

Finding sexuality
through creativity:
sumire's journey in
sputnik sweetheart



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BUSTER**

Sexual desire is a word that brings confusion to the mind of Sumire in Haruki Murakami's *Sputnik Sweetheart*. This sexual desire takes a while for Sumire to comprehend but as the novel continues it is seen that she comprehends it when it comes to the terms of literature, which is composed by her friend K. Another form in which sexual desire is seen, is through music and it is seen like this through the eyes of Miu. Miu is the main reason for Sumire's sudden comprehension of sexual desire, due to the fact that Miu is the one that makes Sumire feel sexual desire for the first time. These ideas of creativity, literature and music, allow Sumire to travel to a place she never thought she would understand.

Sumire's new place is a place where sexual desire exists, a place so foreign to her that she has to ask her friend K for help on the topic. K allows Sumire to understand sexual desire through literature because it is the only way she understands it, since she is an aspiring writer. K questions if Sumire ever did experience sex, "If she did experience sex - or something close to it - in high school, I'm sure it would have been less out of sexual desire or love than literary curiosity." (Murakami 21). Through this it is seen that even K can understand that the only way Sumire would ever feel sexual desire is through literary curiosity and this is how K is able to explain sexual desire to Sumire, a person who has never felt it. Sumire admits to K one time that sexual desire has her "baffled" (Murakami 21) and he responds to her saying that "Sexual desire's not something you understand [...] It's just there." (Murakami 21). Sumire does not understand the meaning of this thing called sexual desire until it hits her like a ton of bricks when she first meets Miu. When Sumire meets, Miu touches her hair, "In the instant Miu

touched her hair, Sumire fell in love, like she was crossing a field and bang! a bolt of lightning zapped her right in the head.” (Murakami 20) in this instant Sumire finally feels something and she feels it through Miu’s touch and it opens up feelings that Sumire has never felt before, and one of these things is sexual desire.

This idea of sexual desire in Sumire’s life is awakened once she meets Miu and she starts to question K about sexual desire and he tells her a story of his first time with a woman, this woman tells K “ What we have here is very similar. Good or bad, nimble or clumsy - those aren’t important. What’s important is being attentive. Staying calm, being alert to things around you.” (Murakami 100). K tells Sumire this story so that she understands the part about being alert “ Not prejudging things, listening to what’s going on, keeping your ears, heart, and mind open.” (Murakami 102), Sumire has to understand the world of sexual desire through stories, literature, and the mind of K. Finally at one point Sumire admits that she is confused to K,

“ The thought hits me a lot these days that maybe my novel-writing days are over. The world’s crawling with stupid, innocent girls, and I’m just one of them, self-consciously chasing after dreams that’ll never come true. I should shut the piano lid and come down off the stage. Before it’s too late.” (Murakami 125).

Through this passage Sumire understands that maybe Miu is a dream and that she has to stop chasing it at some point because in the end that dream will not come true. K asks Sumire at one point if she is sure that what she feels for Miu is sexual desire and Miu answers saying “ A hundred percent

sure [...] When I'm with her that bone in my ear starts ringing. Like a delicate seashell wind chimes. And I want her to hold me, let everything take its course. If that isn't sexual desire, what's flowing in my veins must be tomato juice." (Murakami 130). Sumire finally realizes that Miu is what makes her feels sexual desire and it explains that she might just be a lesbian and figures that maybe that is the reason she never experienced anything sexually to begin with. Miu awakens this foreign product into Sumire's body and Sumire embraces it because it is something that she has never felt before. Julian Loose says in his article in the New Statesman " Certainly from the melancholic viewpoint of Sputnik Sweetheart, we are all satellites of love, sometimes even strangers to our better selves, attracted to one another yet rarely in sync, at best travelling companions (the literal translation of " sputnik")." Maybe this is how Miu feels towards Miu because they are both satellites of love that are attracted to each other but are not in sync.

Miu's sexual desire is hidden when she was younger through her music and being a pianist. The piano envelopes her innocence and she sacrificed everything for it. At one point Miu tells Sumire " I didn't sacrifice a lot of things for the piano [...] I sacrificed everything. The piano demanded every ounce of flesh, every drop of blood, and I couldn't refuse. Not even once." (Murakami 119). Through this Miu shows Sumire that the piano took over her life and everything in her life was sacrificed for it. Through the piano her sexual desire was masked and it kept her innocent and did not leave her stray. In the story of the ferris wheel Miu is stuck on top of a ferris wheel when she looks through her binoculars she sees in her apartment a naked

man, Ferdinando, and in her apartment she saw herself. When Miu is telling this story she says,

“ With me locked inside the Ferris wheel, he did whatever he wanted – to me over there. It’s not like I was afraid of sex. There was a time when I enjoyed casual sex a lot. But that wasn’t what I was seeing there. It was all meaningless and obscene, with only one goal in mind – to make me thoroughly polluted. Ferdinando used all the tricks he knew to soil me with his thick fingers and mammoth penis – not that the me over there felt this was making her dirty. And in the end it wasn’t even Ferdinando anymore.” (Murakami 380).

Through this, let us say, “ dream” Miu is showing how repressed she is towards the idea of sexual desire. Miu refuses to believe that she would ever behave as her other self did, because she has repressed those feelings of sexual desire and refuses to confront them. Miu leaves part of herself on that Ferris wheel that day because that self she leaves is the self she refuses to be and that is one that embraces sexual desire. Miu wants to be seen as someone who is wise and knows everything that there is to know in the world and refuses to go back to that girl she used to be before and so leaves that self behind at the Ferris Wheel. She is so appalled that her other self would do something so sexual that she leaves her behind and matures into the woman she is today. In that moment her hair turns white because she has left that childlike part of herself behind and has grown into a woman, one that does not care for petty things that are sexual. Brian Evenson says in his article *The Review of Contemporary Fiction* “ Miu herself seems incapable of love, at least physical love, ever since an unusual experience has left her <https://assignbuster.com/finding-sexuality-through-creativity-sumires-journey-in-sputnik-sweetheart/>

thinking that her self has been split, half of it lost in a parallel world.” maybe Miu can never feel love other than physical love and that is why she is haunted after her “ dream”. Evenson brings up a good point especially in the case which Miu rejects Sumire, and Sumire runs away, Miu might just reject her not only for obvious reasons but because she is incapable of loving Sumire as much as Sumire loves her.

The characters in Sputnik Sweetheart learn a lot about sexual desire through creativity. Sumire learns it through the ideas of literature that are given to her by her friend K, while Miu learns about them through music and her “ dreams”. Sumire’s sexual desire is awakened by Miu, because she finally falls in lust and understands that the world sometimes needs sexual desire and that in her own literature the innocent girls portray her and that maybe they need to escape as well. Miu’s sexual desire is never fully there instead she lost those feelings in her “ dream” of the Ferris Wheel and also gave everything up, more than likely her sexual desire as well, to the piano. These two women in this novel are like the Sputnik and revolve around each other, though both in different orbs, one sexual and the other not so sexual.

Works Cited

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