

## SELVES WITHOUT IDENTITIES: PSYCHOANALYTICAL ANALYSIS OF *EARTHLINGS*

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### Abstract

*In contemporary literature, Sayaka Murata's Earthlings emerges as a force of defiance against orthodoxy and sociocultural dictates. This dissertation performs a dissection of Earthlings, exploring the negation of identity in the face of trauma. The theoretical framework of this thesis is built upon Lacanian psychoanalysis. The primary method of research, being textual analysis, draws on Trauma of the Real's interpretation of the narrative. The primary focus is on the manner in which the characters grapple with the perpetual process of becoming. By analyzing the experiences of the characters, and their constant search for a harmonic self, this research expounds on the transcendence from the confines of normalcy. Furthermore, the eventual disintegration of self, when one goes on a search for it, due to the inherent unattainability of Lacan's Real, is also explored. The core objective of this paper involves the deconstruction of identity, illustrating an existence devoid of a coherent selfhood. This subsequent lack of individuality aims to provide insights into the understanding of orthodoxy and conformity, as well as associated psychological implications. Illustrating the paradoxical nature of being a human, and its alignment within a sociocultural ecosystem. In summation, this dissertation urges one to question, evolve, and rebel against the strictures imposed by society, coming to terms with the intrinsic intangibility of a self, offering a profound contribution to the broader discourse surrounding the curation of an identity, an integral aspect of the human condition.*

**Keywords:** norms, real, trauma of the real, being, negation, absence

### Introduction

In the perpetually changing ebbs and flows of literature, especially in the contemporary era, Sayaka Murata's *Earthlings* stands dreadfully distinct, with its nuanced exploration of the identity and becoming, explored through Lacanian lens. The author provides a postmodernist view of the mundane repetitions that we have come to call life, and dissects them from a nuanced perspective, offering insights into what it means to be an earthling. The narrative of *Earthlings* chronicles the life of Natsuki, who believes that she is an alien, and dreams of going back to her planet. Beginning from her childhood, Murata depicts the manner in which she grapples with the formulation of her identity, or lack thereof, while going through scarring experiences.

The novel converges themes of antinatalism, pessimism, nihilism, sociocultural and capitalism, offering a scathing critique of the chasm of a value-driven lifestyle. The ceaselessly morphing identity of Natsuki, that does not seem to find an axis, struggles with maturation, domestic strife, fervor, and the abyss of life. The narrative further explores her progression into adulthood by emphasizing on her experiences—both internally grappling ones as well as external liaisons she forms along this route. Murata delves into every facet of Natsuki's journey of becoming, revealing a desperate struggle to cope with family conflicts, sociocultural norms, and all else, while endeavoring to cultivate a self. *Earthlings* is plagued with identity issues and isolated loneliness to an extent where one begins to think of themselves as an alien, grappling with repercussions from what happens during the formative stages of life—harsh realities that no longer seem distant when meeting adulthood head-on.

Murata masterfully imbues the pages of the book with an introspective depth, with each word unfolding like a convoluted web, weaving the structure of linguistic architecture, seamlessly coupled with an unexplained but relatable sense of horror, exploring the intricacies contained within us all. Moreover, *Earthlings* scrutinizes sociocultural as well as

familial structures, and their inclination towards totality rather than focusing on a singular entity, collective good rather than individual, maintain a façade rather than being yourself. Throughout the novel, we observe Natsuki being forced to conform to societal expectations. She gets married, despite being an asexual antinatalist, and keeps up the pretence of a happy life to satisfy her parents, and to blend into the environment in which is dictated by “The Factory,” a metaphor for the consumerism-driven capitalist society in which we live. Murata’s exploration of these aforementioned notions embedded in the narrative provides an unparalleled opportunity for scholarly inquiry into the curation of an identity in the face of trauma.

