

RESEARCH BRIEF

# Haruki Murakami's Norwegian Wood: Intersignalities to Scott Fitzgerald, Thomas Mann, J.D. Salinger, and Ken Kesey

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There are many definitions of signs from Charles Sanders Peirce (1931–1958), Ferdinand de Saussure (1959) to Thomas A. Sebeok (1975), Robert Scholes (1983), and Umberto Eco (2014). This is one of the most representations:

A sign is a meaningful unit which is interpreted as 'standing for' something other than itself. Signs are found in the physical form of words, images, sounds, acts or objects (this physical form is sometimes known as the sign vehicle). Signs have no intrinsic meaning and become signs only when sign-users invest them with meaning with reference to a recognized code. (Chandler, 2007, p. 260)

Signs have existed as a total of cultural relations. Signs could not be outside the culture. A sign cannot exist as an absolute self-reserved object or only has a single autonomous meaning. Right from its inception, signs have always been perceived in the cultural relation. A sign has become a combination of signs in itself and beyond, so it is always an intersignality.

By researching and introducing Mikhail Bakhtin to Western Europe, Julia Kristeva (1986) created the term *intertextuality*. She wrote,

In Bakhtin's work, these two axes, which he calls *dialogue* and *ambivalence*, are not clearly distinguished.

Yet, what appears as a lack of rigour is in fact an insight first introduced into literary theory by Bakhtin: 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. (Kristeva, 1986, p. 37)

Julia Kristeva defined *word* as a minimal structural unit. She did not consider it as a sign but "the word is spatialized: through the very notion of status, it functions in three dimensions (subject-addressee-context) as a set of *dialogical*, semic elements or as a set of *ambivalent* element" (Kristeva, 1986, p. 37). She analyzed the relations between word and "subject-addressee-context." From Kristeva's *intertextuality*, we create the notion of intersignality, which studies word as a sign with its own meanings and its cultural meanings.

In the literature, signs include words, details, characters, gestures, among others. We use the theory of intersignality to study Haruki Murakami's (2000) *Norwegian Wood*.

The Japanese literary world has been shocked by Murakami's bold proclamation of not owning his styles to any Japanese writer (Murakami, 2004). This provocative statement referred to the confirmation of the writer's style and maturity in his early career. Murakami may be well aware that following Japanese tradition would never gain him fame over his

predecessors like Ryunosuke Akutagawa (1892–1927), Yasunari Kawabata (1899–1972), or Kenzaburo Oe (1935–). Furthermore, Japanese literature of his time has witnessed the decline of modern aesthetic principles. Therefore, seeking a novel path is significant to any postmodernist Japanese writer. Murakami once claimed:

When I made my debut as a novelist, they said that Japanese literature was on the decline. It's not on the decline, it's just changing. Many people don't like the change. The older writers live in a very closed world. They don't really know what's going on. (Murakami, 1992, par. 40)

His own art world, in the opposite, is not that close but an open world of intersignalities and multiculturalism.

Heading towards the West, especially the United States, and escaping from Asia (Fukuzawa, 2013) is the pathway that shapes the typical and unique Japanese culture at the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Such pathway originated from the Meiji Emperor (1852–1912) and was subsequently followed by many generations of Japanese elites. Thus, in comparison with other Asian nations, the Japanese culture is more multi-cultured with a density of intersignality that is evident in a number of Western cultural symbols in contemporary Japanese cultural heritage. This is noted by many researchers.

In McNerney's interview with Murakami for the New York Times, McNerney raised the issue of preserving the Japanese identity:

I don't see this self-consciousness in the younger generation of Japanese writers who stud their fiction with references to Western culture. I wonder if this is in part due, paradoxically, to the island sense of isolation and difference that the Japanese have always felt. I sense a poignant urge to roll over Buson and Basho, two of Japan's greatest poets, and to crash through the cultural gap that separates Japan to some extent from the rest of the world with the weapons that are most ready to be in hand. It seems that Madison Avenue and Hollywood and rock-and-roll have provided a kind of reservoir of cultural reference, which provides Japanese writers with a way to assert the scope of their concerns, to

assert their presence on the international scene. (Murakami, 1992, par. 19)

