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Exploration of Post-War Japanese Cultural Trauma in Haruki Murakami's

Norwegian Wood

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Letter of Recommendation

Nisha Khand has completed her thesis entitled “Exploration of Post-War Japanese Cultural Trauma in Haruki Murakami's *Norwegian Wood*” under my supervision. She carried out her research from December 2021 to May 2023. I hereby recommend her thesis to be submitted for *viva voce*.

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Letter of Approval

This Thesis entitled "Exploration of Post-War Japanese Cultural Trauma in Murakami's *Norwegian Wood*" submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Nisha Khand has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Abstract

This thesis Haruki Murakami's Norwegian Wood as a trauma fiction that critiques explores of Post-War Japanese Cultural Trauma. It sheds light on the reduction of the intensity of Japanese people behavior, manner, and activities. Toru Watanabe and Naoko are the major characters who are deeply haunted mentally due to the suicide of their mutual friend Kizuki, Norwegian Wood is a flash back story of the protagonist. Toru Watanabe and Naoko who are haunted deeply and suffering from mental injury are living the life of absurdist involving in various priceless works like extreme alcoholism, misguided sex, unprofessed love, not committed behavior, depression, escapist mentally, and futile sex adventure. The entire young generation of post-war Japan was affected by instability, transition, constant change, because of the over influences of Western materialistic force after its defeat in Second World War period. In this backdrop, the significance of this research lies to pinpoint the negative impact and its long term consequences in the lives of Japanese youthss and even their entire country which is culturally moaned and infected. Thus, the major thrust of the study is to envision the passage of time of the 1960s Japan aiming the detailed investigation primarily focusing on the harsh and harmony norms and values of Western culture and its main influence over the native culture of Japan and its people. To precisely show this sorts of tormented, depressed, imprisoned and traumatized condition of Japanese youths, this research work uses the theory developed by Jeoffery Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Cathy Caruth, Dominick LaCarpa.

Keywords: self transformation; relationship; mental development; death; cultural representation; trauma

This research work explores the issues of cultural transition of the protagonist and his suffering in the context of Japanese society in Murakami's novel *Norwegian Wood*. Haruki Murakami's referencing of Western popular songs, subjects and themes do not all the time push the novel away from Japan; rather it underscores the changes that have occurred, in Japanese society, displaying the influx of other cultures and marking specific references that were culturally present and influential during the 1960s and 1970s. Murakami's novels are set in Japan but his Japanese characters enjoy the American culture and through books and music and learn different languages. Haruki Murakami's *Norwegian Wood*, the title of the novel points to the importance of beginning with musical references. The popular musicians and songs of Murakami choose to feature in *Norwegian Wood* that are vast and varied, as he incorporates the genres of rock, pop, jazz and folk music, including The Beatles, the Bee Gees, Miles Davis and Peter, Paul and Mary to name a few. The privileging of such global entertainment icons seems at once indicative of personal and collective desire on the part of the characters, the author or both to juxtapose the love of certain music with personal identity formation. Music preferences also create cultural longing in the character.

Furthermore, in Murakami's *Norwegian Wood*, the entire young generation of the Japan of 1960s is painfully affected by the blatant aggression on Japan's indigenous culture because of profound and pervasive impact of Western materialistic forces. Furthermore, the pristine indigenous culture of Japan was heavily assaulted by the emerging Western cultural forces after its defeat in Second World War which placed the people to the edge of Exploration of Post-War Japanese Cultural Trauma.

As the native norms and values, cultural ethos of Japan has heavily been penetrated by the aggressive materialistic culture of America thereby the entire realm

of Japanese youths became disillusioned, frustrated and culturally disposed. Consequently, viciously infected youths began to feel that the genius and unique qualities of their social and cultural ethos shattered by the heavy Westernization and insertion of Western culture on Japanese indigenous culture made the entire generation culturally traumatized. For the proof of above statement the historic reality can be taken into consideration- with the end of the Second World War, Japan entered into the era of expansion. As the country's economy began recovering from the blows dealt to it during this war, Japanese culture began to open its borders and look overseas for cultural support and definition. Essentially, the Western victory turned as the colonization over the native, uprooted, glorious and dignified culture of Japan on account of which as a good portrait of protest, Murakami's *Norwegian Wood* is grounded.