The novel begins with an eleven-year-old Natsuki who grows up believing that she possesses innate magical abilities. Depending on your perspective, this belief—or delusion—gives her the resilience to cope with the senseless abuse she endures from her family. While her sister is treated well, Natsuki experiences verbal and physical abuse as well as estrangement, indifference, and isolation. Her cousin Yuu, who thinks he is an alien abandoned on Earth, is her sole human connection in the downward spiral of this narrative. The initial chapters revolve around Natsuki’s early years and a sequence of incidents that drastically alter her trajectory and outlook towards life. A male teacher at Natsuki’s school grooms and then sexually abuses her, while she makes an ineffectual attempt to raise attention to her situation. She becomes utterly fragmented and detached as an outcome of the occurrences that accompany as she tries to find solace with her cousin.

By the time the story resumes, she has grown older and married a man who shares her asexual orientation. Both have rejected norms, and are defying all socio-cultural expectations to fit in, following a profession, starting a family, and generally being normal. The horrific circumstances that shaped Natsuki’s being have emotionally constrained her, and the world of her imagination moulds her outlook on everything around her. Reunited with Yuu in the narrative’s last section, Natsuki’s meticulously built mental barriers are in danger of collapsing. As they attempt to protect themselves from previous atrocities and the outside world, the events that follow get more absurd and detrimental, and eventually, extremely distressing.

### 1.1. Aims and Objectives

This research aims to explore the following questions. The primary objective was to explore the formulation of an identity that stems from the negation of all fixtures and existences that constitute the lives and beings of the characters, resulting in an ontological lack.

- How does the failure to construct a stable identity lead to Trauma of the Real?
- How do the characters search and practice different ways to deal with this trauma?
- How does Lacanian psychoanalysis unveil the nuances of the human condition within Natsuki’s journey of becoming and unbecoming?

### 1.2. Significance

This scholarly endeavour utilizes Lacan’s Trauma of the Real offering fertile ground for a literary, psychological, and philosophical analysis. The overlap between psychoanalysis and anti-psychoanalysis, as evident through the characters’ journey in *Earthlings*, uncovers uncharted territory, worthy of exploration. It aims to highlight how psychoanalytical foundations present within Murata’s opus go beyond mere portrayal, encompassing profound themes with subtle sub-textual meanings and implications. This paper seeks to clarify not just the subtleties woven throughout Murata’s work but also to contribute to a broader discussion on the combined focus point, which is the psychoanalytical systems and complexity associated with being, particularly identity formation and self-perception.

### 1.3. Methodology

The primary methodology for this research is textual analysis. Jacques Marie Émile Lacan, a controversial post-Freud psychoanalyst, navigates the murky terrains of human consciousness and constructs a theoretical framework transcending Freudian paradigms. Lacan's conceptual lexicon, seen in his seminal work, *Écrits*, weaves crucial constructs. He synthesized a post-structuralist approach to linguistics, incorporating philosophy with psychoanalysis, leading to a holistic view of individuality.

Central to Lacanian discourse is the triadic Borromean Knot: the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real. The imaginary order, characterized by the mirror stage, represents the realm of identification and misrecognition, where the ego, as a fictive construct, emerges through the specular image, fostering an illusory sense of unity and completeness (Babich 43). The imaginary pertains to the realm of images and fantasies; the symbolic involves language and cultural systems; and the real is the ineffable, unrepresentable aspect of existence (Eyers 15). The real is an intrinsically unattainable and inconceivable desire, found at the center of the Borromean Knot (Hurst 213). We are condemned to search for this impossible, after losing our innate connection from the imaginary order, as we move to the symbolic order. This search for something that we can never know anything about, and something that inherently can never be held, leads to trauma of the real (Tyson 33).

The narrative's characters—Natsuki, Yuu, and Tomoya—are the exhibitions of ontological disharmony. Since they are unable to identify themselves as earthlings, they continually seek for the primordial connection, the transient Real—a realm that transcends all of our systems, ideologies, religions, laws, regulations, cultures, and conventions, allowing them to create an identity and self. The characters experience a type of trauma that they are unable to overcome since the real itself is an absence that can never be reached.

