

Diagnosing Psychoanalysis in Haruki Murakami's novel "Norwegian Wood"

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Abstract

The present study entitled Analysis of Psychoanalytic Theory in Haruki Murakami's novel "Norwegian Wood" is an attempt to analyse the features of psychoanalysis through certain characters in the novel. The primary assumption of psychoanalysis is the belief that all people possess unconscious thoughts, feelings, desires and memories. The aim of psychoanalysis therapy is to release repressed emotions and experiences.

KEYWORDS: Psychoanalytic, Homosexuality, Mental Disorder

Introduction

Haruki Murakami is a popular contemporary Japanese writer and translator. He was born in Kyoto, Japan in January 12, 1949. His work has been translated into more than fifty languages and the most recent of his many international honours the Jerusalem Prize and Kafka Prize. He also received honorary doctorates from the University of Liege and Princeton University in recognition of his works. Some of his best sellers are A Wild Sheep Chase, A Wind Up Bird Chronicle, Hard-Boiled Wonderland and The End of the World, 1Q84, Colorless Tsukuru, Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage, Sputnik Sweetheart, Norwegian Wood. This novel's translation to English was done by Jay Rubin.

The title comes from a famous song by The Beatles named Norwegian Wood. The story is a flashback of Toru's life. He is at the start of the book 37 years old while travelling to Germany suddenly from nowhere hears the song Norwegian Wood. After listening to the song, his memories flashes and then readers are introduced with the 18 year old Toru and then 20 year Toru. Toru is the protagonist of the story. He reminisces his childhood and thinks about the love, tragedy, moments etc. He thinks of his college life, friends back at that time, Nagasawa, Hatsumi, Kizuki, Midori in Japan. The story is set in Japan. Naoko is Kizuki's girlfriend. One day Kizuki commits suicide and his death puts Naoko into depression. Toru was highly attached to his friend so his death left him in dilemma. The pain of losing Kizuki brings Toru and Naoko close to each other. Sadly for Toru, Naoko is in no state to be in a relationship. Kizuki's death has left her emotionally unstable. Realizing that she cannot control herself or her depression, Naoko seeks help at a mental institution. Toru, still madly in love with her, visits Naoko during her stay.

Toru meets Naoko's roommate, a musician named Reiko, and the three quickly become very close. It is through Reiko's mature guidance that Naoko and Toru are able to become intimate. Toru promises Naoko that he will continue to love her, but eventually finds himself distracted at college after a chance encounter with a girl named Midori. In college, Toru meets Midori, a classmate in History of Drama. Midori is an interesting character. Her background is fascinating, belonging to a middle class family, daughter of a bookshop owner in a small town and sent to a rich

people's school for being academically proficient. It isn't on the face bullying, but there is drudgery as Midori shuttles between the two economic classes – her family and her classmates. And, their inherent incapability to understand the lifestyle of the other class. There is also her mother's disinterest in cooking that requires Midori to acquire culinary skills at a young age by investing her pocket money into buying cookbooks. When Midori's mother passed away about two years back, her father grieved more for his wife and showed no affection for his daughters. As Toru spends more time with Midori, there seems to be an imminent love story at the brim. Especially with Toru taking care of Midori's dying father admitted at the hospital. But, this love story is struggling to emerge under Naoko's shadow. As Toru finally decides to end it with Naoko, Reiko informs Toru that Naoko had committed suicide. Lost and feeling utterly alone, Toru wanders the country deeply hurt. Toru is brought back to life after Reiko's visit. They both talk for hours and have sex. The next morning Reiko goes to a new town to start a new life. He tries to reconnect with Midori but no promises are made.

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In describing mind, Freud wrote "Mental life is the function of an apparatus made up of several portions...To the oldest of these mental provinces or agencies we give the name of id" (p.14). The id is the most primitive part of the mind and the most inaccessible, both for its owner and for the psychoanalyst. The id operates wholly at an unconscious level, meaning the individual has no access to it. The id has no morality; it does not know right from wrong, it only knows what it wants and provide the motivation to reach those wants as immediately as possible. It is pleasure seeking energy Freud called libido, and he viewed it as a sexually based energy.

The purpose of ego is to help the id satisfy its demands. The ego functions to control the instincts, but not to inhibit them. The ego operates partly at the conscious level and partly at the unconscious level. The ego is the rational part of the mind; it serves as the mediator between the id and the external world. The ego might suppress certain actions or might just delay them until circumstances are more appropriate.

Superego develops in childhood through the child's experiences, parental teachings, cultural milieu, and so forth. The superego represents the individual's moral compass. Unlike ego, which tries to achieve the id's desires, the superego may act in direct opposition to the id, attempting to thwart id desires. Across individuals, the id would be viewed as a common component of mind. But egos and superegos, because they develop out of experiences in the world, could differ considerably across individuals.