In *Norwegian Wood*, for instance, I find besides the Beatles—the title, of course—references to Fitzgerald and Hemingway and Salinger and Chandler and half a dozen other Western writers, and I only found one Japanese cultural reference in the whole book, which was Osamu Dazai, something of a rebel himself. (Murakami, 1992, par. 20)

Murakami neither negated the Japanese identity nor desired for its loss, but made some attempt to maximize the global culture in his works. However, those cultural symbols must be “connected” at a “controlled” level so that mainstream Japanese impact can be traced.

Back to the past, thanks to its unique geographic location, Japanese islands are the meeting point of many different cultures. First, the Japanese were influenced by Indian, then Chinese and Western cultures. Consequently, cultural intersignality is a typical Japanese trait throughout history. It greatly influences the intersignality view in postmodern Japanese literary life, where Murakami is considered the most loyal writer of signs.

It took a very long time before I could somehow write a novel in Japanese. That is why I wasn't able to write a novel until I was 29. Because I had to create, all on my own, a new Japanese language for my novels. I couldn't just borrow an already existing language. In that sense I think I'm an original. (Murakami, 1992, par. 23)

The “Westernisation” of the Japanese, represented in Yasunari Kawabata or Kenzaburo Oe's works, is just sitting in Japan to “look to the West,” but to Murakami, he chose to “look back to Japan” from the West. Murakami exploited the essence of Japanese elite from the consciousness of an exile in the West. His works are wonderful combinations of the symbols of European–American–Japanese cultures.

Being a patriot himself, Japanese values are always found in Murakami's (2000) pages. His Western vision, regardless of how strong it is or despite being criticized by the Japanese conservative writers, can never blur the national values. Murakami's every word expresses a heart heavily weighed by anxiety, concern, and pride

of typical Japanese in the era of engineering, where people are always susceptible to “metamorphosis” (a masterpiece of Kafka) by their monsterlike needs and desires.

Kenzaburo Oe (2001) once criticized the writers in Murakami's time for running after mass media and public interest for the economic benefits. He said that novels of Haruki Murakami and Banana Yoshimoto “could be sold millions of copies.” (Ôé, 2001, p. 85)

The entire *Norwegian Wood* is covered by a political atmosphere, as Oe (2001) observed. It is neither for public taste nor money but for the sake of art, the sincere pain of human life. The plot is inspired by Beatles' *Norwegian Wood*, related to the lover of Toru Watanabe or the narrator, named Naoko. The memories arise on the flight to Germany of the 37-year-old narrator. The melody is typically romantic and sad, which is the usual sadness of young people facing life and bewildered by a world of options. The sense of alienation, rooted in the collapse of the faith in humanity, is the one that bears the essence of postmodernism. Since the First World War, Europe had fallen into a humanitarian crisis because the advantages achieved by capitalism have been causing more and more troubles for the people. Material disputes and power ambitions are gradually pushing humans to the edge of extinction. This situation has raised deep concern about survival. As a consequence, panics break out and people get lost.

The melody of the Beatles' song, somehow inspiring the rhyme of the text, increases the constant sorrow of loneliness in human's life. No matter what skin color, place, or time one belongs to, it is a lonely, burdensome, eternal exile in the mind. Among the lonely people and those who are aware of it; perhaps the Japanese belong to the elite group. An illustration for this can be found in Japanese Zen, which is very different from the Zen in Vietnam or China. In the art of life, Japanese haiku poems written by the great poet Matsuo Basho (1644–1694) or palm-of-the-hand stories of Kawabata can be seen as forms of meditation practices. Japanese meditation is pushed to the very end of loneliness, where the frog jumping in the loneliness (Basho poetry) becomes a decisive center of Zen perception.