In the context of the novel and the aforementioned theoretical notions, Trauma of the Real illustrates the way in which characters, when faced with the incomprehensible nature of reality, fall into a perpetual labyrinth of construction and deconstruction of an identity. They try to hold onto whatever they can in order to survive.

Lacan left an impact on all academic domains through the foundations he laid. Their unprecedented explorations fed into a larger sphere of academic intrigue, paving the path for scholars and researchers alike, to dissect and investigate the ties between multiple domains. This contributed to enriched investigations on the core principles of literature, psychology, philosophy, and sociology. Literary studies, under these prisms saw a resurgence influenced by Lacan's provocative inputs that recalibrated Freudian ideas through an unorthodox lens.

### **Literature Review**

This literature review explores the aforementioned theoretical frameworks of Lacan, namely, Trauma of the Real. The central focus is the probe and analysis of these ideas in accordance with their relevance to Sayaka Murata's *Earthlings*. Through critical engagement with these notions, this dissertation aims to contextualize the novel, situating it in the ever-changing contemporary dynamics of literary, psychological, philosophical, and socio-cultural discourse.

### **Dissonance of the Real**

Colecio is of the opinion that Murata's works, especially *Earthlings*, depict individuals that refuse to conform and adhere to sociocultural norms. They constantly struggle to fit in, and despite all effort, are not able to find solace in their being and their bodies, the bodies of others, and their surroundings (2). This radical discord to find an anchor, or something to fixate the orbit of your life around, leads to a trauma, because you are not able to have an identity or a self, something you spend your entire life cultivating. This is directly tied with the imaginary as well as symbolic order that dictates all actions of our marionette-ish lives (Wright 236).

Additionally, Wright goes on to argue that the language of our unconsciousness is as much rooted in silence as it is in verbalization, especially when it comes to feelings of repression that are linked to sexual abuse and associated happenings (237). The body tries to speak and convey and articulate, however it can, what the mind is not able to, or refuses to. Lacan talks about a distinct form of “real,” not confused with reality (Lacan 134). The real is something that can neither be understood nor grasped, for it is inherently unattainable and inconceivable, lying at the center of the Borromean Knot. It is an overlap between the imaginary order and the symbolic order, complementing the structure, and making it a multiplistic event of being (Hurst 213). According to Žižek, the real can be analogized to a “black hole” (14), a “negative space” (99), a philosophical lack of sociality and subjectivity (100), a traumatic consensus of intersubjectivity (29), or an absolute noumenalness, which is the completely separation and disjunction between signifiers and signified, subject and object. When one goes on a journey, whether deliberate or circumstantial, to find this inherently ungraspable fulfillment, the already delicate and susceptible porcelain cup of self gets broken, leading to subsequent distress and trauma.

Murata challenges the normalcy and systems that plague not only the narrative of her world, but ours too (Alzate and Yohio 476). When reading her work from a psychoanalytical perspective, it becomes apparent that the characters, especially the protagonist, Natsuki, her cousin and childhood friend, Yuu, and her husband, Tomoya, have been searching for this ephemeral real all their lives. It seems as if their very existences have been circulating them towards the achievement of this unachievable. Culminating in a cannibalistic ritual, both literal and metaphorical, the characters take a hysterically ferocious stand against everything and everyone (Harada 73). They do so by isolating themselves, and leading a life that is based on the primal needs of sustenance through cannibalism, shelter in their grandmother’s old house, and warmth through each other. According to them, this was the most non-earthling-like act they could do to remove all semblance of conformity, a manifestation of the trauma of the real.

