

**Memories and Mindscapes:
An Intertextual Study of Haruki Murakami's *Norwegian Wood***

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Abstract

This study focuses on obligatory and optional intertextualities that are discernible in Haruki Murakami's novel *Norwegian Wood*, intertextualities that take the form of direct references and allusions to classical and modern literary works, contemporary films and music. The present analysis aims to substantiate a number of important analogies between the novel's theme, plot, setting and characters and those of *The Catcher in the Rye*, *The Great Gatsby* and *The Magic Mountain*. It also illustrates how intertextuality is achieved through adaptation, translation and dialogue, all the while exposing undertones of literary theories such as postmodernism, existentialism, psychoanalysis, and feminism that foster creative interaction between reader and narrative.

Keywords: Haruki Murakami, intertextuality, Norwegian Wood

Introduction

Intertextuality, the idea that the meaning of a text is shaped by other texts, is one of the dominant ideas in modern literary criticism. It is a complex concept that is probably best understood through an analogy. Iampolski (1998) compares it to an intriguing episode in *The Odyssey* where Odysseus journeys to the Underworld to consult the blind prophet Teiresias. The old seer immediately recognizes Odysseus when they meet and foretells the long years of wandering ahead of him. Odysseus's mother was also there but, unlike Teiresias, she does not recognize her own son.

The blind man, it turns out, can see better, for his blindness has retained the past and its images in the dark. To recognize is to place what you see alongside what you know, alongside what has already been. Odysseus's mother, bereft of her memory, cannot "see" her son. Sight without memory is blind. (p. 2)

The blind prophet recognizes Odysseus because the gods have allowed him to retain his memory beyond his death. Odysseus's mother, having no such ability, can only gaze blankly on the face of the son she once loved. This encounter throws light on the complex nature of intertextuality: Just as Odysseus is recognized only by someone who preserves a memory of him, texts can only be understood by the reader when connected to memory.

Intertextuality, therefore, is the way the meaning of a text is shaped by memory. By the term "memory" we mean the experiences of the author who wrote it down and the experiences of the reader who decodes it. In other words, the meaning of the text is the result of the writer's experience as much as it is the product of the reader's personal encounter with it. Thus, for Hirschman (2000) these "memories" that create intertextuality are "the interconnectedness of cultural narratives, such that current texts refer always backward to structures and ideas contained in earlier texts; each generation's patterns of discourse are built upon those of preceding generations" (p. 57).

The beginnings of intertextuality can be traced back to Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of "dialogism", which suggests that all utterances occur inside a social context to the extent that every utterance is made in response to what has already been said and what subsequently may be said in reply (Latham, 2008).

Kristeva (1986) advanced the idea in her seminal essay *Word, Dialogue, Novel*. Therein she states that "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of *intertextuality* replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least double" (p. 37).

Worton and Still (1990) likewise broadened the notion by saying that the writer is a reader of texts before he is a creator of one and therefore the texts he creates are inevitably filled with various references, quotations, and influences. The reader, on the other hand, brings to mind at the moment of reading all the texts he has previously encountered.

Reading thus becomes a process of moving between texts. Meaning becomes something which exists between a text and all the other texts to which it refers and relates, moving out from the independent text into a network of textual relations. The text becomes the intertext. (Allen, 2000, p. 1)

Conceptual Framework

This study is framed by Fitzsimmons' (2013) classification of intertextualities, of which two, obligatory and optional, are present in Murakami's novel. Obligatory intertextuality occurs when the writer intentionally compares or associates two (or more) texts. To be able to comprehend the writer's intention, the reader must not only understand the text he is reading (hypertext), but also the text to which the writer is alluding (the hypotext). Without this link being made, the reader's comprehension will be, at best, inadequate.

The second type is optional intertextuality and refers to connections that are helpful but not essential to an understanding of the text. Optional intertextualities are like hidden freebies in a literary work. They are not prerequisites for enjoyment, but finding them constitutes a bonus in the form of deeper insights into the literary piece.

