

Research Article

Healing or Haunting : Mourning and Melancholia in the Characters of Haruki Murakami's *Norwegian Wood*

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Abstract: This study explores the psychological responses to loss experienced by the main characters, Toru and Naoko, in Haruki Murakami's *Norwegian Wood* (1987). Employing Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic framework Mourning and Melancholia, this study exhibits how each character demonstrates distinct responses to loss. The study was done using qualitative methodology. The findings shows Toru exemplifies the mourning process, gradually letting go of his attachment to what he has lost and re-engaging with life. In contrast, Naoko portrays characteristics of melancholia through her withdrawal, feelings of guilt, and profound connection to the lost individual, which ultimately leads her to emotional devastation. The study concludes that the novel portrays mourning and melancholia not merely as emotional reactions but as deep contemplations on human identity, attachment, and the human struggle with grief.

Keywords: Grief; Loss; Melancholia; Mourning; Psychoanalysis.

1. Introduction

Loss is an inevitable universal emotional experience in a human's life, regardless of cultural background, age, or social status. Every individual might experience some form of loss, "loss is inseparable from what remains, for what is lost is known only by what remains of it, by how these remains are produced, read, and sustained" (Eng & Kazanjian, 2003, p.2). Individual's response to loss can differ depending on psychological condition, depth of connection with the missing, as well as the ability to deal with the trauma (Stroebe et al., 2007).

Sigmund Freud, in his paper entitled Mourning and Melancholia (1917), classified responses to loss into two forms, mourning and melancholia. Mourning is "the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on" (Freud, 1917, p.243). Mourning also can be defined as a normal response to loss, where an individual gradually releases emotional attachment to the lost object. In contrast, melancholia denotes a pathological form of grief, unable to release emotional attachments in a healthy way, leading to a psychologically paralyzing state (Reason & Bradbury, 2001). According to Freud, the key psychological characteristics of melancholia are a profound sadness, a disinterest of outside world, an inability to experience love, a suppression of all activities, and a significant decrease in self-esteem that manifests in self-blame and self-criticism, ultimately leading to a delusional anticipation of punishment. The same psychological characteristics are also found in mourning, except the disturbance of self-esteem.

The process of mourning begins with the loss of a person or object to which there has been a libidinal attachment. When the object lost, the libido is left without an object to attach itself to. This libidinal attachment is both narcissistic and ambivalent, making it difficult to withdraw from the lost object and redirect to another, particularly when that object is gone. Consequently, the libido retracts into the ego, leading it to identify with the lost object, which leaves the ego feeling diminished, resulting in the loss of the object also manifesting as a loss of the ego (Shantha & Cauveri, 2017). Freud wrote that in melancholia, "the shadow of the object falls upon the ego" (Freud, 1917, p.249), an individual directs aggression and hatred towards himself instead of the object.

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Freud (1917) also stated the fundamental difference between mourning and melancholia, which is closely related to the individual's level of consciousness of the lost object. In the process of mourning, the individual consciously recognizes and understands what has been lost. This full awareness of the loss allows the individual to gradually move through the grieving process and eventually accept the reality. In contrast, melancholia, the lost object is "withdrawn from consciousness" (Freud, 1917, p. 245), resulting in the individuals experiencing deep suffering without knowing exactly what is the cause. This leads melancholic individuals to experience inner conflict, guilt, and prolonged loss of self-esteem, unable to consciously identify or process the loss.

Freud (1917) added that in both mourning and melancholia, individuals experience inhibition in daily activities and lose interest in the outside world. However, the difference lies in the source of the inhibition. In mourning, this inhibition is understandable as the ego is fully absorbed in the work of mourning. Whereas in melancholia, the inhibition appears puzzling as it is unclear what exactly is absorbing the individual's attention to such an extent. In addition, melancholia is characterized by an extreme decrease in self-esteem and a feeling that it is not the world that has become meaningless, but rather the self that has become impoverished and empty, trapped in unresolved grief (Bartram, 2013).