Natsuki, like other female protagonists of Murata, initially does her best to build a façade that would allow her to appear normal, and dwell alongside the other earthlings, despite an inherent inability to relate or understand. As the narrative progresses, she feels all slip from her grasp, and because of her fractured self, resorts to behaviours and appearances that enable a smooth lie. Soon, when leaves begin to fall back onto branches, she falls back into the same patterns that she had been trying to escape from. She had to get married because of sociocultural pressure, and become a “tool” for the “factory” of capitalism, leading a life which was everything but what she had ever wanted. So Natsuki, along with Yuu and Tomoya, deviated and formed a reality that was far detached from what is deemed correct, acceptable, and natural, as evident from their isolated habitation near the end of the novel. They find it difficult to conform to without understanding, which leads to acts that only they can understand (Specchio 153). Their bodies become the manifestations of ills that plague their beings (155), leading to the dissociation of self from material reality, forcing them to create their own havens, where they can simply be, without the need to perform and produce.

## Discussion

As expanded in the literature review, this section utilizes the theoretical structures of Jacques Marie Émile Lacan to probe the narrative of Sayaka Murata's *Earthlings*. Firstly, this dissertation contends that the inability to construct a stable and coherent identity leads to Trauma of the Real. Secondly, the characters are perpetually searching and practicing multiple ways to find the real. Lastly, the analytical lens of Lacanian psychoanalysis unveils nuances of the human condition within the novel's journey of becoming and unbecoming, concluding on the negation of self as the ultimate self. This paper ties identity formation, and the search for a the real into a singular process, culminating in a uniform arc of becoming.

Murata offers an intricate look into alienation and isolation, forcing the readers to confront its perpetuation through the very society in which they reside. The narrative contends that absence is the most integral aspect of the human condition, and its fulfillment, or blind conformity to predetermined roles, is not the goal of existence. The rejection of sociocultural dictates is not the acceptance of defeat, but an act of liberation, that frees one from the oppressive systems that view people as commodities. By disrupting the established frameworks of normalcy and identity formulation, the most authentic self can be brought to the surface.

After certain events, neither of them is able to see the other again, and continue their lives without interacting or knowing anything about the other. The narrative moves forward, and we follow Natsuki as she grows and experiences the brutality of what life has in store for her. After being sexually assaulted and killing her abuser, Natsuki's detachment grows further, as she is eventually forced to settle in the sociocultural conformity of an asexual marriage with Tomoya. In the latter half of the novel, Natsuki is reunited with Yuu in their grandmother's summer home, where they, along with Tomoya, try to navigate their way through the labyrinth of life.

The narrative concludes in a surreal cannibalistic ritual, which appears to be the manifestation of the trauma that surfaces due to the absence of the self, since the three of them are not able to find anything to anchor them to an earthling existence. Murata explores the dichotomy of the body and the self, making it clear from her narrative that dissociation acts as a defense mechanism, and enables the characters to lead a life that is in accordance with the norms of society (González 29).

Natsuki, never finding solace or comfort in the company or presence of an other, begins to question her existence in the context of her surroundings. When she realizes that she is a magician who has powers, and discusses this with the only one she can, her cousin Yuu, she finds out that he shares her feelings of alienation and isolation, because he is not an earthling. This intrinsic connection, relatability, and association is the only source of tranquility and happiness in both of their lives, amidst the horrors and pains of life.

When Natsuki and Yuu see each other over the summer, neither wants the other to go, so they make certain promises. "We hooked pinkies and made three promises. 1) Yuu won't tell anyone that I'm a magician. 2) I won't tell anyone that Yuu's an alien from outer space. 3) We won't fall in love with anyone else, even after summer's over. We'll definitely meet up here again next summer" (Murata 8). Both of them, by curating this microcosmic reality, actively negate their identities as earthlings, and replace them with fantastical ones, which can be deemed delusional. This exemplifies their inability to conform to roles that have been crafted for them, resulting in an inability to integrate with the world, and a need to have something of their own, upon which no other can infringe.