These two types of intertextualities appear in *Norwegian Wood* in the form of direct references and allusions to classical and modern literary works, films and music. Other intertextual methods such as adaptation, translation and dialogue likewise abound, enriching the novel's narrative elements while revealing undertones of contemporary literary concepts. This facilitates a creative interaction between the reader and the text, enabling a more nuanced appreciation of the work.

Summary of the Novel

Norwegian Wood (*Noruei no Mori*) was published 1987 and was translated into English by Jay Rubin. It is a coming-of-age story set in the late 1960s at the time of tumultuous student demonstrations in Tokyo. It remains Murakami's most popular work, even as he ventures into darker themes in succeeding novels such as *Kafka on the Shore*.

The novel begins with the main protagonist, Toru Watanabe, arriving at Hamburg Airport while the Beatles' song "Norwegian Wood" is playing on the plane's speakers. He recalls a scene 18 years ago when he was walking in a meadow with Naoko, the girl he loved. Toru and Naoko grew up in Kobe along with Kizuki, Naoko's boyfriend. They were a small, tight group until Kizuki inexplicably committed suicide. This tore Toru and Naoko apart and both decided to go to Tokyo to study at separate universities. Toru lives in a dormitory with a stuttering but compulsively neat roommate he calls Storm Trooper. He also befriends Nagasawa, an intelligent but egoistic senior who takes him out on double dates. One day, he and Naoko happen to meet again and rekindle their old friendship.

On Naoko's 20th birthday they meet at Toru's apartment, where Naoko breaks down in tears. Toru comforts her and they end up making love. The next day Toru tries to reach Naoko but she has moved to another place. While he is pining for Naoko, he befriends Midori Kobayashi, a lively though quirky classmate in his drama class. Midori invites him to her family house where they have dinner and share a tender kiss.

A letter from Naoko arrives informing Toru that she is staying in a sanatorium to deal with her psychological problems. Toru visits her and meets her confidant, Reiko Ishida, a woman in her late thirties who is also convalescing there. That evening, Naoko kneels at Toru's bedside. In the moonlight she shows her naked body to him and then leaves without a word.

Reiko tells Toru that she was studying to be a concert pianist when a nervous breakdown derailed her ambitions. Despite her delicate condition, she met a man who genuinely loved her. Her life was progressing in a positive direction until a young lesbian student, whose advances she had refused, accused her of sexual harassment. This caused another nervous breakdown that destroyed her marriage and drove her to the sanatorium. Moreover, at this same time Naoko confides to Toru that when she was a child she witnessed her sister's suicide.

Toru reconnects with Midori after returning to Tokyo, and takes her for drinks at her favorite bar. She then introduces him to her father, who is confined in a hospital. Toru quickly bonds with her father, who weakly gestures to him to take care of Midori. Nagasawa informs Toru he passed the foreign ministry exam and invites Toru to join him and his girlfriend, Hatsumi, for a celebration. The dinner ends on an ugly note when the couple argues heatedly in front of Toru.

Toru visits Naoko again at the sanatorium, where they share more tender moments. He then goes back to Tokyo and gets busy moving from the dorm to a rented house with a small garden. He invites Naoko to live with him when she feels she is ready. By this time, he has forgotten about Midori and when he remembers to call her, she refuses to speak to him. He feels guilty about neglecting Midori and feels even worse upon learning that Naoko's condition has deteriorated. Toru and Midori eventually reconcile even as Toru realizes he is actually in love with two women. Midori supportively agrees to wait while Toru sorts out his feelings.

Two months later, Toru receives news that Naoko has committed suicide. Devastated, he wanders homeless for a month until he finds himself alone and hungry on a beach talking with a kind fisherman. After their conversation, he resolves to pick himself up and resume his life. Reiko, having decided to leave the sanatorium, visits him in his house in Tokyo. They hold a memorial service for Naoko by singing her favorite songs on the guitar. They sleep together that night, but Reiko leaves the next day for Hokkaido to begin a new life. Later, Toru excitedly calls Midori telling her he “wants to begin everything from the beginning”.