The whole young generation of Japan was affected by instability, transition, constant change, melancholia because of the over influence of Western materialistic force. Throughout the novel, the following major characters are culturally traumatized. Kizuki, the boy friend of Naoko and the best friend of Toru, committed suicide in his garage because of his depressed condition. In the similar fashion, Toru Watanabe, a protagonist and the narrator, seems colorless having bland personality lacking straight forward drive and direction ever since the sudden death of his best friend Kizuki. Similarly, Nagasawa, a Don Juan type character in the novel seems as lacking personality person because of his excessive but futile sex adventures (with more than 80 girls) which ultimately proves him culturally disintegrated fellow. In similar way, Naoko, a gentle and almost angelic figure is developed as a troubled young lover who appears to be on her way to schizophrenic comprehending her traumatic past. Likewise, Reiko, another thirty one years old woman character whose

life revolves around an abortive seduction attempts by a thirteen year old piano student (female), ultimately leads towards her tormented and shattered family bond and eventually admitting her in rehab institution which is a result of nasty outbreak of cultural trauma. Hence, *Norwegian Wood* is provocative in it attend to reflect the culturally traumatic past of entire Japanese youths in the novel. As a result of which the youngest were professionally not committed, socially alienated, and culturally excluded. Hence in the socio-cultural lives of Japan different problems like, suicidal feeling, escapist mentality, misguided sex adventure, crisis in interpersonal relationship, alcoholism, feeling of being exploited culturally and disruption in social life, unemployment, and homosexuality had grown up pervasively. In this backdrop, the research will be concerned with finding out the answer, what underlying factors are responsible behind making youths culturally traumatized condition?

After the defeat of Japan in Second World War several harsh and harrowing consequences of cultural trauma namely crisis in interpersonal relationship, cultural chaos, disruption in socio cultural lives, led to the entire traumatization of Japanese culture. Murakami carefully shapes this disintegration, fragmentation and the exotic penetration of Western culture over unique and dignified native culture of Japan so as to reinforce the fatal consequence of culturally traumatized youths of Japan in the novel.

According to Jeffrey Alexander, cultural trauma is closely connected with the collective memory and community identity. It is “through the repeated-ness, sequestration, rhythmically, etc. within any particular collective experience that the process of Patterning takes place, diminishing the role of uncertainty inside this social reality” (4). The source of a sense of security, trust and identity in community is based on the institutionalization of certain value and norm in the collective memory and the

stereotyping of everyday behavior. Due to constant cross-cultural encounters between different peoples and countries, the world is displaced than ever. This process was going at an accelerated rate in contemporary Japan, thus the topicality of intercultural communication was beyond dispute. In this backdrop, the research presents the results of a study of the Western influence on Japanese culture using a cultural trauma approach.

Cultural trauma theory is a relatively new concept in twenty first century. The premise of this theory according to LaCapra is “populations historically subjected to long-term, mass trauma-colonialism, slavery, war, genocide-exhibit a higher prevalence of native culture even several generations after the original trauma occurred” (701). Understanding how cultural trauma might influence the current status of racial/ethnic populations in Japan may provide new directions and insights for eliminating cultural disparities. This attempt offers an analysis of the theoretical framework of cultural trauma theory and provides a general review of the then literature. A conceptual model is introduced illustrating how cultural trauma might play a role in cultural disparities.