These promises initiate the beginning of their relationship, which culminates in a "marriage contract" by the end of the week of the Obon festival. "We hereby pledge the following: 1) Don't hold hands with anyone else. 2) Wear your ring when you go to sleep. 3)

*Survive, whatever it takes*” (Murata 29). These rituals stem from their inability to anchor themselves on their own, due to the fragmentation of their selves and identities. Dissecting it from the perspective of Lacanian psychoanalysis, we can decipher that characters have no inherent identity, which is why they need an “other” to align themselves.

Natsuki and Yuu, through these promises and marriage, try to fill the “lack” that plagues their being. The promises center around the protection of their respective identities as a magician and an alien while devoting themselves to each other, and only each other. The marriage contract reiterates the initial promises, placing emphasis on making sure that both of them remain faithful and are the axis of each other’s worlds. This exemplifies their innate need for reassurance and safety, something that is foreign, leading to a catalysis that might help them form a cohesive sense of self and identity.

When there is an absence of a concrete self, there are various coping mechanisms through which individuals deal with it, and for Natsuki, it was dissociation, which she described as an out-of-body experience. She would detach from her self in order to grapple with, and endure the traumatic events that happened, including the harsh treatment of her family, sexual abuse and assault, and other distressing occurrences. This allowed her body to take the toll, while her mind remained indifferent to the emotional and cognitive ramifications. “Piyyut had taught me the magical power of invisibility. I didn’t actually become invisible. I just held my breath and could make myself go unnoticed” (Murata 15). Here, the notion of negation comes into play. Natsuki, when faced with constant invalidation, resorts to a removal of her presence and identity, because that is the sole mechanism which allows her to go through life.

This situation highlights the extent of damage her parents, especially her mother, had done to her, to the point where she began to internalize all the negatives. “I was used to Mom saying I was hopeless. And she was right, I really was a dead loss” (Murata 22). These harsh statements and treatment at the hands of the ones who are supposed to provide you with unconditional love and support, who are supposed to structure your transition from the imaginary order to the symbolic order, who are supposed to help you find the closest thing to the real, can utterly and completely destroy one’s self and identity, leading to a lack that never gets fulfilled by anything or anyone, leaving one untethered.

Building upon her coping mechanism of dissociation, Murata exemplifies the pervasive nature of this crippling alienation that creates waves on the sea of Natsuki’s being: “I wanted to return to that pitch-blackness as soon as I could. I’d never been to Planet Popinpobopia, but I was beginning to feel it was my true home” (38). Planet Popinpobopia, a place that does not exist, and is the haven to which Natsuki, along with Yuu, yearns to return, is a manifestation of the Lacanian real. Since it is a representation of their microcosmic delusions, and merely offers them solace, but practically, does not exist, and is therefore unattainable. It represents the ultimate truth, and a haven where everything is perfect, but because of its very nature, can not be achieved.

Before entering the imaginary as well as the symbolic order of images and words, respectively, there is a moment in which the individual is one with the cosmos. Upon birth, this primal connection is severed, as one takes their first breath, and familiarizes themselves with the world of images. Slowly, and just as one gets comfortable with this association, the realm of language and symbols comes barging in, forever disrupting the harmony of being. Now, the inherent interdependence is lost, and can never be re-attained. “As that which is unsymbolized, the real in itself is meaningless: it has no truth for human existence” (DiCenso 54). The real stands outside all order of images and symbols, and can not be categorized, represented, or even explained, since it is an inherent lack and offers no truth. It disrupts the harmony of imaginary and symbolic orders, resulting in Natsuki and Yuu’s unfulfilled desire

to return to a home you have never been to, further aggravating the pre-existing feeling of not being an earthling.

Additionally, she is not really concerned about this fragmentation and havoc that has been wrecked upon her. “The sooner I was brainwashed the better. That way I would no longer suffer. I, too, would be able to live with a smile on my face in the virtual reality world in which everyone was living” (Murata 160). Natsuki is aware of the suppressive nature of societal mechanisms, and when faced with the unbearability of existence, yearns to submit to the illusion of orthodoxy as a refuge. If she stops resisting the performative compliances of society, she will be free from the instability of having an identity and a self, compromising authenticity for artificiality, relying on fake outward expressions of contentment instead of actual feelings and emotions.