Literature, in this context, plays an important role as the reflection of human inner life. As an artistic and reflective vessel, literature allows readers to explore the complexity of emotions and psychological conflicts experienced by its characters. According to Zhou et al., (2019), emotions play a crucial role in human experiences, and literature has the power to evoke intense emotions, enabling a greater understanding of the emotional landscape that is part of being human. Through fictional characters and the conflicts, readers can witness concrete representations of psychological dynamics such as trauma, loss, and existential struggle. Therefore, the psychoanalytic approach in literary studies is relevant and significant, especially in studying works that are rich in symbolism and inner turmoil of characters.

The depiction of experience of loss has appeared in many literary works, reflecting how grief and emotional trauma are inseparable parts of human life. Many authors used the theme of loss to explore the inner struggles of individuals in the face of death, separation, or loss of hope. One of literary work that highlights this theme is *Norwegian Wood* published in 1987 written by Haruki Murakami. The novel depicts the life of Toru Watanabe, a young university student whose life is overwhelmed by the shadow of the death of those closest to him. The loss of his best friend, Kizuki, to suicide, and his intimacy to Naoko—Kizuki's lover, who later suffered a mental breakdown and also committed suicide—create an emotional landscape that is dark, desolate, and full of isolation.

There have been a significant number of research studies on *Norwegian Wood* using psychoanalysis approaches. Ashok & Sreekumar (2020) analyzed how suicide, trauma, and memory shape the characters' lives. The study also examined the role of 'memory' in cognitive processes of the human brain and provides an analysis of the factors that influence the brain's development of trauma. Permatasari & Rosyidi (2020) examined the impact of Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) on an individual's self-concept in Haruki Murakami's *Norwegian Wood*, particularly concentrating on the character Naoko. Utilizing psychoanalytic theory grounded in Freud's framework of the id, ego, and superego, the study outlined five main criteria of BPD as demonstrated by Naoko. However, no research study has specifically analyzed the differences in Toru and Naoko ways of dealing with loss using Sigmund Freud's Mourning and Melancholia theory as the main basis for analysis. Therefore, this study is important to fill this gap by focusing on how Freud's theory can be applied to understand the different response of loss between the two main characters.

This study uses psychoanalysis to analyze the novel and chooses to bring the aspects of mourning and melancholia. The researchers employs Sigmund Freud's Mourning and Melancholia in order to investigate the contingent factors influence the expression and process of grief on the main characters in *Norwegian Wood*, Toru and Naoko, as well as the psychological characteristics of mourning and melancholia experienced by the characters. Furthermore, the study analyses how mourning and melancholia, as normal and pathological grieving processes, are depicted in the psychological development of the characters.

Through Freud's psychoanalytic approach, this study aims to explore the psychological dynamics of the characters in *Norwegian Wood*, particularly in terms of how the characters response to loss. It also seeks to show how psychological conditions such as mourning and melancholia are represented in literature, and how these representations can contribute to a broader understanding of mental health issues. Thus, this study reveals the ways in which loss and grief influence the emotional challenges and mental states of Toru and Naoko as depicted

by Haruki Murakami in the novel *Norwegian Wood*, emphasizing the difference between healthy mourning and unresolved melancholia.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Norwegian Wood by Haruki Murakami

In order to achieve a better understanding, the researchers presented the literature reviews related to the novel that are analyzed in this study.

Norwegian Wood has been analyzed in many studies by numerous of researchers using varied approach. Miah (2020) examined Naoko's suicide in Haruki Murakami's novel through sociological and psychoanalytic lenses. It utilized Durkheim's theory of egoistic suicide, which posits that insufficient social integration, absence of common values, and feelings of isolation heighten suicidal risks, along with Freudian psychoanalysis, which emphasizes Naoko's suppressed childhood experiences, unresolved psychosexual conflicts, and the trauma stemming from her lover's death.

Susetio et al. (2023) discussed the application of Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory to the character Naoko in Haruki Murakami's *Norwegian Wood*. The research used Maslow's humanistic approach and qualitative descriptive method to analyze how Naoko meets or does not meet Maslow's five levels of needs: physiological, security, love and existence, esteem, and self-actualization.

Uzma et al. (2025) examined the intricate emotional landscape of Haruki Murakami's *Norwegian Wood*, concentrating on the relationships between love, loss, and existential anguish experienced by its characters. The researchers analyzed the representation of the vulnerability of human connections through the journeys of the main character, Toru Watanabe, along with individuals like Naoko and Midori.