Japan is commonly known as a society where tradition coexists and blends with modernity. Matthew C Strecher states that, “[t]he modernization of Japan that started in the Meiji period was a planned policy motivated by the recognition that the acquisition of Western methods and achievements in technology, science, and culture was necessary in a competitive world. Japanese culture plays its role in the process of intercultural communication. Contemporary Japanese literature provides a dialogue between different cultures” (362). Thus, the quote seems quite supporting uses of technology and cultural variation.

The most popular writer of the end of the twentieth century Haruki Murakami's literary works are of a great significance in the good deal of cultural picturesque as they smelled of culturally alienated youths and their futile activities in the society those days. It is argued "His literary career began in the late 1970s and earned him popular acclaim that forwarded him to be recognized in national and international spotlight. In 1987, Murakami released *Norwegian Wood*, the novel that captivated its audience and catapulted Murakami into the position of an international idol with a fanatical fan-base" (Jay Rubins (362). Most scholars in Japan and other countries investigated Murakami's fiction in the light of postmodern theory too.

Many researchers point out Murakami's frequent references to images originated in Euro-American culture. These references are definitely of a great interest from the intercultural communication perspective. All cultural references in Murakami's texts deserve a special attention, so a deeper penetration into the nature and effect of these references is needed. Realizing this truth, this attempt of dissertation through the methodology of cultural trauma, is designed in its prime motive.

The language of Murakami's literary works deserves a special mention. Murakami's emphatic use of vivid Western references, crisp and curt sentences, farfetched metaphors, and witty dialogue has made him one of the most easily accessible Japanese authors to achieve international reputation. It is common knowledge that language is a reflection of changes taking place in the culture of any society. In this backdrop, the following saying of Murakami Fuminobu seems remember worthy to - "globalization and internationalization of Japanese culture find their immediate expressions in new, borrowed words. In this respect, the case of *gairaigo*, lexical borrowings from European languages into Japanese, frequently

found in Murakami's texts, is of much importance and interest" (39). Thus, the quote seems quite supporting in its applicability of the socio-cultural encroachment in case of Japanese reality.

Likewise, Tamotsu Aoki has put forward his ideas in the following ways, "[t]he Japanese language bears the traces of Japan's centuries-long isolation, but at the same time the features of Americanization and Europeanization of Japanese culture become more distinct" (274). These lines, in a sense, really sound a cultural superiority over Japan. Hence, rampant influence of American culture and practices over Japanese culture is a kind of colonization which made the Japanese youths culturally departed.

Hence, the significance of this research lies to pinpoint the negative impact and its long term consequences in the lives of Japanese youths and even the entire country which finally resulted into culturally traumatized, moaned and psychologically infected condition. Similarly, the research work would be beneficial in regard of presenting them it as reference especially for those who want to conduct the research on the same text intending to explore many other multiple aspects too. Most genius significance of the present study is new, for no other critiques of this work have dwelt yet with cultural trauma as lens to read Norwegian Wood.

The major thrust of this study is to envision the passage of time of the 1960s Japan, aiming the detail investigation primarily focusing on the harsh norms and values, so called good and forcefully imposed cult of Western culture and its exotic influence over the native culture of Japan and its people after the defeat of Japan in the time of Second World War. Furthermore, to shed light over the dominant implicit and explicit components solely responsible for causing devastating effect in the lives of Japanese people, that's why they are turned into culturally tormented, depressed,

reclosed, imprisoned, immensely traumatized and even professionally irresponsible, is the major revelation which ultimately throughout the persistent and multi dimensional experiment this research pursuits to bring into light. In addition to this the research focuses on finding out all the attachment which could be helpful in order to achieve the targeted goals of this researcher in regard of cultural trauma, a psychologically hunted and thereby mentally depressed injury. The legacy of cultural trauma is manifested in the destructive activities occurred in Japanese society including violence and suicide which are known symptoms of post traumatic responses.