When it comes to the loneliness among the adolescents, Murakami has practiced this Zen. Loneliness is the essence. Regarding loneliness as the mental essence, the more one tries to escape it,

the deeper one faces it. The feeling of loneliness has blocked the story of *Norwegian Forest* in the emptiness and overwhelmed feelings. All characters of the novel, males and females on their journeys to find the way out, are facing the deadlock permanently. For what they seek does not ever come and the last stage is still dead, the intersignality of such a sad love song touches the depth of human souls. The lonely Westernized story is well documented on Murakami's oriental book with the addition of tiny bits of Japanese Zen. It seems to propose a more aggressive outburst of humanity at the threshold of the destruction from the atomic bomb or of all the sicknesses or craziness that a person faces on a self-denial journey. Murakami's story has, therefore, intersignalized with a variety of cultural layers. It reveals the work of polyphony; the echoes of many breaking sounds but still relentlessly solicits a life that worth living.

Murakami (2000) also mentioned Scott Fitzgerald's American literary masterpiece, *The Great Gatsby*. Scott Fitzgerald is considered a famous modern writer, the predecessor of two greats, William Faulkner (1897–1962) and Ernest Hemingway (1899–1961). When two modern American literary masters were new to the profession, Scott Fitzgerald (1896–1940) had already been shining with works portraying the disillusionment of the “American Dream,” not from despair as the way Theodore Dreiser (1871–1945) did in his book, but by the endless disillusionment of human being when reaching the so-called “American Dream” (Dreiser, 1976). His *Gatsby* (Fitzgerald, 1993) is the kind of man who is constantly striving to be accepted into the upper class. However, once he became “upstream,” he fell into the trap of complete boredom. As society is full of mediocrity and falsehood, it leaves human beings no way to escape but to act until the end of that tragicomedy. Finally, *Gatsby*'s random death was caused by a jealous husband for false revenge. *Gatsby*'s bland world is dubbed as “noble,” “great,” or it can be called by any other name but it is actually nothing but a dark hole of unreasonableness and unacceptability.

The thought of *The Great Gatsby* had a great impact on Murakami's masterpiece. Essentially, when it came to the heading “American Dream,” Scott Fitzgerald was on the opposite side. In terms of postmodernism, it is a “destructured American Dream.” Fitzgerald has reproduced two-dimension of the point—one is the path to the American Dream, and the other is to ridicule it. Murakami (2000) has well applied the duality of the

beautiful life dream (close to the American Dream) in this intersignality. Youth is beautiful and ambitious. However, it can become a typhoon—the bad wind that sweeps away many young Japanese lives.

In this respect, *Norwegian Wood* can be considered as a collection of “malicious codes,” each of which is a mischievous life. Murakami (2000) took the mischievousness with the sudden death of those who no longer want to live as representatives of post-World War II youth generations. The correspondence between Scott Fitzgerald and Murakami is noted at this point. After the First World War, the Western youth sank into crisis due to the disillusionment of the imperialist war and alienation in the postwar life. This generation was later identified as “the Lost Generation,” first recorded in Scott Fitzgerald’s (1993) book. Murakami also recreated that sense of loss, but about 30 years later. In Murakami’s time, humankind has stepped into postmodernism—human disruption is indispensable for a series of deconstructive missions. Thus, Murakami’s characters have a serene but negative attitude towards death when they find their life unworthy of living. This can be explained by the very fact that Japan lost in the Second World War, which means the end to the dream of global hegemony or shattering the illusion of fanatical Japanese power. All of this means that good things for them no longer exist. So the sense of death is the essence of religion in the mind of many young Japanese patriots. Their death acts as proven love for their motherland. Murakami (2000) wrote about hollowness and death, and in some way about the pain of a nation in its worst time in history.

The deaths of Japanese youths unconsciously symbolized the death of the young Japanese power in the hegemonic ambition. It can also mean the death of the disillusion of many human beings with “conquering” mindset, knowing that there will be no global hegemony when people work towards equality and democracy. Murakami’s image, therefore, has gone beyond everyday life. It conveys the profound thoughts of human and nation destinies, which, readers who maybe not Japanese, can still interculturalize with their own cultural approach.

