

Murakami, as a postmodern author, had often been an observer of the changes that occur around him. One of the main interests he often tries to depict through his literary works

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is the journey of self-discovery against society's restrictions, such as the Japanese. However, during his escapism from the group's social codes of his native country he could not help but to feel the necessity of his commitment to his fellow citizens of his native country, portraying the need of building independent identity for the good of the society that the individual belongs to.

*After Dark's* author had often been bothered by the social codes that the Japanese culture developed. According to Sugimoto (2014), the Japanese society social codes fall under two dichotomies that youth maintain while they transfer from young to adults. The first dichotomy is defined as *Omete* and *Ura*, *Omote* means the 'front' is the organized acceptable façade that is shown by the individuals to the others, while *Ura* means the 'rear' which is the disorganized hidden part of the individual that consists their deep thoughts which they hide from the others. In addition, Wetzel (1994) suggests the pair of *Uchi* and *Soto*, he argues that the Japanese children grow in their families they belong to as *Uchi*, in which they share and develop common purposes. While all the other social relations are counted as the outside 'Soto' and other social members are referred to as 'them' (cited in Mani et al 79). Such dichotomies were considered as old-fashioned in the postmodern world. Murakami purpose was to abolish such social codes that cause self-contradiction for individuals who seek to create their identities.

Murakami's observation of the consequences of 1995's two tragedies of Tokyo Subway Sarin and Kobe's earthquake that caused drastic change of the Japanese individual perception about the group. The tragedy of Kobe's earthquake led to the death of thousands of citizens followed by another one, that was for Murakami, the starting point of the Japanese social values' changes. Tokyo Subway Sarin gas attack was organized by AUM Shinrikyo, which is a religious cult guided by Shoko Asahara responsible for the death of thousands of people. Silencing the citizens who rose against the non-religious activities of Asahara and his followers was the main reason of taking their lives and freedom away. After interviewing people involved in the attack to deeply understand the social changes that occurred, he observed the changes of Japanese individuals' consciousness after the events. The gap within the Japanese social structure of group spirit and social anxiety were revealed, Murakami believed that there was a need of embracing the consequences of both tragedies as the responsibility of all the groups, for a change of the Japanese mindset of dividing the society according to the dichotomies of 'us' against 'them' to free the individual creates identity without social norms' restriction (cited in Mani et al 78-79).

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Despite Murakami's fascination with the Western society and his escapism to the American dream, he remained committed to his native society. Since the outset of his career, Jon Michaud states, "the nature of boundary line between the individual and the collective has been a recurring concern of Murakami". Murakami's purpose was influencing the Japanese individual from the discrimination of the group, so the individual can be independent from the strict norms which he could not accept since his youth. Murakami's call for individualism was for the good of both society and individual, which is remarked in his interview with Burma, "I have tried to make a foreign country in my heart. It is strange, but the farther I got away from Japan, the more I felt tied to it" (New Yorker 2011).

From the very start of his literary career, Murakami has often been interested in the concept of building the self and the identity against the oppressive values of societies, such as Japanese who were divided into separate groups. Murakami observed the contradiction that the Japanese individuals suffer while they try to discover their identities inside, especially after the tragedies of 1995 that rose social anxiety between individuals who lost the trust in the group. However, Murakami interest about one's identity against the society is not a matter of promotion of individualism, but rather as a transmitted message to create a one united group that is Japanese, instead of many groups, where the individual can freely build his own identity.

### **2.5 Overview of *After Dark***

*After Dark* is a novel written by the global author Murakami Haruki in 2007. Using a specified way of narration to attract the young readers, Murakami depicts the world one night from dawn to dusk for the characters to break the disconnectedness walls that their social anxiety creates and find each other once again. The novel works as a reminder for the readers to be aware of the difficulty of the postmodern world and as a guide to help building their identities as future adults.

Narration of the novel is presented in a delicate way for the young adolescent readers, through the tongue of a narrator who can transform from the body of a bird to a human shape having dinner in family restaurant then move to a camera in the corner of the room, which

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depicts Murakami's imaginative sense. The novel is divided into chapters with a clock depicting the passage of time at the beginning of each one portraying the separated worlds of characters. The narrator is unreliable, he is subjective in telling the characters' stories, as the following passage indicates,

Our point of view, as an imaginary camera, picks up our and lingers over things like this in the room. We are invisible, anonymous intruders. We look. We listen. We note odours. But we are not physically present in the place, and we leave behind no traces. We follow the same rules, so to speak, as orthodox time travelers. We observe but do not intervene (Murakami 31).