The research is exclusively with the relationship between the sufferings felt by one generation which led to the entire suffering of the people belonging to the same culture. Moreover, the cultural problems faced by the young generation of 1960s. Though the novel may be subject to multiple theories, my research not future particularly be directed towards the cultural problem faced by whole youths of Japan and their suffering due to the process of Americanization after the decade of mid 1950s applying cultural trauma theory.

Haruki Murakami is a popular contemporary Japanese writer. Since the publication of Murakami's novel *Norwegian Wood* in 1987, it has attracted the attention of many critics and reviewers. Different critics show their interest on *Norwegian Wood* analyzing it from different perspectives but there exists a strong need to carry out research on the cultural issues. So, this research is fresh in this field of cultural trauma perspective. Since the whole book is an exploration of racial and cultural sufferings, the researcher wants to unfold the traumatic experiences of Japanese youths of 1960s.

Among many critics, Kevin Dawson Gladding has treated *Norwegian wood* from the postmodernist root as stated in following excerpt:

In Murakami's *Norwegian Wood*, romance and coming-of-age confront the growing trend of post modernity that leads to a discontinuity of life becoming more and more common in post-war Japan. As the narrator struggles through a monotonous daily existence, the text gives the reader access to the narrator's struggle for self- and societal identity. In the end, he finds his means of self-acceptance through escape, and his escape is a product of his attempts at negotiating the multiple settings or "scapes" in which he finds himself. (iii)

Kevin highlights the modernistic point of view in order to get the novel analyzed. Moreover, the actions and the activities committed by the protagonist, Toru, in the development of the novel, are subject to the no center notion of post modernistic flavor. Disruptive way and the infinity of finality thereby human life and existence are also the matter of vain is the exploration of Kelvin.

In the same way, Virginia Yeung has a different view on the novel. Her concentration is rather on the narratological study of the novel as presented below:

Norwegian Wood takes the form of autobiographical narration. The narrator recounts and comments on his past self from the vantage point of a more mature self. As mentioned above, the first chapter of *Norwegian Wood* is dominated by the voice of the thirty-seven year-old narrator. The young Watanabe only appears in the meadow scene. In subsequent chapters the younger Watanabe takes center stage and the older one becomes almost invisible, though we can still discern his voice in many places. Near the end of the second chapter the narrator talks about him when he was young – It's a cliché translated into words, but at that time I felt it not as words but as that knot of air inside me. Until that time, I had. (3-4)

Virginia focuses on different kinds of ways of narration by the protagonist that the novel is full of. Moreover, she has ranked this text as autobiography of the central character of the novel. The implicit and explicit aspects of the narration and the active and passive presence of the Toru, main character of the novel, and his way of recalling story throughout the novel is taken into deep consideration to analyze the text by her. So, her concern is far from my applying tool- cultural trauma.

Similarly, Alisa Tsombarevits has reviewed this text counting the overall similar that the text has used like the following way:

Murakami's similes are a striking feature of his fiction, they are very numerous and they draw the reader's attention. In Murakami's own words, "Japanese purist writers adore external prettiness [...]. For them, this prettiness is good by itself, it becomes an end in itself, and that is why their style often results in frozen, formal metaphors that are not perceived naturally, on the level of a spontaneous feeling [...] I like to write more freely and that is why I use long metaphors in which I find more life and freshness. (11)

Alisa has analyzed this novel on account of similes that the novel has used vividly. Moreover, her innovation seems by dint of counting similes of the novel. She viewed the text as fresh and natural because of the excessive but spontaneous use of similes. So, her concentration on the physical aspects of the novel is also remotest far from my purposed tool.

Here, *Norwegian Wood* completely subverts the 'holy' expression; it mocks its weighty, supposed meaning. It answers the locution with a nonsensical, mystifying sentence, instead of the standard procedure of saying the exact same thing back. Through these lines Midori asks whether Toru loves her, but what Toru replies is in the extreme form of artificiality. He knows the mere sentence will not mean anything,

his love cannot be explained in language. After Naoko dies, he calls Midori. What joins them is not the declaration of love, but the silence thereby the researcher has called this novel as of empty signs.