Instead of an uncertainty in happiness, she prefers the certainty of despair, because that enables her to lead a life where she does not have to assimilate into the overlap of imaginary and symbolic order, having to accept predetermined roles and identities that she neither understands nor wants to perform or inhabit. Knowing that the real is unattainable, she is in a state of trauma, and wants to be “brainwashed,” exemplifying a surrender to the symbolic order, and the dictates that everyone is helpless in the face of. Despite this, her reconciliation is not complete, as she does not align herself with the normative ways of the earthlings, because her thoughts, desires, and identity do not align with those of the masses.

The symbolic order continues to structure the lives of all, and curates a world that fixates on the achievement of goals that are in accordance with the removal of self, and the propagation of production. “I was keenly aware that I was unable to fulfill my duty as a tool for the Baby Factory. Being a Popinobopian, I just couldn’t understand Earthlings. On Earth, young women were supposed to fall in love and have sex, and if they didn’t, they were ‘lonely’ or ‘bored’ or ‘wasting their youth and would regret it later!’” (Murata 174). The norm of women having no agency over their bodies, and the strict nature of conforming to what the sociocultural expectations asked for is something that Natsuki, despite all effort, can neither understand nor agree with.

Natsuki deliberately finds someone who shares her opinions regarding procreation, and marries Tomoya, who is horrified by women’s bodies and physical contact. She does this not as some form of rebellion, but because she would rather have no identity and self than have one thwarted upon her. “What I’m really scared of is believing that the words society makes me speak are my own” (Murata 201). She is afraid of losing her individuality and identity by submitting to performative social dictates, and the eventual indistinguishability of her self from them. The symbolic order, which encompasses language, norms, and societal structures, dictates the manner in which individuals communicate, interact, and formulate, oppressing agency in favor of social programming.

This results in an alienation of the individual from their true self and identity, creating a dissonance between external norms and internal reality, making them a puppet who speaks for the infiltrative sociocultural order. When one is not able to cultivate a being of their own, they feel alien while inhabiting any other, which is precisely what Natsuki goes through, since the first page of the novel. This fear also reflects a resistance against the stratified desire to restructure and dismantle performative adherence to norms, since they can offer masked conformity as identity, and never capture the essence of individual selfhood.

When Natsuki finds out that Yuu lost his job, and is living in their grandmother’s summer house, she has an urge to see him, because both of them have an inherent understanding of each other. She convinces Tomoya to come with her, who seems more eager than her to finally see the house with the silkworm room. Upon meeting each other after twenty-three years, both of them seem hesitant to discuss all that has transpired, but

conversation is kindled by Tomoya, who suggests that they leave everything behind, and embrace the non-earthling life that was meant for them.

Through their rejection of the earthling identity, and embracing being a Popinpopopian, the characters question the very nature of identity and self, and the necessity of having one, when it only leads to conformity and a blind urgency to produce and provide. This negation of the earthling self, and the subsequent negation of this negation, leads to an identity that exists beyond the structures and frameworks of self that constitute it. In Lacanian terms, it can be explained through the negations that occur when we enter from the organic world to the imaginary order (images), which can be called the first negation. The second one occurs when we enter the imaginary order (language and structure), and the last one occurs when we go on the search for the Real (unattainable).