However, he interferes in the psyche of both the readers and characters, and makes assumptions of characters next moves and intimate thoughts. Which can be seen in the following, 'Mari has a moment of hesitation, but, looking at her face, she guesses that the woman is not a bad person' (Murakami 38).

Characters in the novel represent the postmodern individuals that are supposed to portray the Japanese society and its traditions and features. However, Murakami's aim of depicting the conditions of the world that is affected by Globalization is presented in the places depicted in the novel that seem Western such as, *Denny's* restaurant, and the food presented inside like, omelette and toasts the jazz music played throughout the novel does not relate to the Japanese culture such as, *go away little girl* by Perry or *Hall and Oates' I can't go for that*, taking into consideration the clothes the characters wear such as the red sox cap or Addidas T-shirt. However, Tokyo is the only signifier that the culture is Japanese alongside with characters' names such as Takahashi or Shirakawa. Murakami purposely apply such indicators to get familiarized with the young readers, since the novel is directed to young adults.

The world, in one night, is depicted as deconstructed and in an instant change, also the characters' lives are pictured as separated and disturbed. Characters live in separate worlds, each with his/her own story and conditions, as an illustration, Mari escapes home because of the pressure of familial responsibility and the feeling of alienation, she goes reading books at *Denny's* where she is depicted as strange and alone, and so all the characters seem. However, the novel takes one night to narrate the difficulties that the characters face on daily bases, Takahashi isolates himself from the toxic relationship he has with his father and goes wander the whole night playing trombone and tries to find the question of what is his interests? and

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who really he is? Eri, on the other hand, escape the social anxiety she suffers because of the beauty's role she often plays, she is depicted as anxious about the way she looks and the way people perceive her. As a result, she cannot bear the emotional struggles so she allows her mind to forget everything and goes sleeping for more than two months. While characters isolating themselves from the world they belong to, they seem socially-ill and anxious. However, once they stumble to one another they show their gentleness to the others and share deep conversation, which lead them to discover their real identities and purpose in life, which leads to the creation of intimate relationships. By the end of the dark night, characters seem connected to each other and less anxious, their separate worlds dissolve in one world that gather all the characters together.

Murakami's chose YA fiction to narrate the novel *After Dark* in a smooth way to attract young readers. The purpose of the novel is to highlight the main issues of the postmodern youth so the readers learn from the experiences of the characters whom they relate to. The novel works as a reminder of the difficulties of living in a developed nation that push individuals to think of themselves as anti-social. However, by the end of the novel, a new beginning is presented in which characters are connected and less anxious again.

### 2.6 Conclusion

Development of technology is related to the development of human's rationality. As the postmodern world necessitates critical thinking, individuals are called to be the creators of their own original thoughts. Authors are the first contributors in the process of individuals' enlightenment, consequently, they manifested against the previous literary movement, since modernism was cohesive to the new modern world. Postmodernism success to overcome modernism led to the creation of new literary subgenres, for postmodernist are the philosophers and the observers of their surroundings. Young Adult literature came to the world as a literary escape and life guide for young readers, who paid more attention for the future is theirs, to provide them with lessons of growing to be adults in a world flickering with technology. *After Dark* by Murakami Haruki is a YA novel that provides young readers with lessons about building independent identity and reconnecting with each other in the new individualized world, as a preparation for the future adults.

## **Chapter Three**

### **The Illusion of New Individualism**

### 3.1 Introduction

The following chapter introduces an examination of New Individualism theory on the novel *After Dark* by Murakami Haruki. Characters of the novel represent the promoted lifestyle and mentality of new individualistic people in the postmodern countries such as Japan in the early 2000's. Daily obstacles of new individualistic people are highlighted, for they unconsciously pursue the creation of autonomous life, well-being, and self-development. Consequently, people's perception of finding intimacy and relationships changes, which influences their communication skills.

### 3.2 New individualists' Disconnectedness in *After Dark*

Globalization reconstructs the world by the notions of New Individualism, people's lives are rapidly and continually changing and so are their identities. Individuals follow the trend of ideal life's creation, which results in creating and struggling an instability in relationships. Elliott and Lemert, sociologists, identify the disconnectedness of the postmodern individuals as 'Engagement Through Detachment'. People rapidly cross different paths, as if they agree to detach from one another. However, their expectation that everyone is more concerned by their own interests is the reason of their detachment.