In *Norwegian Wood*, the characters encounter a *defect* and a *hollow self*. They are aware of the imperfection, and try not to refine, but to adapt to that imperfection. Tragically, the more they try to adapt, the more they discover that there are things that cannot be adapted. These characters are like debris trying to break

themselves. Naoko is a person who is deeply hurt by traumas originating from mental issues.

Similar to the traditional Eastern culture, the Japanese attaches importance to blood relations. Family tradition is one of the cornerstones of personality development. However, in Murakami’s view, that tradition is almost exploited in the negative aspect. There are times when he let the characters get fed up with the wealth that the family brings. For example, Kagasaki talked about his father without admiration, even with a bit of a downside. Naoko, meanwhile, asserted that her bloodline is beautiful, talented, and suicidal. This view is so implicit that the end of the beautiful past can express the sense of the fragility of beauty versus ordinary material desires.

Like Naoko, Watanabe Toru is also deeply hurt. Watanabe travels widely, makes friends with many people, but only has a male friend named Kizuki—whom he can “speak honestly of my [Watanabe’s] feelings” (Murakami, 2000, p. 50). The close friendship promises a good foundation for the future. However, Kizuki committed suicide on the day he asked Watanabe to quit school for a billiard evening, a serious battle as usual with no sign of death. That very night, Kizuki killed himself in his familiar car with exhaust gas, no message, no suicide line, just as quietly as on a long trip. Watanabe and Naoko also did not know the reason for Kizuki’s death at the age of 17. Kizuki’s death opens an empty dark hole in Watanabe’s mind, causing him to be stunned and lost in the world: “In the ten months between Kizuki’s death and my exams, I was unable to find a place for myself in the world around me” (Murakami, 2000, p. 30).

Murakami (2000) always revisited the love triangle or the love affair in the trilogy because there is no such struggle for love as traditional stories. Watanabe’s relationship with Naoko, Hatsumi, or Midori is without exception. Watanabe does not dispute the love of these girls, which does not conflict with their boyfriends. However, his presence, at least, makes the readers realize that he deserves the girl more than anyone else. This type of relationship, which intersignalizes not only the motif of love in the Japanese tradition, but also is very close to *The Great Gatsby* when Gatsby creates a non-conflicting trilateral relationship between him, Daisy, and her husband, Tom.

These “conflictless triangles,” however, are always painful. Watanabe’s next pain is a tragic, desperate love affair with Naoko – his girlfriend and lover – who



carries part of Kizuki in her body and mind. Watanabe's love for Naoko is a kind of holy love with the sincere hope of saving Naoko from the ghost-haunted past from the empty "field well" (Murakami, 2000, p. 9) threatening to devour Naoko. Her mind is always about the past, of loving memories with Kizuki, and of inexplicable death.

At the end of the work, Watanabe regarded Midori as salvation, an ending like one in *The Catcher in the Rye* (Salinger, 1951). In Salinger's (1951) story, Caulfield does not leave just because of her sister's love for him and his feelings for her. In Murakami (2000), Watanabe does not lose his life because of Midori who has sincere, warm affection awaiting for him. Midori is an opposite love version to Naoko. Whereas Naoko is born in a materialistic family, Midori soon suffers from the hardship of life when both parents were sick and died. Such a hard life did not knock her down. She is a symbol of living energy and the brightness whenever she appears, in contrast to the gloom that frames Naoko's life. In particular, Midori can give Watanabe what Naoko cannot. Thus, in relation to Watanabe, if Midori is the light, Naoko is the darkness—the hidden side of a man. Both of these are essential for human life on the journey, especially for adolescents. Thanks to Naoko and her pain, Watanabe can be awakened to the noble, infinite painful emotions that make her character more perfect. The pain will make a man more mature than pleasure and happiness. However, humans cannot simply grow up with pain. If it is a disaster and it is easy to lead people to negative thoughts, people need some fun to overcome them. Midori was the "fun part" in Watanabe's life. This will open a new page in his life. After all, Murakami (2000) did not want Watanabe to drown in the darkness of torment and misery.

But who knows, even with Midori, whether Watanabe will escape from the tragedy of human life or not? It is notable that Midori just broke up with her lover. These triad-type love affairs do not simply end in peace, but rather the beginning of other series of troubles.