Intertextual Analysis of the Novel

Intertextuality is not a modern concept. Bauman (2004) notes that “the *relationship of texts to other texts* [emphasis added] has been an abiding concern...since Aristotle speculated on the potential shape of tragedies based on the Iliad and the Odyssey as against other relations of the fall of Troy and its aftermath” (p. 2). It is this interdependence of authors as demonstrated in Murakami's *Norwegian Wood* that this study will analyse. All direct quotations from the novel are taken from the Vintage International Edition, copyrighted by the author in 2000.

Obligatory Intertextuality

The title of the novel is an obligatory intertextuality because a proper appreciation would be inadequate without the idea that it is based on the Beatles' “Norwegian Wood (This Bird Has Flown)”. The song was written by John Lennon and Paul McCartney and released in December 1965 as part of the band's *Rubber Soul* album.

The song's opening line (“I once had a girl, or should I say she once had me.”) succinctly captures the ambiguity in the relationship of Toru and Naoko. They are the closest of friends, confiding in and making love to each other. However, the psychological commitment is one-

sided, since Naoko never gets to sort out her feelings for Toru because she still loves her boyfriend Kizuki, or at least feels some kind of responsibility for his suicide.

Optional Intertextualities

This type of intertextuality is not necessary for an adequate appreciation of a story. Nonetheless, an awareness of the allusions and adaptations in the text enriches in no small measure the reader's understanding of the narrative by revealing pathways towards a multi-layered interpretation of its elements.

***The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald**

Murakami makes lengthy references to Fitzgerald's 1925 novel about the fictional town of West Egg on New York's Long Island in the summer of 1922. The story focuses on the young and mysterious millionaire Jay Gatsby and his quixotic pursuit to win back the affection of his former sweetheart Daisy Buchanan. The book explores themes of decadence, idealism and social upheaval during the 1920s, an era also known as "The Jazz Age".

In *Norwegian Wood*, Toru and Nagasawa become fast friends due to a mutual admiration for the novel. Nagasawa considers it a badge of distinction to have read *The Great Gatsby*. For him, that separates him and Toru from the "hicks and slobs" that live in their dormitory. Furthermore, the references to Fitzgerald's novel are an aid to characterising Nagasawa. He is not your ordinary serial womanizer. He is a well-read and intelligent person who is a keen student of human behaviour. One can also see a parallelism between his character and that of Jay Gatsby. Both are cynical human beings who see life as inherently unfair but who are nonetheless driven to succeed.

Another optional intertextuality the two novels share is the colour green, which is central to Fitzgerald's opus. In a memorable scene in the book, Jay Gatsby stands on his lawn on a moonlit night reaching out to the green dock light, a symbol for Daisy Buchanan, whose affection he seeks to reclaim. In a similar scene in *Norwegian Wood*, Toru gazes at Naoko's house as he walks within the sanatorium grounds in the moonlight.

Likewise, the name of Naoko means "forest" (related to *green*) in Japanese. It can be assumed that just as green symbolizes Gatsby's quixotic pursuit of Daisy, it also stands for Toru's heroic love for Naoko. Interestingly, Midori, which is the name of Toru's other love interest, means "green" in Japanese. In the same way that the guiding beacon on the dock is green and symbolizes Daisy, the colour green in *Norwegian Wood* represents Midori, a light providing direction to Toru whose mind is confused by his complicated relationship with Naoko.

***The Catcher in the Rye* by J. D. Salinger**

Murakami admits to being a fan of Salinger; this shows in the many instances in *Norwegian Wood* where *The Catcher in the Rye* (1965) is referenced. To begin with, both novels are in the mould of a *bildungsroman* – a coming-of-age story in which a young protagonist undergoes a transformative experience towards deeper maturity. Several intertextualities in this regard are worth noting.

First, Tokyo and New York serve as mindscapes for the respective protagonists of the two novels. It is in the city where they express and act out their ideas and meet people who support or challenge their perceptions of life. On one side are the subways, bars, parks,

museums, and hotels of Holden Caulfield's New York City. On the other are the bullet trains, bookstores, restaurants, and love motels of Toru Watanabe's Tokyo.

The cities are places of existential wanderings for both protagonists. Holden roams New York for days searching for authenticity both in old friends and new acquaintances. Toru spends months living and loving in Tokyo trying to come to grips with his love for two women of complicated characters.