The detachment of individuals rapidly develops to loneliness and separates the individuals from each other. Through time it becomes a struggle rather than a factor of leading to a better life. Under the postmodern society's expectations, individuals are convinced in immersing themselves in their own world to run their own interests. Individual loss of interaction with one another is the price of leading an autonomous life and a sacrifice of one's emotional health, which leads to the decay of the essential innate communicative skills. Elliott et al report,

“Engagement through detachment” refers to “the Emotional Cost of New Individualism” of surviving in a fast-paced, networked world in which the pressure of continual change, ongoing reinvention, short-termism and episodocity<sup>2</sup> take their toll in individuals. Engaging with others through detachment can breed emotional deadness, a precursor to the impulse to suicide (16).

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<sup>2</sup> Globalization constructed life as collection of continual sliced episodes of actions and events; the identities of individuals became fastly consumed and disposed. (Elliott, Lemert 97).

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Characters in the novel are the reflection of Japanese postmodern individuals of the early 2000's era that Elliott et al describe as 'The Age of Fragmentation' the period starting from the 1990's to the early 2000's. It is the era when Globalization plays a major role in the creation of a consumerist individualized society. Taking into consideration that Japanese society was involved in the social privatization trend since the 1970's, individuals separated themselves from the group to enjoy leisure lives (15). Continual pursue of leisure life means extreme involvement in personal interests, although its perception differs from one individual to another, it equally leads to the norm of the freer individual spirit. In addition to the pre-existed privatization in fragmented age's Japan, the detachment is expected to get enlarged in the early 2000's causing more profound social and personal communicative struggles. In contrast, connectedness between individuals still exist, in the new individualized society, for individuals often belong to common certain places and areas in a form of groups that share the same interests, which lead to the expectation of the creation of relationships.

### 3.3 Detachment in a form of Loneliness in *After Dark*

One major issue discussed by Elliott and Lemert is the one related to how can an individual lead a meaningful independent life under the pressure of rapid instant change, which requires individual detachment from the others. Instead of feeling the group spirit people in the postmodern societies are expected to experience the 'otherness' of each other. Murakami describes the sense of such detachment in the novel, "The room is dark. Only the area around the man's desk receives illumination from fluorescent lights on the ceiling. This could be an Edward Hopper painting titled *Loneliness*" (87). Detachment comes in the shape of loneliness, which takes many forms according to Mijuskovic theory of loneliness.

Loneliness constructs lives of socially-ill individuals, which is the common point between all the characters of *After Dark* who represent the individualists. Loneliness forms indicate that detachment is not generally chosen by individuals. Aloneness is the first form of loneliness that can be identified as the state of being physically alone (Amanda et al 62), it is also included in the other forms of loneliness. Aloneness can be remarked in the novel, since being detached from society necessitates the physical separation; characters are often alone in family restaurant, bars, and parks.

Another loneliness form comes in a shape of alienation. According to Killeen, Mijuskovic defined the sense of alienation as the extreme level of loneliness, individuals experience it once they get separated from others and experience the sense of love's lack, which

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causes emotional pain (Amanda et al 63). Takahashi, a character from *After Dark*, dealt with alienation at a very young age because of both his mother's death and his father's absence in prison, it appears to be deeply affecting him, as it is presented in the following passage:

Takahashi smiles and looks at Mari, "well, finally, once you become and orphan, you are till the day you die. I keep having the same dreams. I'm seven years old and an orphan again. All alone, with no adult to take care of me. It's evening, and the light is fading, and night is pressing in. It's always the same. In the dream I always go back to being seven years old." (Murakami 158).

Detachment in such a situation is imposed on the individual, since it was not the choice of Takahashi to be alienated, which concludes that alienation is not an individual choice, but rather an unwillingly detachment.

On the other hand, Killeen describes isolation as being distinguished by the other's expectations, which leads to a sense of differentiation. Individuals are isolated once they escape from the pressure of people's attitude towards them. Isolation is dependent on the surrounding of the individual, however, it is their choice to be self-isolated. (Amanda et al 63). Mari, a character in *After Dark*, felt isolated since her childhood because of her parents' expectations. She was treated as the ugly little child of the family who must be smart enough to recap with her beautiful sister, as a result, her confidence was shaken to the extent that she was often bullied at school. As an isolation act, Mari moved to a Chinese school to get detached from them, she occupied her time to learn the new language and to make friendships, which is indicated in following passage: "They wanted me to go to dome famous prep school and become a doctor or a lawyer or something. They had our roles picked out for us: the elder sister, Snow White; the younger sister, a little genius" (Murakami 62).

