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A study of Ryu Murakami's "*Almost transparent blue*"

—The color and sight reflected in a piece of glass

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In this paper, I deal with "*Almost transparent blue*" by Ryu Murakami (1952 -), one of the most famous Japanese novelists. This novel is his first and semi-autobiographical work, and presents a group of teenagers living in Japanese port town close to an American military base through the eyes of the central character "Ryu". Ryu and his friends indulge their desire for drugs, alcohol and sex, and repeat disorderly days without purpose. In the end of this story, however, Ryu finds "almost transparent blue" of the sky at dawn reflected in a piece of glass. The color implies the positive change of his state of mind and departure from the destructive life.

Previous research has not sufficiently paid attention to the relationship between the figurative phrase, that is, "almost transparent blue" and the writer Ryu Murakami's real life. I think it is important to clarify the meaning of that color by taking the semi-autobiographical style adopted by Murakami into consideration. I aim to maintain that "almost transparent blue" represents not only the color of the sky in fiction but also the sight of Murakami's hometown near the sea in the real world. The town is precious place for Murakami, because he lived a passionate and active life there in his youth. Away from the hometown, Murakami had to establish himself through the experience in searching for his own place in a strange urban city. It is believed that the impressed scene of finding "almost transparent blue" in the novel bases on such a personal experience of his journey to find "new home". In the end, he made up his mind to live

in the new place by writing novels that was his only way to survive there. Namely, “almost transparent blue” symbolizes the beginning of Ryu’s new life and also the birth of a novelist Ryu Murakami.