A second intertextuality has to do with dormitory friends. In *The Catcher in the Rye*, Holden has a dorm-mate named Robert Ackley, an insecure guy who is always barging into his room and bothering him. Toru, on the other hand, rooms with a very neat guy he calls Storm Trooper because he always wears sternly formal clothes. Ackley and Storm Trooper do not share the same traits, but they accomplish the same purpose by serving as foils to the protagonists, highlighting their respective characteristics by striking a contrast. Ackley's obtrusiveness clashes with Holden's tendency to keep to himself. In the same manner, Storm Trooper's obsessive compulsiveness contrasts with Toru's laid-back demeanour.

It is the character of Stradlater in *The Catcher in the Rye* and that of Nagasawa that bear similarities. Stradlater is Holden's sexually hyperactive dorm-mate, while in *Norwegian Wood*, the randy one is Nagasawa, Toru's dorm-mate, who boasts of having bedded 75 girls. But unlike Stradlater who is an academic slacker (he asks Holden to write an English essay for him), Nagasawa is a resolutely studious person.

In another parallel, Naoko and Jane Gallagher are both girls whom the protagonists love but who do not reciprocate the protagonists' affections. In *The Catcher in the Rye*, the object of Holden's affection is Jane Gallagher, a girl with whom he spent one summer in Maine. They have never been sweethearts, but Holden is fascinated by every little thing about her, especially the way she keeps her kings in the back row when playing checkers. He is attracted to Jane but never gets to reveal his feelings for her. In *Norwegian Wood*, Naoko is the object of Toru's unrequited affection. He loved her even when she was still going out with his best friend. His affection never wavers even when she leaves for the sanatorium to deal with her neurosis. He waits for her to recover while planning for the time when she finishes convalescing and they can finally live together. His is a heroic kind of love – selfless, fiercely committed and given purely without thought of reciprocation.

Both Holden and Toru have secondary objects of affection, Sally Hayes and Midori. In the case of Holden, it is Sally Hayes. He is not attracted to her as much as he is attracted to Jane Gallagher, but it is Sally whom he seeks out when he needs somebody to talk to. At one point, her outgoing personality lifts Holden's spirits so much that he impulsively asks Sally to elope with him. Toru's secondary love is Midori Kobayashi. Like Sally she is attractive and friendly. Toru meets her at the time Naoko is confined in a sanatorium. She runs their small family-owned bookstore while her father is confined in a hospital. She and Toru date several times and develop feelings for each other although Midori still has a boyfriend and Toru is still very much in love with Naoko.

In some instances, the parallelisms between the two girls are striking. For example, Sally's coquettish efforts to attract people's attention in the ice-skating scene in Radio City is replicated in a scene in *Norwegian Wood* where Midori meets up with Toru dressed in an eye-catching miniskirt.

Phoniness can be regarded as another point of contact between the two novels. *The Catcher in the Rye* is filled with Holden's rants about the inauthenticity of people around him. He describes his teachers, fellow students, and most of the people he meets in New York City as "phonies". Only Jane Gallagher and his sister Phoebe are spared from his cynicism. In *Norwegian Wood*, it is a secondary character, Midori Kobayashi, who expresses disgust at the superficiality of people around her, describing the members of a college organization she once joined as "phonies."

It is interesting to note that the Harvill Press paperback edition of *Norwegian Wood*, published in 2001, uses the word "fraud" and "fakes" instead of "phonies" in their version of the quoted passages above. It might have been a belated attempt by Murakami to hide the more obvious intertextualities of his novel with Salinger's work.

Birds and Ducks form another point of contact. In *The Catcher in the Rye*, Holden is so curious about what happens to the ducks in the Central Park lagoon during winter that he cannot resist asking Horowitz, the taxi driver, about it. Likewise, Toru Watanabe shows concern for equally vulnerable creatures in *Norwegian Wood*. While walking with Reiko in the grounds of the sanatorium, he inquires how the birds in the aviary fare when the cold sets in.