The obstacles of the need to fit in other's standards is the factor that leads the individuals to create their own worlds, Eri, the same as her sister Mari, was obliged to escape the role she was pressured to perform as the beautiful woman on the covers of school magazines and TV shows, thus she escaped through sleeping for months. However, Shirakawa, another character, chooses to be self-isolated. He is often depicted alone in the novel at work or home while everyone is asleep. Isolation allows Shirakawa to free himself from the disturbance of the outer world and to escape the image of a computer company's worker and enjoy pleasure, as it is mentioned in the following passage:

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Not that the man himself feels lonely where he is at the moment: he prefers it this way. With no one else around, he can concentrate. He can listen to his favorite music and get a lot of work done. He does not hate his job. As long as he is able to concentrate on his work, he does not have to be distracted by practical trivia (Murakami 87).

The different forms of loneliness caused by the conditions of the postmodern world push individuals to seek solitude as a reconstruction of the painful detachment they experience. Solitude is the undertaken healing process to overcome loneliness, Killeen states that Rokach identify it calming and refreshing feeling that can be used to cope with loneliness (Amanda et al,63). Characters, portray the postmodern people who are under the pressure of innovation, who are expected to rapidly seek their own privatized worlds as an escape from the outer one's expectations.

However, they transform the harmful forms of loneliness into solitude to experience less pressure. Minogue states, "such individuals would seem to be competitive, or in a modern jargon, to be playing a zero-sum game. Every loss of X is a gain of Y" (261). In addition, instant change becomes a corporate concept that changes the one's world, so even the self can be continually revised and changed however the individual desires. The need of changing the one's world necessitates that the identity is limitless, as an illustration, some characters in the novel appear to be not sure about their sexuality, future and the attitudes of others towards them. Consequently, individuals are continually patching their own identities. Elliott et al, claim, "one general line of consensus in such recent social theory is that, in conditions of intensive globalization, individuals are required or called upon to become the "architects of their own lives", to engage in continual do-it-yourself identity revisions" (1). Mari might be a suitable example in the following passages:

Mari thinks about what Korogi said. "I do feel that I've managed to make something I could maybe call my own world ... over time...little by little. And when I'm inside it, to some extent, I feel kind of relieved. But the very fact I felt I had to make such a world probably means that I'm a weak person, that I bruise easily, don't you think? And in the eyes of society at large, that world of mine is a puny little thing. It's like a cardboard house: a puff of wind might carry it somewhere. (Murakami 177)

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On the other hand, although individuals seek privatization, they still experience pressure of society, Takahashi isolated himself in his own world, playing trombone in a basement the whole night with a group of people who share the same passion. However, during the journey of developing and discovering his self, he sacrifices his interest in music to meet society's expectations and live a decent life. Such experience of solitude as Koch supported Mijuskovic, "a positive form of loneliness, however the same way it seems pleasant it might be painful" (Amanda et al, 64). It is highlighted in the next passage:

"It is hard", Takahashi says. "that's why I'm getting off. I'm gonna change the trains at the next station." "You won't even touch your instrument anymore?" He turns his hands palm upwards the table. "Maybe not". "Gonna take a job?" Takahashi shakes his head again. "No, that I'm not going to do." After pause, Mari asks, "Then what are you going to do?". "Study law seriously. Take the National Bar Exam." Mari keeps silent, but her curiosity seems to have been piqued. "It'll take a while, I suppose" he says, "Officially, I've been in pre-law all along, but the band is all I've ever thought about. . . Then he says, "To tell you the truth, this is the first time in my life I've ever wanted to study something seriously. I've never had bad grades. They weren't especially good, but they weren't bad, either. I could always get the point of things where it really mattered, so I could always manage with the grades. I'm good at that. Which is why I got into a pretty good school, and if I keep up what I'm doing now, I can probably get a job at a pretty good company. So then I'll probably make a pretty good marriage and have pretty good home... you see? (Murakami, p101).

However, majorly is such a society, it is not necessarily required to be a strong individualist but it can be seen that individuals are pushed to follow the trends of innovation to meet the society's expectations. It is not that the individuals are afraid of failure in a world that is simulated by technology and development's speed, that was describes by Kurdera as, "non-corporal, non-material, pure speed, speed itself, ecstasy speed" (Elliott et al 4). Individuals might generate their own decisions and life choices, but still they long for acceptance not separation, since the reason why they choose detachment is the loss of self-confidence because the social system that is influenced by the economic rules.