All the aforementioned critics show the deplorable situation of the Japanese youths during the 1950s. They show the issues of frustration, disparities absurdity, escapist mentality, humiliation and suicidal mentality. Thus, they agree on the point that Japanese were encroached and made puppets in regard of their pure norms because of the free insertion of the Western materialistic values. Different critics have analyzed *Norwegian Wood* from various perspective yet no critics have arrived with the issue of cultural trauma. Having taken this fact into consideration, the present researcher attempts to analyze the *Norwegian Wood* from the theoretical perspective of cultural trauma.

This research work has been divided into three sections. The first chapter deals with the introduction of the whole thesis in the context of the Exploration of Post-War Japanese Cultural Trauma. This sections also presents some ideas of discusses the trauma as the theoretical tool or methodology. Similarly, the second section in the textual analysis that applies the events and experiences using the tool to meet the objective of the research. Finally, the last section in the conclusion where the protagonist's suffering has been synthesized.

Toru Watanabe, the protagonist and narrator possesses a post-traumatic psychology. Similarly, Naoko, another central women character is also suffering from the live memory of her dead boyfriend Kizuki in the novel. A cultural trauma theory focuses interpretation in *Norwegian Wood* mainly centers on the activities of its characters that stand as the perfect example of anyone in possession of a traumatic past. All the characters, throughout the novel, signal the post-traumatic stress such as

restlessness, depression, hallucinations, moodiness, emotional outbursts, intellectual and spiritual doubt etc. after the suicide by Kizuki.

Especially, the novel is analyzed from the vantage point of cultural trauma studies which placed the Japanese youths to the edge of death, suicide, depression, homelessness, disintegration, misguided sex, futile activities, professional discontinuity, and feeling of alienation. Therefore, post traumatic experiences gained after the bombing activities in Hiroshima and Nagasaki of Japan and its post effects on people are taken into mentality. All the characters in the novel are shocked, disappointed and professionally not committed because of the brutal insertion of Western materialistic forces over native Japanese culture. Thus, they are isolated from the state codes. Hence, Murakami's *Norwegian Wood* is the text to explore the traumatic experiences of the entire youths of Japan. A pioneer theorist of cultural trauma, Jeffery C. Alexander writes:

Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways. Cultural trauma is first of all an empirical, scientific concept, suggesting new meaningful and causal relationships between previously unrelated events, structures, perceptions, and actions. It is by constructing cultural traumas that social group, national societies, and sometimes even entire civilizations not only cognitively identify the existence and source of human suffering but “take on board” some significant responsibility for it. (1)

As Jeffrey C. Alexander states in afore mentioned argument, black people in America collectively feel that they are stereotyped and inferiorized by white people so is the

fate of Japanese too. Hence, trauma is a depressed injury in mind. Cultural trauma is a term frequently used to denote the social embarrassment of a whole race or society of a particular country if they felt defeated or embarrassed. As it has been stated above, cultural trauma occurs when members of collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event. In Murakami's *Norwegian Wood*, Japanese youths become the witness of the assassination of their cultural code thereby victimized of suicidal feeling and the escapist mentality of whole Japanese race. Hence, they are traumatized culturally.

Norwegian Wood is about the narrativization of those traumatized, humiliated, and culturally marginalized experiences of Japanese youths who after their defeat had greatly felt ashamed. To manifest the cultural trauma, is assess to the novel on the verge of analyzing- plot, characters, setting, actions, and other subordinating aspects which are responsible to distress the Japanese youths in regard of their cultural considerations indeed. What is the significance of unnatural death and suicide especially in Japanese society? This question remains the central pivot to be answered throughout the whole attempt in this dissertation.