From a different perspective, Nugroho (2020) used postcolonial approach to explores the profound influence of American popular culture and lifestyle on Japanese youth during the 1960s, as illustrated in Murakami's novel. Through the lens of cultural imperialism theory, the study underscored the extensive embrace and admiration of American music, literature, fashion, and social practices among young adults in Japan. The study contended that this phenomenon of "Americanization" stemmed from a sense of inferiority in postwar Japan following its defeat to the U.S. in World War II, a sentiment that was exacerbated by American dominance over mass media during and after the occupation.

Chakraborty & Sarma (2024) challenges conventional wisdom that portrays women as the passive objects of male desire by applying a feminist perspective to Haruki Murakami's *Norwegian Wood*. The researcher argued, drawing on Audre Lorde's idea of the erotic as a source of female empowerment, that the erotic becomes a creative and liberating force when women regain control over their bodies and sexuality. The study challenges the phallogocentric (male-centered) view of sexuality by presenting *Norwegian Wood*'s erotic as a way for both sexes to examine identity, emotional depth, and vulnerability while challenging gendered power structures.

While *Norwegian Wood* has been examine from various perspectives—such as postcolonialism, psychoanalysis, and feminism—there has yet to be a dedicated study that specifically addressed the psychological aspect of mourning and melancholia in the characters Toru and Naoko through the lens of Freud's psychoanalytic theory.

2.2 Freud's Mourning and Melancholia

Freud made a substantial addition to psychoanalysis with his 1917 paper "*Mourning and Melancholia*," which offers an advanced comprehension of how individual response with loss. In this work, Freud made a distinction between melancholia, which he defined as an internalized, pathological state that results in intense self-criticism and lowered self-worth, and mourning, which is a process related to the outside world where the individual eventually detaches from the lost object (Bartram, 2013). According to Freud, mourning is a type of psychological resolution that allows individuals to redirect their emotional energy into new relationships once their emotional bonds with the departed have been sufficiently severed (Baker, 2001).

On the other hand, melancholia is linked to severe ego impoverishment, in which the lost love is absorbed instead of being symbolically buried. Instead of a psychological adjustment to loss, this state is characterized by a mental breakdown, as the person may have self-accusatory thoughts and an incapacity to interact with the outside world (Clewell, 2004).

Therefore, melancholia can result in a stunted emotional state where the lost object maintains a bothersome presence, frequently making the healing process more difficult, whereas mourning permits rehabilitation and reinvestment in relationships (Granek, 2010).

In conclusion, Freud's "*Mourning and Melancholia*" highlights the significant distinctions between normal mourning and the pathological condition of melancholia. It suggests that although grief is a common experience that fills the void left by loss, melancholia is a complicated psychological problem that needs further research and comprehension.

3. Proposed Method

This study applied a descriptive-qualitative methodology. Creswell & Creswell (2017) explained that qualitative research connects to human and social issues because qualitative research explores attitudes, behavior, and experiences ascribed to humans and social problems. In addition, Creswell & Creswell (2017) also emphasized that qualitative research talks about the explanation and interpretation of non-numerical data. Moreover, Aspers & Corte (2019) perpetuated that qualitative research encompasses all aspects that do not involve numerical data. Word interpretation is the focus of qualitative research. The research employed descriptive qualitative or non-numerical data as expected that this methodology would provide and gain in-depth knowledge of the object of the study.

The primary data was taken from Haruki Murakami's novel *Norwegian Wood* translated by Jay Rubin (1987, translated 2000). This novel is used as the main material to analyze as it contains psychological issues relevant to the focus of the research. The secondary data was taken from theoretical texts and scholarly works that support the research. Sigmund Freud's paper entitled *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917) as the main theoretical foundation used to analyze the object material in this research. The research also provided the literature review and the previous studies taken from scholarly articles, scientific journals, and other relevant academic books.