### 3.4 Family as an Institution in The Postmodern World

Family, as a major institution, is deconstructed by the economic promotions of New Individualism mentality. Short-Termism and Episodicity of life are the reason of family members' separations. Parents and children barely meet because of different plans, schedules, and work conditions. Pressured parents seek happiness outside family environment, children grow affected by such attitudes and grow farther than home, which consequences, a deconstructed modern family.

Episodicity makes life a continual series of diverse episodes of events and chances to the extent of living almost separately, guided by the notion of Individualistic trend, Shirakawa and his wife struggle the same issues in the novel:

Shirakawa says. "Anyhow, I think it'll take me another hour. I'll call a cab and be home by four thirty, maybe."

"I'll probably be asleep by then. I've gotta get up at six and make the kids' lunches."

"And when you get up, I'll be sound asleep"

"And when you get up, I'll be eating lunch at the office."

"And when you get home, I'll be settling down to do serious work." "Here we go again: never meeting" (Murakami 90).

Shirakawa's intention from doing the same act of separating himself from his family is mainly because of his long hours of work, "In individualizing Japan", Suzuki et al, draw on Ulrich Beck's account of individualization to argue that,

various aspects of people's lives in contemporary Japan are becoming more individualized. From individualization of family life to employment and work, Japanese women and men are experiencing increasing levels of individualization both objectively and subjectively (under compulsion and personal life choices) (cited in Elliott et al 15).

However, Shirakawa's detachment from others incites him, as any other individual longing for emotional support, to seek pleasure outside family's circle, since he seems to be a usual client of love hotel "Alphaville". For instance, since individuals accept separation, they

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seek happiness separately since the world promotes consumerism and happiness's pursuit, Minogue sheds light on the situation of family in a postmodern world's society:

One version of "law" is personal commitment (all above of marrying and creating families). Men and women live together have children but do not get married. As if the experiments in living surfaced in the Bohemian circles in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century became the wisdom of the moment, two developments are striking, he continues; The first is The liberation of sexual morality from many conventions that even individualist societies had retained. The common identification of morality itself with sexual morals has diffused a wide spread opinion that all mores principles are merely a matter of taste. The second is the decline of serious commitment is also enfeeblement of identity (264).

For Shirakawa is supposed to act like any individualist individual, the future is open-ended and so is the self; which shakes the conception of such a strong bond as marriage, so the one is pushed to seek non-serious intimate relationships. Relationships, in general, become fatal that family restaurants seem empty while places such as love hotels are occupied for nights.

Divorce's case in Japan was conducted by Mukai (2004), a professor at Nagoya University, it indicates the result of new individualist trend effects on relationships. The study included that divorce rate reached its peak in the 2000's with a rate of 15.2 for males and 15.9 for females, Mukai states,

Divorce rates in Japan have increased since the mid 1990's, even more rapidly since the 1990's divorce decreased throughout the period of industrialization, although modernization theory has argued that economic development brings pervasive cultural changes (including higher divorce rates). However, values regarding family are also influenced by the persistence of traditional values". Mukai continues assuming, "The Japanese cultural beliefs have been transformed from a group-oriented to a more individualist orientation, triggered by the long stagnation of the 1990's modernization has brought autonomy to the Japanese. Today divorce is a reflection of autonomous and rational decisions to pursue personal happiness" (9).

Consequently, happiness pursuit takes the major role in individuals' separation. Marriage, as a social bond becomes nothing more than divided household, rare meetings, and

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financial balances. However, it can be argued that most divorce cases occur because of harsh life conditions adults are living, starting from work pressure that necessitates separation.

The perspectives of marriage's fatality in the postmodern world seem to be affecting children as well, who are seemingly raised in a socially-ill atmosphere, their relationships are also affected. Young adult, affected by their parents' attitude of self-freedom, develop thoughts of isolation from the family, as everyone is seeking his own interest. Young individuals experience unbalanced emotional teenage and disconnectedness in relationships with parents and siblings, as it is portrayed in the next passage, "We were sisters living under the same roof, but we grew up in two different worlds" (Murakami 136), Mari talking about her relationship with her elder sister, in addition to the following, "the same sisters but two different worlds, Take you and your sister, for example. You're born to the same parents, you grew up in the same household, you're both girls. How do you end up with such wildly different personalities?" (Murakami 19). Takahashi seems to be experiencing the same issue, he does not pay attention to his relationship with his father or stepmother, as he reports in the novel,

No, it's not that we don't get along. I'm just the kind of guy who likes to stand up and rock the boat. But that doesn't mean I want to spend every day making chitchat and putting on a smiley face at the dinner table. Being alone has never been hard for me. Besides, I haven't got such a great relationship with my father (Murakami 112).