Observing this direction, Murakami's (2000) characters' lives are just journeys to heal persistent traumatic injuries, and maybe inexplicable catastrophes. Thus, the role of what is called the minimally functional "Ami Hostel" again becomes a minimal symbol of the social struggle—the insane, the genius, the good, the bad, the victory, and the failure. It is actually an asylum, but because both the founder and the patient do not want

to get mad, they name it that way. This type of lodge is very similar to the asylum in Ken Kesey's (1962) *One Flew over Cuckoo Nest*. The only difference is that Murakami's (2000) story has no conflict between the mad and the normal—the good and the bad for the human right to life—but the harmony between the doctor and the sick and between the mad and the normal. Even healing carries the hidden message of combination between madness and civilization, the two inseparable parts of a human being.

Murakami's camp treats patients with sincerity to help them overcome their emotional trauma by letting the patient become a doctor for himself. The philosophy sounds very scientific at first but somewhat ridiculous, almost like the way the doctor strapped the patient to the hospital bed in the hope that the patient will be physically fit, as in Kafka's (1952) *A Country Doctor*. The therapy at the Ami Hostel evidentially follows Freud's (2010) psychoanalytic model. After the Second World War, as psychological shocks reached desperation in Japan, people required more psychological therapy.

The hostel is described as a peaceful place for people suffering from the shock of the times or unknown reasons. Reiko's pianist talent, for example, was about to witness spectacular development, but abruptly ended because her little finger suddenly did not move. That means that she will not be able to follow her music dreams. However, tragedy is not yet there. When that finger was healed, it could move again. Reiko's soul was broken, and she was no longer aspiring to become a celebrity. Those inner torments grew. Soon, Reiko was mentally ill. This was even more terrible than not being able to move the other finger. She became a burden to her family, society, and herself. Her place moved from the center to the side of life. She needed to revise her perceptions and find her life's aspirations. This unconscious view of consciousness was one of the striking features of the intersignality in the view of psychoanalysis. Needless to say, the success of *Norwegian Wood* mainly owes to Freud's unconscious psychoanalysis. The unexplained, unresolved obstacles of the character mark the neurological failure and stress, which bursts into illness.

It seems that Murakami's works are likely performing a psychoanalysis technique by letting his patients be aware of the disease and attempt to control it psychologically. They are the ones who exist in a self-treat community. All their ways of acting are

very scientific and seemingly right. However, in the end, it is tragic that after being aware of almost every problem, reality, and the suffering they suffer, the character no longer desires to integrate or to return to the community. Therefore, most of them seek for a silent death. Thus, in the psychoanalytic perspective, *Norwegian Wood* is a form of psychoanalysis where Murakami (2010) pointed out that, in certain crisis peaks, psychoanalysis also experiences the same illness that it attempts to cure.

The characters in the *Norwegian Wood* frequently referred to *The Great Gatsby* and *The Magic Mountain* (Thomas Mann, 1875–1955). These two works, as mentioned, evoke an atmosphere of social degradation when ethical norms are no longer present. Nevertheless, the beauty of these senses is that, especially for *Gatsby*, there was a time when the narrator “I” quietly compared himself to this character admiring in despair the light on the other side of the bay shining from *Gatsby’s* idol, Daisy’s house. That is exactly what “I” encounters when visiting Naoko at Ami Hostel. “I” wants to move on with Naoko but forever, Naoko belongs to Kizuki, so such love is a combination of love, pain, and torment. In the end, Naoko decides on death to free both herself and Watanabe.

The story is from the “I” when he is 37 years old from the *Norwegian Wood* song, but the events date far back in the past when “I” was seventeen. This age is very close to Holden Caulfield’s age in Salinger’s (1951) *The Catcher in the Rye*. It can be said that Murakami’s (2000) *Norwegian Wood* owes much to the work of this American writer. The “I” is a very close version of Caulfield in both first-person narrative, thought, and action, emphasizing honesty and sincerity despite the “phony” moral norms of society.