Data collection was conducted through an in-depth reading process of the novel, noting key passages that illustrate the characters' emotional and psychological responses to loss. The researcher identified narrative quotes, dialogues, and monologues that reflect the characteristics of mourning or melancholia based on indicators formulated from Freud's theory.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Contingent Factors

According to Corless et al. (2014) in an article entitled "*Languages of Grief: A Model for Understanding the Expression of the Bereaved*", expressions of grief are influenced by a number of interrelated factors. The article identifies three contingent factors that influence how individuals express and process grief, which are internal factors, interpersonal factors, and external factors.

4.1.1. Internal Factors

Internal factors include an individual's personality and coping mechanism which greatly influence how they process grief. Toru Watanabe had an introverted, reflective personality and tended to keep his feelings to himself, which was why he often internalized his grief. He often suppressed his emotions and avoided facing pain directly, which was evident in his habit of self-censorship and difficulty expressing vulnerability. His views on life and death were reflected in his words:

"The night Kizuki died, however, I lost the ability to see death (and life) in such simple terms. Death was not the opposite of life. It was already here, within my being, it had always been here..." (Murakami, 2000, p. 34).

Toru's coping mechanisms include intellectualization and escapism through drinking, superficial sexual relationships, and walking around aimlessly, reflecting an attempt to avoid unresolved grief. In contrast, Naoko was portrayed as highly sensitive, fragile, and prone to suppressing her feelings, leading to an inability to deal with loss. Her personality made her withdraw and eventually succumb to her psychological distress through suicide. Naoko tried to avoid remembering painful memories and avoided talking about Kizuki's death as a defensive coping mechanism, thus choosing to isolate herself in a sanatorium. As Toru

observed, Naoko “was taking great care as she spoke not to touch on certain things... she had certain subjects she was determined to avoid” (Murakami, 2000, p.52). Emotional suppression and fear of intimacy deepen her suffering and lead to a tragic end.

Overall, these internal factors of personality and coping mechanisms shape the different ways Toru and Naoko go through their grieving process, illustrating Murakami's profound depiction of grieving as a deeply personal and painful experience.

4.1.2. Interpersonal Factor

Relationship with the deceased is an interpersonal factor that influences the grieving process experienced by the characters in *Norwegian Wood*. The characters of Toru and Naoko show that the deeper and more complex their relationship with the deceased, the more difficult the psychological healing process becomes.

Naoko had a deep emotional attachment to two people who died in her life: her sister and Kizuki. Her sister was a very close figure to her in childhood, but her death occurred when Naoko had not yet developed emotional maturity to understand or process grief. Kizuki, on the other hand, was not only a close friend but also a lover and an important part of her identity. Their relationship has been so close and intertwined since childhood that Kizuki's death felt like losing a part of herself. These two relationships, which were deep and emotional, have resulted in Naoko's grief being chronic and unresolved. These overly attached and meaningful relationships contribute greatly to Naoko's state of grief—guilt, hopelessness, and the inability to move on without them.

Toru, on the other hand, had an equally strong relationship with Kizuki, but was more of a close friend, but not as complex as Naoko and Kizuki's relationship. Kizuki's death left Toru deeply shaken, and made him feel that life had turned absurd and empty.

“When it took the 17-year-old Kizuki that night in May, death took me as well.” (Murakami, 2000, p. 34)

This passage shows the deep emotional attachment between Toru and Kizuki. The sense of loss Toru experienced was so deep that he felt as if the death also took his own life. However, since their relationship was more equivalent and Toru had a high reflective capacity, he was able to process this grief in a more functional way, despite the lingering sense of emptiness. Toru experienced a healthy grieving process; he grieves, yet manages to function socially and internalize the meaning of loss.

Toru's relationship with Naoko was more complex: there was love, sympathy, but also confusion because Naoko was never fully present for him. When Naoko ultimately committed suicide, Toru was again hit with a heavy loss. However, as their relationship was already fraught with emotional ambiguity, Toru's grief became a mixture of sadness, regret, and confusion. He lost the person he loved, but also realized that he could never really reach Naoko. Naoko's death became a form of loss of hope and the last connection with his past. This made his process of grieving more existential and reflective, but did not lead to a total breakdown, as their relationships, although intense, were not as fusalional as Naoko and Kizuki.