Japan is a country with its native culture. But the culture and identity of Japan in post war period was under shadow, forcibly imposed of Western superiority which led Japanese towards cultural trauma. J. Alexander regards cultural trauma as a threat to the culture and identity of the people. Alexander states, "A cultural trauma is above all a threat to a culture with his individuals in that society presumably has identification. [...] Cultural trauma is a threat to some part of their personal identities" (40). Hence, from above line we can say that the identity of an individual gets affected by how s/he is treated in the society. If they are not behaved well and if their

culture is not regarded equal to others that leads an individual to the traumatic one. So is the case of characters in this novel.

Likewise, regarding the cultural trauma, Ron Eyerman, another theorist, has offered following excerpt which it takes help:

The “trauma” in question is slavery, not as institution or even experience, but as collective memory, a form of remembrance that grounded the identity-formation of people. There is a difference between trauma as it affects individuals and as a cultural process. As cultural process, trauma is mediated through various forms of representation and linked to the reformation of collective identity and the reworking of collective memory. The notion of cultural trauma implies that direct experience of an event is not necessary condition for its inclusion in the trauma process. (11)

Eyerman, in above, has defined trauma as the form of slavery considering it as the result of collective memory. Moreover, he opines that not only the direct experience but also the indirect experience of an event can cause trauma. “Cultural trauma involves the loss of the culture of origin by the disruption of language, economic, socio-political and spiritual system through oppression and imposition of the ideology of a foreign culture, identity community and worldview” (14). The legacy of cultural trauma is manifested in the destructive activities and sometimes mentally frustrated viewpoint and actions including violence and substantive abuse which are known symptoms occurred in post war era in Japan. Characters like Toru, Naoko, Nagasawa and Midori possesses this psychology in the novel.

Eyerman, in African American context argues that the former slaves want to forget the past and look toward the new future but cannot forget the past because of the trauma. He notes, “[T]he fact that many, if not most, former slaves wanted to

forget the past and look towards a new, more open future” (33). It is the equal case of native Japanese who were colonized culturally after their defeat in Second World War during 1960s. He further says, “Black life in South was becoming more differentiated and complex; white views of the civil war and its aftermath were undergoing transformation” (33). As the lines are quoted the colonized life in Japan became more and harder to the youths as their native culture was looted by the whites. Thus, the penetration of Western culture over the native culture of Japan led young generation towards Exploration of Post-War Japanese Cultural Trauma pushing youths culturally moaned. In this backdrop, *Norwegian Wood* is the depiction of cultural paradigm and shifting from native Japanese culture to Western materialistic culture.

The plot of *Norwegian Wood* is grounded upon two unexpected suicides of its characters named Kizuki and Naoko. Two main characters- Toru Watanabe, the first-person narrator and the protagonist of the novel and Naoko and mentally shocked young woman Naoko are haunted by the memory of a boy Kizuki. Kizuki was the first lover of Naoko and the best friend of Toru. He was wealthy and cheerful boy of 17 in high school having all sorts of prosperity. But he had shocked them and his parents by gassing himself in his parents' garage one night. For Toru and Naoko, it is an unpredictable but undeniable and equally unbearable fact that their beloved friend, leaving ‘no suicide note,’ and with ‘no motive that anyone could think of,’ (29) had suddenly decided to be vanished from this world. Naoko injured mentally because of her boyfriend’s suicide. The first and foremost blueprint that this shocked and unexpected suicide of Kizuki had implanted the sense of alienation, fragmentation leading them towards their absurd activities is the very primary events for the tormented life of Japanese youths along with the novel gets begin.

After apart following Kizuki's death, Naoko and Toru became lovers in physical act but not in spiritual motif. The cultural aspects that need to be analyzed why Naoko, a native girl of Japan, and Toru, another Japanese boy shared sex are because of the immense influence of Western culture of free sex which places them cultural away. They were psychologically impaired, culturally marginalized and socially depressed due to the unbearable loss of their boyfriend Kizuki's suicide. Naoko's mental health increasingly deteriorates and leads her hospitalization in psychiatric center. Though she was in the condition of gradual recovery of her illness, yet, finally, she killed herself leaving no cause of suicide. This is the second plot of the novel.