What creates the popularity of *The Catcher in the Rye* is the voice. This narrative was very influential to *Norwegian Wood* when “I” talks to Kizuki: “Hey, Kizuki, I thought you’re not missing a damn thing. This world is a piece of shit. The arseholes are getting good marks and helping to create a society in their own disgusting image” (Murakami, 2000, p. 59) or “Life doesn’t require ideals. It requires standards of action” (Murakami, 2000, p. 67). The most typical example of this vicious argument is “wisdom” in such a way that “an unfair society is a society that makes it possible for you to exploit your abilities to the limit” (Murakami, 2000, p. 242). This is what we call the

“counter-argumentation” characteristic of Salinger’s account.

“How many Sundays—how many hundreds of Sundays like this – lay ahead of me? ‘Quiet, peaceful, and lonely,’ I said aloud to myself. On Sundays, I didn’t wind my spring” (Murakami, 2000, p. 238). This expression reveals the man’s loneliness. It is worth saying that the lonely self is conscious of the burden of loneliness but does not seem to remove it. There is something like fate. The inspiration for “fate” can be referred in ancient Greek tragedies.

It is impossible not to mention the intersignality between *Norwegian Wood* and ancient Greek tragedies through the trinity of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. These artists are founders of tragedies. Except for Aeschylus, the other two are famous for their drama of soul complexity and fateful tragedy (*Medea*, *Oedipus the King*, *Electra*, etc.). This involves issues of human survival, which is unavoidable despite the awareness. For example, Sophocles (1994), in his play *Oedipus the King*, portrays Oedipus’s frankness and courage in the face of fate, but in the end, he cannot escape the early curse that killed his father and got married to his mother. The story of Murakami possesses the same motif governed by this destiny. Humans are aware of the tragic incompleteness in themselves, and their efforts cannot save them.

The establishment of the trio in Murakami’s narrative also led to the dramatic feature of *Norwegian Wood*. Taru Watanabe, a 37-year-old man, tells the story of his life between the ages of 17 and 20. Those turning around “I” are in the groups of friends: Kizuki – Naoko – I; Nagasawa – Hatsumi – I; Midori’s lover – I – Midori; Naoko – I – Reiko. In addition, there is the trio of men: I – Nagasawa – Kizuki. The story is almost exclusively about such characters, but by exploring unconscious memories, letters, and inner dialogues, the narrator places the reader into a labyrinth of psychological states.

The characteristics of this trilogy of the group are not intended to depict contrasting qualities such as the good and the bad (for instance, such as the characters Thach Sanh – the Princess – Li Thong in a Vietnamese folktale) (Nguyen, 1996) but towards sexual impulses. Murakami’s character flushes with the principle of “honesty and sincerity,” not only in everyday behavior but primarily in sexual ones. At the center of the relationship, Watanabe seems to be the saint in his narrative world. This character bears a resemblance

to Caulfield, except for the fact that he has entered the sexually active age. Watanabe's sex life was centered around Naoko and Midori. These female characters are all holy. Naoko is a delicate beauty, lovely, and feminine, whereas Midori represents a strong, energetic beauty. They both worship the honesty and the sincerity, so Watanabe is their ideal lover.

Regarding the topic of sexuality, a cultural characteristic of the Japanese that worships Buddhism and Confucianism, they favor "the Western" but more liberal in sex than the West. Probably with *Norwegian Wood*, Murakami has upgraded sexuality into a kind of "religion" in comparison to other things in Japanese culture, expressing the divine in pure instinct subject. His description of Nagasawa's unbridled sexual life is not to promote a flesh misconception but also presents a kind of Japanese conception of male-female relations. The Japanese do not quite deal with sex with strict ethical principles. Watanabe does not criticize Nagasawa; he considers it just a way to express his ego but he himself is the regulator of sexual behaviors. He sees it as a principle of expressing dignity, more specifically, expressing sincere human affection.