The plight of the ducks and the birds intrigues and frightens both Holden and Toru. Like those creatures, Holden and Toru are about to experience a difficult season in their lives – a psychological winter if you will. In asking how those animals will survive the coming cold, they are in effect wondering how they, too, will manage. Unfortunately, the symbolism is lost on Horowitz and Reiko, who respond to their queries with exasperation and playful mockery.

***The Magic Mountain* by Thomas Mann**

While *Norwegian Wood* is sometimes called the Japanese *The Catcher in the Rye*, it also has much in common with *The Magic Mountain*, the 1924 novel by Thomas Mann considered one of the most influential works of 20th century German literature. There are several significant intertextualities between the two novels.

The first of these revolves around the importance of sanatoriums. When Toru brings a copy of *The Magic Mountain* to the sanatorium, Reiko reacts with mild incredulity: "How could you bring a book like that to a place like this" (p. 141)? Toru knows Reiko is upset because she lives in a sanatorium that is very similar to the one described in *The Magic Mountain*. The protagonist of the novel, Hans Castorp, visits a relative at the Bergdorf, a sanatorium in the alpine slopes of Davos, Switzerland, where he himself ends up staying for seven years.

In *Norwegian Wood*, the sanatorium is Ami Hostel, hidden among the mountains outside Kyoto. Toru Watanabe goes there to visit Naoko, but it is Reiko, not Toru, who has stayed there for seven years. The two places are similarly located far from the city; self-sustaining, commune-like institutions in which the residents endeavour to live in harmony.

Female Characters are another point of correspondence. In *The Magic Mountain*, Castorp falls in love with Claudia, a beautiful but sickly Russian woman. In *Norwegian Wood*, Toru visits his love – the beautiful but mentally ill Naoko.

Hereditary Ailments also are prominent in both books, with major characters suffering from physical or mental illnesses that run in the family. In Mann's novel, Castorp has tuberculosis

just like his cousin Joachim, who eventually succumbs to the disease. In Murakami's work, Naoko battles depression and commits suicide just as her sister did when she was young. In addition, Midori's parents both die of brain cancer.

Politics figure prominently in both novels. The events in both occur at a time of political upheaval. Those in *The Magic Mountain* occur in Germany during the years leading to the First World War. In *Norwegian Wood*, they happen in Japan at the time of 1960s student uprisings.

Forrest Gump

Forrest Gump is a 1986 novel by Winston Groom, made into a successful film in 1994 starring Tom Hanks. One of the most memorable quotes from both the novel and the movie is "Life is a box of chocolates. You never know what you're going to get". Forrest Gump says it to a nurse sitting beside him on a park bench. It is also spoken by his mother on her deathbed. In *Norwegian Wood*, Midori makes almost exactly the same comment in a conversation with Toru: "I always think about that when something painful comes up. 'Now I just have to polish these off, and everything'll be OK.' Life is a box of cookies" (p. 332).

Murakami was presumably influenced by Groom's novel, which appeared a year before Murakami published his novel. It is interesting to note that the 2001 Harvill Press edition of *Norwegian Wood* actually uses the word *chocolates* instead of *cookies*.

***The Gambler* by Fyodor Dostoevsky**

Dostoevsky, the author of *Crime and Punishment* and *The Brothers Karamazov*, is one of the most highly regarded Russian writers. However, his personal life was characterized by a constant struggle with a gambling addiction. His novella *The Gambler* was actually written under a strict deadline to pay off his gambling debts. Murakami references that particular work in the conversation between Toru and Nagasawa, where the latter tries to rationalize his chronic womanizing by comparing it to a gambling addiction: "Hard to say. Hey, you know that thing Dostoevsky wrote on gambling? It's like that. When you're surrounded by endless possibilities, one of the hardest things you can do is pass them up" (p. 46).

***Electra* by Euripides**

This tragedy written by Euripides is based on the story of Electra, who took revenge on her mother and stepfather for the murder of her father, Agamemnon. Murakami references this work in the first meeting between Toru and Midori, and in the part where Toru's drama professor speaks about the concept of *deus ex machina*. Toru also refers to the literary term in his monologue at the bedside of Midori's father in the hospital: "But think about it – what if there were a *deus ex machina* in real life? Everything would be so easy! If you felt stuck or trapped, some god would swing down from up there and solve all your problems" (p. 253).