The narrative concludes when some rescuers, including the family of Natsuki and Tomoya, come to the house in order to find them. All of them are distressed and do not know how to react upon the sight of seeing the three of them. “Gently entwining our arms and legs together, we three Popinpopopians rose up. From the outside world, the glow of Light Time with its reflection from the snow softly flowed into our spaceship. Holding hands, shoulder to shoulder, and engulfed in light, we slowly stepped out onto the Earthlings’ planet. As if in concert with us, the cries of the Earthlings rang out to the far corners of the planet, setting the forests trembling” (Murata 247). Here, their movements are active, deliberate, and of their own accord, something which they previously did not have, as they move towards literal, emotional, and ontological light. Their very existence disturbs and disrupts the social and world order, causing it to tremble and rupture.

This manifests a negation of all earthlings, and the earth itself, as Natsuki, Yuu, and Tomoya embrace Popinpopopia and a state of absent becoming that is beyond earthling order, control, and constriction. Natsuki, Yuu, and Tomoya have left behind their individual identities, and regained their innate connection with the cosmos by defying orthodoxy and the ways of earthlings. Through the aforementioned discussions, we know that the real cannot be achieved, but by being fixated in a search for them, one can form an identity and self that is rooted in negation of a fixed identity, dictates, and conformity. In the context of Lacanian psychoanalytical frameworks, it can be argued that they have seen a glimpse of the ineffable real, where all distinctions between self and other sublimates, leading to the primordial unity before birth.

In summation, the textual analysis of this paper offers a nuanced exploration of identity and self through the context of sociocultural dictates. The characters of *Earthlings*, namely, Natsuki, Yuu, and Tomoya, after going through immense forms of trauma, both verbal and physical, are in a perpetual search for the unachievable. Their futile attempts to find the Lacanian Real, because of the fragmentation of their imaginary and symbolic orders, metamorphoses in a holistic negation.

#### **Chapter – 4**

##### **Conclusion**

This paper explored Sayaka Murata’s *Earthlings* from a psychoanalytical perspective, utilizing Lacanian frameworks. The research centered around the manner in which the inability and limitations of the characters to construct a stable identity and coherent self, led to Trauma of the Real.

The aforementioned notions are an integral part of our being. Prior to birth, we are woven into the very fabric of the universe, but the initial unity is temporal, because of the subsequent initiation into the world. Here, we reside in the imaginary order, a world that revolves around images, for there is neither an ability, nor a reason to communicate. We



experience an intimate connection with the surroundings that is not dependent on articulations. After a while, this unity too is lost forever, as we are taught language, and enter the realm of symbolic order. This opens up multiple avenues, but closes the most elemental ones. Inherently, both of these orders cannot be consolidated into a singularity, as there is a fundamental discord.

The characters in the narrative, namely, Natsuki, Yuu, and Tomoya, are the manifestations of this discord. Since they do not consider themselves to be earthlings, they are in a constant search for the primal connection, the ephemeral Real—a domain that exists beyond all our systems, ideologies, religions, rules, regulations, cultures, norms, and everything else that governs our society, enabling them to construct a self and identity. As the real itself is a lack, it can never be attained, which leads to a form of trauma that the characters neither resolve, nor recover from.

The search for this innate connection is apparent from their pursuit through rejection and negation, but it does not lead to a tangible or cohesive relationship. Furthermore, there is severe exacerbation of the fragmentation as the narrative progresses, and the characters lose themselves in the absence of their selves. It is not that they do not try to learn the way of the earthlings and live in accordance with the masses; it is that they have an ontological disagreement with the manner in which the non-Popinobians lead their lives, so they defy in every way that they can, fighting for their independent selves.

This research demonstrated that refusal to forge an identity that is founded on established stipulates conduces to an eternal search for the unachievable, and inconceivable. The characters implement this uncategorizable lack-based sense of self-identification, which is reliant on absence for its composition, to orient themselves and disintegrate down the myths that permeate their existence. A paradoxical selfhood is produced by a cessation of disparities, including individuality, societal obligations, standards, and earthling identity, since it distinguishes itself by the lack of any unchanging markers or signifiers. The cultivation of the self takes place through a negation of all aggregates that are synthesized to form a whole, resulting in a rejection of organizational domains and fixed potentialities.

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