From this perspective, *Norwegian Wood* is no longer pornographic. The way of regulating the regulator will all lead to the sexual norms of the civilized world. However, Murakami's intention does not stop at displaying a Japanese culture through which he deals with issues of human identity in the stormy changes. It is symbolic here. Those who are sexually impaired sooner or later will face death. Their death is the consequence of the inability to breed. This group includes Kizuki, Naoko, and Hatsumi. Meanwhile, "I", Nagasawa, and Midori, who may have sexual relations, are still alive at the end.

There is an intermediate character—simultaneous hermaphrodite Reiko. She is Naoko's friend in the nursing home who failed to pursue a piano career and also failed to preserve family happiness after the sexual assault by a 13-year-old lesbian. The sexual assault led Reiko into an unprecedented hysteria with any other man. That shakes Reiko to collapse.

In *Norwegian Wood*, Reiko is attached to the Ami Hostel, a treatment area that lies in the deep mountains with beautiful scenery and very cold winter. This is very similar to the context of *The Magic Mountain* of Thomas Mann (1996), German author, who won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1929. It is no accident that Watanabe's character visited Naoko in a nursing

home, like in *The Magic Mountain* novel. Watanabe's journey coincides with Hans Castorp, who also visits his cousin at a similar lodge. The common theme between the two novels is love. However, *Norwegian Wood* focused more on this topic. The similarity is that both refer to sex when contemplating on the happiness and meaning of life. Evidentially, both authors do not describe sexuality just for the sake of itself.

*Norwegian Wood* was published 63 years later than *The Magic Mountain*. The work is considered a sad piece of music of unhealing sentiments in the postmodern time. In contrast, *The Magic Mountain* is a classic summary of all the modern criteria. Accordingly, this work marks the peak of bildungsroman. The setting of Mann's novel is the years before the First World War and on the high mountainous terrain in Switzerland. The plot depicts the peace, without any shadow of war. *The Magic Mountain* entails human values and progressive thinking, including obligations and duties that the right people should have. It is undeniable to ignore the predictability on human tragedy through the metaphor of illness, not just physical but also mental illness. Where illness dominates, there appear signs of European bourgeoisie decline and the eve of war.

All things considered, it seems that Murakami's intention is to establish the dialogues of love, sex, happiness, and loneliness in two specific times, before and after the catastrophe of the Second World War. Mann's novel is towards salvation, whereas Murakami's work targets nothing but the pain and loss that a person suffers. Murakami's novel world is the world of death. In other words, the characters encounter death in one way or another. It is worth mentioning that these deaths are associated with youth. Childhood suicide as a sign of an imminent human death threatens not only the Japanese but the whole of humankind.

## Conclusion

One sign is always in a relationship with another. "Intersignality" is a term introduced to capture the nature of signs. The paper compares Haruki Murakami's style with some world writers whom he has been in debt of aesthetic characteristics. We used the term "intersignalities" to point out that many elements in Murakami's novel have chains with former writers. These help us deeply understand about Japanese tradition and the way Murakami creates his artistic world.

As an international writer, Haruki Murakami uses multiplicities of a sign. Therefore, the intersignality in Murakami's *Norwegian Wood* is obvious. Through a system of indigenous signs—namely, the Japanese language and images in his novels—Murakami evokes the signs which are outside of Japan. His images reveal intersignalities with works of Scott Fitzgerald, Thomas Mann, Salinger, and Ken Kesey in the themes of love, loneliness, unsafety, and death. Murakami was deeply influenced by those writers, but his talent helps him find out the new way to compose literature. To construct a Japanese postmodern style, Murakami sets up a picture of post-World War II society—a postmodern Japanese society with many variables and many problems to solve.

The intersignality of *Norwegian Wood* has far exceeded what belongs to the homeland. The novel, which is inspired by the Beatles music, has led readers to different cultural values, creating both novelties and reminiscent of a myriad of issues in the unconsciousness. Above all, no matter how intersignal his works are, Murakami has actually created his own signature. *Norwegian Wood* with its title, and both the physical wood in the nursing home and the blurred and inescapable unconscious wood did not prevent Murakami's youth from dreaming about the good living of being themselves.

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### Declaration of ownership

This report is our original work.

### Conflict of Interest

None

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The study was approved by the institution.

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