4.1.3. External Factor

Circumstances of the death are external factors that greatly influence the grieving process, as the manner and circumstances of the death determine the intensity of the trauma as well as the individual's ability to understand and accept the loss. In *Norwegian Wood*, Kizuki's death was unexpected and tragic- he committed suicide at the age of 17 without leaving any message. Neither Toru nor Naoko saw any signs beforehand, which made the loss particularly shocking and unexplainable. For Naoko, this was deeply traumatizing and pushed her into a pathological process of grieving. Her intimate relationship with Kizuki since childhood exacerbated the impact, as if she had lost a part of herself. This wound was further exacerbated by the death of her sister in the past when she was at a very young age, which was also unexpected and similar to Kizuki's death.

"Nobody knew why she killed herself. The same as Kizuki. Exactly the same. She was 17, too, and she never gave the slightest hint she was going to commit suicide. She didn't leave a note, either. Really, it was exactly the same, don't you think?" (Murakami, 2000, p. 192)

The repeated pattern, unexpected, and no emotional closure causes Naoko to remain trapped in a fear of attachment, making her hesitant to truly open up to Toru. This accumulation of psychological distress eventually drove Naoko to the decision to end her own life, reinforcing the unresolved pattern of grief within her.

Meanwhile, Toru experienced a more controlled process of grief. Although Kizuki's death left him shaken and felt life had become absurd, Toru was still able to function in social life, exhibiting a rational and reflective process of grief. However, Naoko's death later aggravated his inner wounds.

“Once upon a time, you dragged a part of me into the world of the dead, and now Naoko has dragged another part of me into that world.” (Murakami, 2000, p. 364)

Naoko was not only his loved one, but also his only connection to the past and to Kizuki. When Naoko died, Toru lost meaning and direction, and the trauma of loss resurfaced more deeply.

Thus, the external factor, circumstances of the death, in this novel plays a central role in shaping the complexity and depth of the grieving process of the two characters.

4.2 Psychological Characteristics

In *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917), Freud explained that both mourning and melancholia share similar psychological characteristics, including profound sadness, disinterest or withdrawal to the outside world, inability to build intimacy, and suppression of all activities. However, melancholia presents one additional key symptom, a decrease of self-esteem, which is absent in the process of mourning.

In *Norwegian Wood*, Naoko exhibited psychological characteristics that can be attributed to melancholia. She experienced profound sadness following the loss of her loved ones. In one of her conversations, she articulated her emotions by saying:

“I imagine myself wandering in a deep wood. I'm all alone and it's cold and dark, and nobody comes to save me.” (Murakami, 2000, p. 146)

This quote reflects extreme alienation and hopelessness, signifying inner disorientation and existential emptiness. In Freud's context, this is a manifestation of severe ego fragmentation. Naoko also exhibited withdrawal from the outside world and suppression of all activities. She consciously chose to live in a place that was isolated from campus life and the general public:

“What I need now is to rest my nerves in a quiet place cut off from the world.” (Murakami, 2000, p. 59)

“I have decided to take a year off from college. Officially, it's a leave of absence, but I suspect that I will never be going back.” (Murakami, 2000, p. 58)

Not only does this statement indicate a desire for rest, but it is also a reflection of not being able to function in the social world anymore. This isolation becomes a form of protection that reinforces feelings of loneliness and emptiness.

Naoko appeared to have difficulty establishing complete emotional intimacy with others, including Toru. Despite her feelings of love, Naoko was not truly able to be vulnerable and accept a stable relationship. This also relates to her poor self-esteem. She expressed a negative view of herself by saying:

“I am a flawed human being - a far more flawed human being than you realize.” (Murakami, 2000, p. 115)

This statement shows the chronic inner conflict and self-blame that are the main characteristics of melancholia. Freud explained that in this state, individuals not only grieve the loss, but also direct their anger and disappointment at themselves, which then drastically lowers self-esteem.

In contrast, Toru Watanabe exhibited psychological characteristics which were more akin with the mourning process outlined by Freud. Toru expressed his profound sadness following Kizuki's passing as follows:

“All I knew - with absolute certainty - was that Kizuki's death had robbed me forever of some part of my adolescence. But what that meant, and what would come of it, were far beyond my understanding.” (Murakami, 2000, p. 107)

This sadness shadowed Toru for a long time and became a significant part of his emotional state. He continued to carry the wound of loss with him wherever he goes, even as he tried to live life in a new environment.