As a result, both parents and children are victims of the globalized world that promotes detachment. Separation attitudes are imposed on individuals as a way of living in new individualized world.

### 3.5 Anxiety in New Individualized Society

Living in a world of innovation and instability, individuals are expected to privatize their worlds by seeking their interests and goals. Life becomes hard for individuals as they long preserve their emotional health, within the engagement through detachment which cause social anxiety along with psychological issues. Both Uchida and Ogihara argue, based on Triandis (1995) ideas, that "In particular subjective well-being and culture systems urge people to pursue personal achievement, which creates competition between individuals", they continue

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statement depending on Oishi et al, “these systems can also result in high social mobility, which lead to high social anxiety” (2).

Since the 1990’s, Japan experienced the collapse of its Bubble economy system that was shaken by the rise of Capitalism, as a consequence of Globalization and neoliberal policies (Elliott et al 11). The destabilization of employment and the changes that occurred in its system led to the expectations of New Individualism perspective’s raise in Japan, since maintaining the Western economic systems needs adaptation with its culture. Ogihara and Uchida state,

Through globalization, Japanese society has been influenced by the European American cultures. This is especially true for the aspects of Japanese society that are adopting the individualistic systems imported from European American cultures. For example, the number of companies introducing pre-pay-performance systems in Japan has increased (Institute of Labor Administration, 2004) (2).

Moreover, Doi argues, Japanese school emphasized education system that encouraged autonomy (Ogihara, Uchida 2).

Students had to follow the trend of flexibility with the new rules of employment to meet the required expectations of companies. They had to maintain ‘Self-analyses’ tests as a start of job searching, Elliott and Lemert explain, “The cult of the ever-new and of short-termism has produced a code of self-searching, self-discovery riddled with conditions” (99). The required tests allow young individuals to self-revise and verify themselves in order to develop their identities to meet the required jobs. For instance, such rules were the starting point of the postmodern individual’s emergence. Individuals soak deep in the psyche to the extent that they became anxious about themselves and their surroundings. Globalization requires new way for the individuals to behave, which means continual self-realization and more anxious society’s members. Such ideas necessitated psychology to be included in the study of social phenomena. However, society does not affect only social positions of individuals but also their mental health. The self-psyche healing is concerned as a confrontation to the postmodern individuals. Rose claims, “The key discourse of identity in the age of fragmentation is the ‘psychologized self’, it has defined the tendency to share social problems by medical treatment or therapy as instance of the *psychologization of society*” (Elliott et al 8).

Since individuals are detached in their privatized worlds, their lives’ obstacles are considered as the result of their own decisions. The individuals are expected to solve their

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struggles without referring to social conditions as causes. Mills, an American sociologist who was interested in the concept of connectedness and disconnectedness of social members, claims, “Individuals tend to see no far than their noses. As a result, when something goes wrong in life they tend to blame themselves for their personal troubles” (cited in Elliott, Lemert 182). The increase of separation caused difficulty for individuals to relate their emotional and personal problems to social factors, which reflects a massive breakdown in society, since it is possible for problems to occur under social conditions in the postmodern world.

Individuals often seem affected by their past decisions, and traumatized by their previous life experiences, they develop personal insecurities and psychological issues, Joe’s example illustrates, “They struggle with emotional breakdowns from past, struggle with consumerism and employment experiences, relationships and desires insecurities” (cited in Elliott, Lemert 166). As an illustration, Eri’s character represents these individuals, she struggles with her past experiences that are isolated to her only, since she is anxious about others thoughts about her so she seeks medical treatment, which is indicated in the following passage:

Takahashi goes on, “While she was talking to me, Eri was popping every kind of pill you can imagine. Her Prada bag was stuffed with drugs, and while she was drinking her Bloody Mary she was munching’em like nuts. I’m pretty sure they were legal drugs, but the amount was not normal” (Murakami 131).