It is interesting to note that Murakami himself employs a *deus ex machina* to facilitate a resolution near the end of *Norwegian Wood*: Toru's dilemma whether to choose Midori or wait for Naoko is resolved when he receives word from Reiko that Naoko has committed suicide. Nonetheless, Naoko's death at the latter part of the novel does not come unexpectedly as a *deus ex machina* usually does, but is foreshadowed throughout much of the novel. And while the predicament has been resolved, the novel still ends with an air of uncertainty that often characterizes Murakami's stories.

***Beneath the Wheel* by Herman Hesse**

This 1906 novel by the German writer and Nobel laureate is referenced in the part where Toru reads a copy of the novel while Midori is asleep. It tells the story of Han Giebenrath, whose education focuses on intellectual improvement at the cost of personal development. He studies at a seminary but leaves after a creeping mental illness causes a decline in his academic performance. Back in his village he takes up the life of a blacksmith as alternative to a life of scholarly pursuit. However, he never fully adjusts to this situation and later drowns himself in a river.

As with other literary works mentioned in *Norwegian Wood*, one finds some parallelisms in the plot and characters of *Beneath the Wheel*. Han and Naoko are similar in that they are both intelligent characters suffering from mental illness and an inability to have productive social interactions. They both retreat to a life of simplicity to deal with their sickness – Han to a village as a blacksmith and Naoko to a sanatorium. In the end, both are unsuccessful and take their own lives.

John Updike, Boris Vian, Dante Alighieri

Norwegian Wood contains a number of passing references to other famous authors. John Updike, for example, was directly mentioned as one of Toru's favourite writers. Another noted writer, Boris Vian, is referenced in Toru's description of his humdrum life without Naoko.

It is interesting to note that these writers dealt with deeply psychological themes and populated their works with characters wrestling with existential issues. One might also add that Naoko and Midori, the objects of Toru's love in *Norwegian Wood*, echo Dante's Virgil and Beatrice in *Divine Comedy*. Symbolically speaking, Naoko takes him down to the depths of hell and purgatory because of her psychosis, while Midori leads him up to paradise through her stable and positive view of life.

Painting

Norwegian Wood also alludes to the visual arts, specifically the works of Edvard Munch (1863–1944), a Norwegian expressionist painter known for his intense portrayal of psychological themes. His best-known work is *The Scream*, which shows a figure with an agonized expression against a swirling landscape and red-orange sky. Murakami references the painter's style in Toru's description of the sanatorium grounds layout:

It occurred to me that this was what you might get if Walt Disney did an animated version of a Munch painting. All the houses were exactly the same shape and colour, nearly cubical, in perfect left-to-right symmetry, with big front doors and lots of windows. The road twisted its way among them like the artificial practice course of a driving school. (p. 136)

Indeed, some of Munch's paintings such as "Evening on Karl Johan Street" and "The Red Vine" feature cube-shaped houses painted in solid colours with multiple symmetrical windows (Messer, 1985). This intertextuality serves to emphasize the psychological states of the patients in the sanatorium: they are trying to live as normal a life as possible in a place where they are both free and confined.

Films

Casablanca

Films are likewise referenced in the novel. In the iconic movie *Casablanca* (Wallis & Curtiz, 1947), Rick (Humphrey Bogart) gives strict instructions to the house pianist never to play the song “As Time Goes By” in his café because it reminds him of Ilsa (Ingrid Bergman), the woman who broke his heart. This is referenced in Haruki Murakami’s novel, specifically in the episode where Naoko requests Reiko to play “Norwegian Wood” on the guitar:

“That song can make me feel so sad”, said Naoko. “I don't know, I guess I imagine myself wandering in a deep wood. I'm all alone and it's cold and dark, and nobody comes to save me. That's why Reiko never plays it unless I request it”. “Sounds like Casablanca!” Reiko says with a laugh. (p. 146)

The Graduate and “Scarborough Fair”

The Graduate (Thurman & Nichols, 1967) is an American film based on the homonymous novel by Charles Webb. The film is referenced indirectly in the scene where Toru, Naoko and Reiko are in a coffee shop listening to the radio playing Simon and Garfunkel’s version of “Scarborough Fair”, which is part of the film’s soundtrack.