Toru also indicated withdrawal from the outside world. He interacted infrequently with those around him and preferred a quiet, solitary life. He struggled in establishing emotionally intact relationships with others and showed a decreased interest in activities that he used to engage in. Despite this, Toru did not show signs of decreased self-esteem or extreme self-criticism. He retained self-perception, despite being in profound sadness.

This highlights the primary distinction between the two, Naoko exhibited psychological characteristics such as decreased self-esteem, in contrast to Toru. According to their psychological characteristics, the characters showed different responses to loss, as outlined in Freud's theory.

4.3 Response to Loss

According to Freud (1917), there are two forms of response to loss which are called mourning and melancholia. Both share similar psychological characteristics on the surface, such as deep sadness, withdrawal from the outside world, inability to build intimacy, and loss of interest in daily activities, but differ in their deeper psychological structure and consequences for self-image. In this section, the researchers will explain how each form of response is reflected in the characters of Toru and Naoko in *Norwegian Wood*.

4.3.1. Mourning

Toru Watanabe's experienced of grief in *Norwegian Wood* closely mirrors the stages and characteristics of Freud's mourning process. Mourning, according to Freud, is a normal psychological process that occurs when a person loses the object of love, it can be a loved one, relationship, or something meaningful. Following the sudden suicides of his closest people, Kizuki and Naoko, Toru was profoundly affected and acutely aware of their absence. He has full awareness about the reality of their deaths. Instead of denied it, he permitted himself to feel the ensuing grief, bewilderment, and emptiness. He underwent intense emotional upheaval and vivid memories, and frequently recalling moments shared with Naoko and Kizuki, which aligns with Freud's idea that mourning entails the continual presence of the lost object in one's thought.

Following the death of Naoko, Toru suffered another major emotional shock. He withdrew from social life and daily routines, travelled alone to the countryside as a form of escape and reflection. In this period of isolation, Toru experienced complex inner turmoil, including the guilt of feeling as if he failed to save Naoko. Freud mentioned that feelings such as these—sadness, anger, regret, and helplessness—are part of the emotional cycle that one must go through in the mourning process before one reaches the point of acceptance. At this point, Toru slowly released the emotional energy (libido) that was previously focused on the lost object, and began to direct it towards a new object or value.

Freud stated that the process of mourning allowed individuals to draw back the libidinal energy from the person who has passed away, and then invest it in new objects or other abstractions. Toru reflected this process through reading, studying, building sexual relationships, and making new emotional connections. Although he initially felt alienation and emptiness, he was not let himself driven to despair. He opened himself to the possibility of new relationships, especially with Midori, which, although complicated, reflects Toru's willingness to live and love again. This relationship symbolizes Toru's desire to move on. His relationship with Midori is a turning point in Toru's journey, where he shows a strong desire to get up and start a new life.

Moreover, Toru also turned the experience of loss into a point of deep existential reflection. In his narrative, he said, “I had learned one thing from Kizuki's death, and I believed that I had made it a part of myself in the form of a philosophy: ‘Death exists, not as the opposite but as a part of lie,’” (Murakami, 2000, p. 360). This quote shows that Toru has consciously engaged himself in the process of constructing meaning from death, which is in line with the ultimate goals of the mourning process: acceptance of reality, construction of meaning, and reintegration of the self. In another reflection, he also stated, “Unlike you, I've chosen to live—and to live the best I know how,” (Murakami, 2000, p. 328). This is a form

of life affirmation—an acknowledgement that even though the shadow of death lingers, he chooses to live the best he knows how. Mourning involves the process of remembering and relocating memories of the lost, and becomes real when a mourner accepts that the loss will change him (Díaz, 2023). Toru has not forgotten Kizuki or Naoko, but rather he has managed to reshape his identity in their absence, turning his past an integral part of his whole self.