In such a world, anxious individuals, are dependent on psychological treatment. The self that is pressured might be healed by the use web-based technologies of self-reconstructions and life coaching (Elliott, Lemert 4). Psychological solutions become the source of self-comfort, since the self in the modern jargon is an object for transformation so it is exposed to psychological experiments. However, Elliott and his associates conducted study about the transformation of anxiety in Japan exposed the Japan’s National Police Agency that showcased the increase in suicide rate by 24.9 per 100.00 people in 2010 (13), which symbolizes, as they mentioned, ‘The Emotional Cost of New Individualism’, since people are not only anxious about their looks, behaviours, society’s expectations, but also their personal and emotional struggles,

Young Japanese people often appear overly nervous about their private relationships, compulsively reading the inter personal atmosphere, which indicates that they are under the pressure of the ‘instant change’ mentally,

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similarly, they might feel the ‘otherness’ of others more equally in the Age of Fragmentation (Elliott et al 16).

This indicates that Japanese people, especially young generation, are mostly anxious about their relationships with themselves and others, which is represented in the novel, as characters feel anxious to tell their stories or show their real personalities. It is represented in the selected passage from the novel; “The two fall silent for a while. “Do you believe what I’m telling you? Korogi asks. “Sure, I believe you.” “Really?” “Of course.” “I could be making it all up. You wouldn’t know: we’ve never met before” (Murakami 170).

Furthermore, truth is doubted in a world of technological advances and televisual media. Society experienced a loss of traditional life’s aspects, as religion, God concept, and the origin of human. Individuals lost beliefs in reality, since its concept is strongly associated with truth that became a questionable object. Doubts emerged about existence and one’s purpose of life and even about reality of the one’s own identity. For instance, characters of the novel, representing the postmodernist, seem not to be quite sure of their sexuality, life choices and the belief in afterlife. Japanese individuals sense an existential anxiety, they lost trust in the group (Elliott et al 15). From the novel, Eri is distracted between the two worlds that she seems teleporting while sleeping through her room and the other room on the TV’s screen, as an illustration:

In the bed in that other world, Eri continues sleeping soundly, as she did when she was in this room, just as beautifully, just as deeply. She is not aware that some hand has carried her (or perhaps we should just say her body) into the TV screen. The building glare of ceiling’s fluorescent lamps does not penetrate to the bottom of the sea trench in which she sleeps. (Murakami 96).

Reality for Eri is distracted by TV, which symbolizes the effects of technology on the one’s thoughts, as represented in the next passage, “This is reality she concludes. For some reason, a different kind of reality has taken the place of my normal reality” (Murakami 122). It is almost impossible for her to know exactly what happened to her or since when she was in a deep sleep, which highlights the unawareness of the postmodern individuals about the value of believing in the concrete and time, which is often affected by the instant technological changes, as the following passage represents, “Reality spills through her slim fingers like the sands of an hourglass. Thus time is by no means on her side” (Murakami 162). Reality is disturbed in the world of mass technology, and so it is the identity.

### 3.6 Coping with anxiety in Postmodern society

Surviving the world of instant changes by building relationships is a main issue for individuals in the postmodern countries, like Japanese of the early 2000's who are socially anxious, however, the studies occupied to prove that proved the existence of a contradictory type of the psychologized self that develops anxiety to seek solutions for the one and the others. The term Gentle self that was brought by Asano and his associates (2006) indicates the development of individuals' communication skills in the postmodern world.

The American sociologist, William James states, "practical psychology cannot avoid the sociological dilemma that the self is necessarily social" (cited in Elliott, Lemert 186), which represents that the inner self seeks interactions although it is anxious. 'The Gentle Self', for Asano et al, "is a component of the psychologized self in a broader sociological sense, as one who displays emotional connections with others" (cited in Elliott et al 10). Takahashi is a representation the gentleness hidden within the postmodern psychologized self (which is often counted as, individualistic, socially-ill, and detached) through the next passage;

"No, I don't think so. . . it's just that people always seem to pick me to tell their secrets to. Guys, girls, people I hardly know, people I've never met before: they open up to me about their wildest innermost secrets" (Murakami 129).

It indicates his subconscious skill to lead vulnerable communications with the others, which leads them to understand their situations in life, to find solutions to their daily obstacles, and most importantly recommunicate again. Asano explains that the gentle self has features such as, multiplication of relationships that allows it to get acquaintances with the others, delicacy to the others and the gentle way they perceive others, in addition to the orientations of their relationships' situations to develop intimate deep ones (cited in Elliott et al 8).