The reference is significant for two reasons. The first one is because the movie, like *Norwegian Wood*, is a coming-of-age story. In the film, 21-year-old Benjamin Braddock (played by Dustin Hoffman) is seduced by an older woman, thus marking his transition to adulthood. This intertextuality foreshadows Toru’s sexual encounter with Reiko, a woman in her late thirties, which occurs near the end of the novel. Interestingly, that event also precedes a progression in Toru’s character. Sometime after that night with Reiko, he excitedly calls Midori telling her: “I have a million things to talk to you about ... All I want in this world is you. I want to see you and talk. I want the two of us to begin everything from the beginning”. (p. 386)

Secondly, the song “Scarborough Fair,” which is actually an old English ballad, serves to describe in poignant terms the unrequited love that Toru has for Naoko:

Are you going to Scarborough Fair?
Parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme;
Remember me to one who lives there,
She once was a true love of mine.

Music

“Here Comes the Sun”

Besides the song “Norwegian Wood,” a Beatles composition that is mentioned at length in the novel is “Here Comes the Sun.” The song was written by George Harrison and first released on the Beatles’ 1969 album *Abbey Road*. It was referenced in the part where Reiko, at the coffeehouse in the mountains, is playing songs requested by Toru and Naoko:

Her milk was on the house if she would play the Beatles’ “Here Comes the Sun”, said the girl. Reiko gave her a thumbs up and launched into the song. Hers was not a full voice, and too much smoking had given it a husky edge, but it was lovely, with real presence. I almost felt as if the sun really was coming

up again as I sat there listening and drinking beer and looking at the mountains.
It was a soft, warm feeling. (p.187)

Murakami could have chosen this song because it fits the scene's hopeful atmosphere. After a long dark spell, Naoko looks happy and seems on the way to a recovery. Toru senses a faint promise that Naoko might finally learn to reciprocate his feelings for her:

Little darling, I feel the ice is slowly melting
Little darling, it feels like years since it's been clear
Here comes the sun, here comes the sun,
And I say It's all right. (Harrison, 1969)

Conclusion

Norwegian Wood is replete with intertextualities that enrich the reader's encounter with the text. The melody and lyrics of the song "Norwegian Wood" capture the sexual and dramatic energies of Toru's coming of age. It provides the only significant instance of obligatory intertextuality in the novel. An appreciation of Murakami's work would be largely incomplete without an idea of the Beatles and that particular composition.

The rest of the references are optional intertextualities consisting of thematic and plot borrowings from *The Great Gatsby*, *The Catcher in the Rye*, and *The Magic Mountain* showcasing Murakami's postmodern style and references to contemporary films and music. The most apparent philosophical influence on the novel is existentialism, as is evident in the angst, anxiety and fear of Naoko, Reiko, and Toru as they struggle valiantly, and with varying results, to overcome their neuroses.

Toru is finally able to sort out his feelings for the two women in his life – Naoko and Midori – and experiences an exhilarating epiphany at the end. Reiko is eventually able to summon the courage to leave the sanatorium and start a new life in another city. Naoko, though, is not as fortunate. There are just too many ghosts in her past. Her sister's suicide and that of her boyfriend are simply too much for her fragile psyche; even a love as heroic as Toru's fails to lift her out of a fatal despondency.

Psychoanalytic theory is touched upon here not so much as a window into Murakami's mind but as a means to make sense of the tortured psyches of his main characters. We see Toru struggling to deal with unresolved emotions, Reiko wrestling with psychological conflicts, and Naoko fending off guilt. A hint of feminism is evident in the independence and assertiveness of the character of Midori.

Finally, the references serve to form a postmodern pastiche of plots, themes and subtle adaptations that celebrate the genius of the original authors, making the old narratives as relevant today as they have ever been. In this "post-truth" era when people are sadly retreating into their own versions of reality, this openly integrative aspect of intertextuality may just be what is needed to bring more civility and empathy to the reading and discussion of current issues.

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