Psychoanalytic elements can be seen in each individual in this novel. Toru Watanabe who is a nineteen year old student felt weak facing the mentally unstable and suffering from mental illness tendencies. Feelings of weakness was offset in behaviour like drinking in order to forget Naoko and he made love with a lot of women. But of many women, Toru got only interested in Naoko and Midori. Toru loved Naoko but the presence of Midori made Toru could momentarily forget Naoko. There are feelings of low self-esteem in the face of the world of Naoko and Toru that cause them to feel alienated in this world and finally experiences the loneliness. After the death of Naoko in order to relieve from his mental stress and anxiety he even has sex with Reiko a woman in her late thirties who is a friend of Naoko. Through the character of Toru we can see that he relieves all his tension by having sex with women.

Naoko is Kizuki's girlfriend at the time of his suicide. Kizuki, Toru and Naoko were all friends in high school. However, Toru states that when Kizuki was not in the room, the air between Naoko and himself grew awkward. They were not close friends, which makes it less surprising when Naoko cuts off contact with Toru after Kizuki's suicide. Naoko also struggles with her identity after Kizuki's death, which is what she and Toru connect to each other about. Further on in the book, it is revealed that Naoko has already undergone a severe loss as her older sister committed suicide when Naoko was a child. She was the one to find her sister hanging in her room and confesses to Toru that it felt "like something inside me had died. I just stayed that way, with my sister, in that cold, dark place until my mother came up to see what was going on" (Murakami 145). She goes on to reveal that she truthfully never left that dark place and when Kizuki committed suicide at the same age as her older sister, it further undid her fragile psyche. She is unable to love Toru from bottom of her heart because of the scars from her past and even though their sexual bonding does make any sense. Finally in the end of the novel she commits suicide.

Midori Kobayashi is a girl with quirky and exuberant personality. Midori mirrors Naoko in a lot of ways but in a way that both women's traits lie at the opposite ends of each other's spectrum. Midori is a white pearl, and Naoko is a black pearl. However Midori was strong headed and decisive woman who is a complete contrast to Naoko. Midori, often expressing the sexual thoughts she has about Watanabe, wants to date Watanabe and have a real relationship with someone, something that Midori has been missing her whole life. Midori took care of her grandparents, mother, and father before they all pass away. Midori does not have great relationships with these people seeing as how she treats them all with a little disdain and derision. Midori, sexually frustrated by the boyfriend she has when Watanabe first meets her, is all the more willing to do carnal acts with Watanabe. Midori expresses how the people in her life accumulate her personality "My father, my mother, they never paid the slightest attention to me, and my boyfriend, well, he's just not that kind of guy" (Murakami 227). Midori's was dealing with narcissistic personality disorder because of the unreturned love, care and attention from all these people whom she loved. Midori shows herself as a maturing young woman, originally with flawed views and an egregious and possibly insulting stated worldview, but who ultimately compromises her own narcissism for her love of Toru even as she claims not to understand Toru's commitment to Naoko.

Reiko just like Naoko was dealing with mental issues and she had been there in sanatorium for almost years. On Toru's visit at the sanatorium she tells about her tragic story of a thirteen year old girl manipulating her. Even though she seems very supportive and concern about Naoko, on a keen observation to her character we can see that she is a mythomaniac. It seems that Reiko had been secretly manipulating Naoko into lesbian relationship. When Naoko returned to the Ami sanatorium from the real medical hospital, Reiko was rebuffed because Naoko said she was about to reunite with Watanabe and so she showed Naoko the letter from Watanabe asking for advice on how to deal with his love for Midori and his unrequited puppy love for Naoko. This caused two things that Reiko wanted to be able to comfort and then seduce Naoko on the rebound, and then to put herself in the place of the younger, unwrinkled Naoko, and seduce Watanabe. In other words, to become young and beautiful once again. Naoko was not suicidal she was wanting to get better, looking forward to life with Watanabe until the revelation. Recall that Reiko's feelings for

Naoko were not all that charitable ,she wrote to Watanabe saying that although Naoko was all the world to him, she was only a "clumsy girl" to Reiko.

Conclusion

“Norwegian Wood” is still one Murakami book that everyone on Japan has read, but Murakami’s young audience has grown up with him as he begun wrestling with Japan’s dark past in “The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle” and the 1995 double punch of the Kobe earthquake and in “Underground”, the sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway. Apart from normal love story this novel portrays the clashes, mental issues, depression, death, sexual frustration and harsh realities of life. Murakami’s Norwegian Wood is the story of all traumatic characters who are displaced culturally and remained far away from mainstream. Insanity of all characters in the novel is evidenced throughout the behaviour, action and manner of the characters. As a result of which the youngest were professionally not committed, socially alienated, and culturally excluded. Hence, in the socio-cultural lives of Japan different problems like- suicidal feeling, escapist mentality, misguided sex adventure, crisis in interpersonal relationship, alcoholism, feeling of being exploited culturally and disruption in social life, unemployment, homosexuality had grown up pervasively. Native Japanese wheresoever go and whatsoever do against the western norms and values, however, most of them fall prey of the Americanization and finally Europeanization, which makes them traumatic.

All Japanese youth narrate their own stories to get relief from the mental stress. Despite of Japanese youth’s escapement from much traumatic experiences through the narration or sharing of their stories each other, they live most of their tormented and traumatized life not by other reason but by memorizing the past and desiring the balanced and equitable society in Japan. As we know, trauma is not only physical illness; it is also taken as a psychological illness which recurs in the mind of the people after the event occurs.

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