Both Elliott and Lemert, assumed through their theory of New Individualism, that the postmodern individual is intentionally disconnected, in a sense of selfishness, especially in societies such as Japanese. However, the existence of the Gentle Self is the proof of social connectedness norms. Although life conditions obliged the one to be distracted by the instant changes of globalized world, individuals still maintain social communication skills and get attached to one another and prevent the anxious self from harm, as it is presented in the following passage,

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“Yeah”, Mari says. “But it’s possible for people to draw closer to each other even while they keep a reasonable distance between them.” “Of course it’s possible, Takahashi says. “But what seems like a reasonable distance to one person might feel too far for somebody else.” (Murakami 130).

We cannot assume that new individualism generally means detachment, since in American society it is regarded as being unique and free while it is perceived as living selfishly and lonely in Japanese society (Ogihara et al 214-215). However, Hashimoto claimed that the Japanese traditions are strongly associated with the ancient Buddhist norms and Yin-Yang concepts of collectivism, thus, individuals think of themselves as less collectivist than others (cited in Ogihara et al 215). It is the fear and anxiety of being less social, not good enough that lead to the idea that societies such as Japanese are individualistic.

In contrast, people in what is called an individualistic society might be more attached than they appear, as it was portrayed in the novel characters are alone but still manage to get acquainted to each other. Although they are more anxious about how the others might perceive them, they apply their social skills once they communicate. The Gentle Self is needed to revive the emotional connection between social members in a world that promotes disconnectedness. Asano and his associates referred to Globalization as ‘Gentleness’, since it allows a new way of understanding communication with the self and the others (cited in Elliott et al 8). As a result, it is not necessarily for the postmodern world to contain only new individualist identities and only detached social members, since communities are built on these communication skills.

### 3.7 Conclusion

It might be seen that people in a postmodern world suffer of life conditions were affected by new rules of the new changing economic systems. However, enhancing such attitudes of modernity does not necessitate the loss of society’s traditions and social structure. The individual is the victim of such systems since they are forced to cope with the norms that are promoted. While discussing a society structure, to not consider it nor collectivistic, neither individualistic is more appropriate, since it is the mix of both. Being individualistic does not mean total freedom since people are always pressured by life conditions where they are limited to choose. At the same time, being individualist does not mean anti-social but rather afraid of the others’ expectations. Thus, such attitudes indicate that the promotions New Individualism theory that individuals’ interactions and attachments are into an end in the postmodern world is false, it is just a myth that accentuates social members’ anxiety about communication.



# **General Conclusion**

The early 2000s individuals live under the pressure of capitalist systems' promotion of one's independence and innovation and calls for the creation of uniqueness and productivity. Capitalism promotes the individual independence and escapism from fellow social members for the sake of a different successful life' creation. The pressure of instant change and life's short-termism boosts the individual to adapt with both economic and social obstacles on the daily bases, such as social anxiety and the sense of disconnectedness an experiencing of the different forms of loneliness. As a consequence, individuals suffer of disconnectedness and hardship of building intimate relationship. Postmodern people seem anxious about the creation of their identity, and about how others perceive them, which is portrayed as social disconnectedness for the subjective benefit of the individual.

The objective of the conducted study is to deconstruct New Individualism theory of Elliott and Lemert using *After Dark* novel by Haruki Murakami, to showcase the development of capitalism as an economic system, which influenced the social structure and became a cultural paradigm that calls for the individual separateness from the other. More importantly, the study at hand aimed to demonstrate the limitation of Elliott and Lemert claim that the individual is responsible for the social deconstruction of the postmodern world.

Besides, the research has hypothesized that New individualism possibly occurred as a consequence of the individuals' intentions to maintain extreme individualistic values to achieve success and subjective well-being, for they ignore social relationships. However, the rise of new individualism norms might be a consequence of capitalism promotion of one's independence, which pressured people to think of themselves and the others around them as individualistic who live in a separated society.

Despite the development of technology and economic systems, it is innate for the postmodern individuals to seek social relationships. However, socially anxious individuals are the result of New Individualism's massive promotions that should be properly conceptualized. Further studies should be conducted to that the economic systems' developments are to be separate from the social structure. The postmodern individuals would be familiarized with the right conception of New Individualism that should be defined as a personal choice and not the development cost. The spread of new individualism does not necessitate an end of the collectivist spirit.

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