As we saw in Chapter Two, 1970 is viewed as a turning point in Japanese cultural trends. Ōsawa terms the period from that year to 1995 the fictional age, when Japanese culture gradually shifted from struggling for change through political movements to seeking ideals in fictional settings. This shift is particularly evident in major apocalyptic science fiction narratives from the 1980s and 1990s, especially those with prequels or sequels. An influential literary example from the 1980s is *Sekai no owari to hādo boirudo wandārandō* (Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World, 1985) by Murakami Haruki (b. 1949), and its precursor *Machi to sono futashikana kabe* (The Town and its Uncertain Wall, 1980). In popular culture, the apocalyptic animation film *Kaze no tani no Naushika* (Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind, 1984) by Miyazaki Hayao (b. 1941) was serialized as a manga until 1994, and the manga narrative differs from that of the animation. Another internationally renowned apocalyptic animation, *AKIRA* (1988) by Ōtomo Katsuhiro (b. 1954), was also serialized as a manga until 1990, and the manga version of this story also has a different message from the film version.

All three of these works have apocalyptic themes and similar settings. However, there is discontinuity between the prequels and sequels or manga and animated versions of each. Examining the differences between different versions of a given narrative highlights the shift from modern to postmodern, and what modern apocalypse and postmodern apocalypse convey. By closely comparing the ambiguities in apocalyptic narratives and their visions of what the world will be like after the crises have passed, we can also see how the relationship with the Other transformed in 1980s and 1990s.
Murakami Haruki’s *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*

Murakami Haruki is an extremely popular and critically acclaimed writer of fiction and non-fiction. His fourth long novel, *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* (hereafter *Hard-Boiled Wonderland*), was written in 1985, and won the Tanizaki award that year.¹ It is considered one of the most popular of Murakami’s early novels. The success of this novel brought the author popular attention, and in 1987 his *Norwegian Wood* sold millions of copies in Japan, turning him into a national celebrity. Although *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* was not a bestseller it has been widely referenced since it deals with the core issues of the postmodernized world.

The novel consists of parallel narratives: the odd-numbered chapters are set in a place called Hard-Boiled Wonderland, in near-future Tokyo, while the even-numbered chapters are set in the End of the World, an isolated town surrounded by a forest and a wall. The narrator of the odd-numbered chapters is a Calcutec, a human data processor who has been trained to do shuffling, data conversion that uses his subconscious as an encryption key. The Calcutecs work for a quasi-governmental institution called the System, while the criminal Semiotecs, generally fallen Calcutecs, work for the Factory. These organizations compete for information; the Calcutecs protect data while the Semiotecs steal it.

The odd-numbered chapters begin with their narrator’s visit to a mysterious scientist who is exploring “sound reduction” in a laboratory hidden within an anachronistic version of Tokyo’s sewer system. The scientist asks the protagonist to calculate some data with a shuffling system that the Calcutecs have for some time been forbidden to use, but the scientist has official permission from the top of the System. The protagonist has no reason to refuse this special request, but this precipitates an attack on the scientist’s office by the Semiotics after the calculation is done, and both the data and the scientist disappear. Two days after the calculation, the protagonist is able to meet the scientist, who has escaped and is hiding in a secret underground hollow. Here, the scientist reveals a shocking truth: he invented the shuffling system when he used to work for the System years ago. When he installed the shuffling system in the protagonist’s brain, he also secretly reorganized the subconscious of the protagonist and implanted it as an artificial world. Moreover, the scientist confesses that he activated this circuitry with the recent shuffling execution: he was curious to collect data on this subconscious world, for the protagonist is the only Calcutec