In this way, Toru Watanabe is healed. He underwent the process of mourning as understood in Freud's theory of Mourning and Melancholia as he faced the loss with full consciousness, endured the emotional pain, withdrew to reflect, and gradually found the strength to reconnect with life. His healing process was not a matter of forgetting, rather accepting and integrating the mourning into himself, until he is finally able to live life with new meaning.

4.3.2. Melancholia

Naoko's psychological journey in Haruki Murakami's *Norwegian Wood* reflects the condition of melancholia as understood within Freud's psychoanalytic framework. Melancholia, according to Freud, is a psychological response to loss that is not consciously resolved. In the case of melancholia, the individual is either not fully conscious of the nature of the loss or refuses to let go, causing libidinal energy to be absorbed by the loss complex itself and weakening the ego structure.

Naoko exhibited an inner tension between the desire to live and the subconscious drive towards death. She was aware that she has lost her loved ones, but unable to let go of her attachment with the lost object and slowly dissolves into profound sadness. This situation indicated that the emotional conflict is not processed at the conscious level, but rather settled in the subconscious and appears in the form of psychological characteristics such as withdrawal, difficulty expressing feelings, and social isolation. Her unwillingness to relate fully to the outside world, including in her relationship with Toru, reflects a failure to complete the grieving process in a healthy way.

The characteristics of melancholia Naoko experienced are also manifested in her sleeplessness. Naoko admitted that she frequently had a trouble falling asleep, sobbed quietly during the night, or wandered around aimlessly at night. Freud stated that in a state of melancholia, the ego no longer has enough energy to carry out basic functions such as sleep, as its entire energy reserves have been depleted by the loss. Naoko's sleeplessness is not just a possible symptom of depression, but also a reaction that can be seen as a pattern of sympathetic arousal triggered by the stress of being apart (Parkes, 1996, as cited in Neimeyer et al., 2002). Ego defense mechanisms such as anticathexis, which should be able to reduce inner conflict become paralyzed. The energy that should have kept painful thoughts from consciousness is instead submerged in the dominant depressive complex. This causes Naoko unable to experience the mental relaxation needed for sleep. Her inability to sleep regularly shows that her psychic wounds are active, open, and continue to drain her mental energy like a wound that never heals.

In addition, melancholia is also characterized by a complicated inner conflict between love and hatred for the lost object. When the ego is unable to let go of its attachment to the object, emotional energy that should be directed outward turns against the self. The hatred that was previously directed towards the object—due to disappointment, anger, or betrayal of the loss—is transferred into the ego. This gives rise to a form of internalized aggression, or internalized sadism, which then manifests as guilt, self-punishment, even self-destruction.

Naoko exhibited self-punishing behavior through a tendency to doubt her own worth. This can be considered as melancholic sadism, where personal suffering becomes a way to maintain lost bonds. The climax comes when Naoko chose to suicide, an act that reflects the culmination of an unresolved inner conflict, where the powerful drive of love towards the object is unable to compensate for the aggression and hatred that also accompanies it.

“Naoko no longer existed in this world; she had become a fistful of ash” (Murakami, 2000, p. 357)

The quotation is not only a sign of physical death, but also a metaphor for destruction of Naoko's identity and psychological existence that never recovered from her inner wounds. She is haunted by the past, by losses that she cannot give meaning or let go of.

5. Conclusions

In *Norwegian Wood*, Haruki Murakami depicts the profound process of loss through the characters of Toru and Naoko, who response to loss differently. Through the lens of Freud's psychoanalysis Mourning and Melancholia, Toru exhibits characteristics of mourning, a painful grief that he slowly overcomes by staying connected to the real world. In contrast, Naoko experiences melancholia, a condition in which loss eats away at her from within, leaving her trapped in an inability to let go or come to terms with grief. An analysis of the contingent factors, as well as the psychological characteristics of mourning and melancholia, shows that responses to loss are not universal. Toru is able to redirect his libidinal energy back into reality and new social relationships, whereas Naoko lost the power to love the outside world and instead internalize guilt over the death of Kizuki and her sister. Thus, this difference in response confirms that grief is not only about the loss of a loved one, but also how individuals manage identity, guilt, and emotional attachment after the loss. Murakami, through Toru and Naoko, subtly yet sharply presents two very human sides of grief: grief that can be healed, and grief that is haunted into emptiness.

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