In this way, the characters in *Norwegian Wood* are obsessed by death. Toru struggles till the last scene of the novel because Kizuki's suicide has traumatized Toru culturally. He admits that when “it took the 17-year old Kizuki that night in May, death took me as well...in the midst of life, everything revolved around death” (31). In this context, Ron Eyerman notes, “It is the collective memory of dead and suicide that defines an individual as a race member” (3). Whole Japanese considered themselves as race members as all of them have similar traumatic experiences and memory of the defeated past. Hence, the significance of suicide and death in post war Japan is a means of escape from the unbearable loss of past. Eyerman further notes; “Collective memory is part and parcel of collective identity because memory is a precondition for narrative construction of autobiographies by which we identify who we are. As historical circumstances changes; we reconstruct our collective memory and redefine our collective identity” (3).

The simple interpretation of this line is a traumatic event has an important role in construction of collective memory and identity. Moreover, it is perfectly applicable

in the novel throughout the activities of main characters- Toru and Naoko, absurd living and escapist mentality of Toru and the suicide by Naoko at the end of the novel. Thus, the theory of collective memory targets on how a traumatic event plays an important roles for the formation of an individual's identity in the colonized society.

Likewise, Takao Tsuchiya speaks this line in Japanese context in his essay 'Write In, Rub Out': "Suicide is a special privilege of mankind in post war Japan. Other people have said suicide is the ultimate human freedom but this right, this freedom, exerts tremendous effects on the people associated with the suicide" (262). From these lines it is clear that Suicide in Japan is also sometimes understood as an honorable means of accepting blame or of shouldering responsibility. Similarly, Takie Sugiyama Lebra speaks in Japanese context as:

The popularity of so-called 'love suicides' in Japan can also be seen to fall into the category of types of self destruction to the nation's cultural mores and double suicide for love in Japan is based on the nation's religious belief in the future life, on the low value placed on individual life from the way of thinking, and on rigidly prizing women's chastity. (368)

Dying is not hard for the post war Japanese because they consider that "death exists, not as the opposite but as a part of life" (30).

Similarly, Nagasawa is another character only with whom Toru is able to become intimate after the death of Kizuki. Just as Toru and Naoko feel inextricably connected by their memories of the dead Kizuki, so, Toru and Nagasawa have their friendship nothing other than a shared love for F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*- a book in which death in the form of murder and suicide and accidental manslaughter presented. In this respect what Nagasawa says is, "Well, any friend of Gatsby is a friend of mine" (38). Why the Japanese youths loves this text is because in *The Great*

Gatsby, modern America has been presented as the valley of ashes where no kind of spirituality exists on and in which all the characters commits suicide and destroy themselves, taking death as the ultimate means of protest against pervasively growing modern American codes.

In this regard, J. Alexander's ideas are notable to justify the nature of trauma. Alexander notes, "The status of trauma dependent on the socio-cultural context of the affected society at the time of historical event or situation arises" (36). The historical situation in 1960s Japan is the changing scenario in socio-political and cultural aspect. Hence, in Murakami's *Norwegian Wood*, traditional thinking and behavior confront the growing trend of postmodernism that leads to a discontinuity of young life in post-war Japan. This kind of cultural chaos and fragmentation can be noticed through the manner, thinking, action, saying and the futile activities of the characters such as Toru, Naoko, Midori, Nagasawa and Reiko. Characters in *Norwegian Wood* seem fairly mechanical-going to work, eating, sleeping and having sex, until some catalyst propels them to participate in some event outside the routine of their everyday live. Cathy Caruth, a cultural trauma theorist, admits, "Collective memory does not only exist in the individuals, but that in fact it is located in cultural artifacts" (81).

On the basis of this line, a quick examination of the story highlights the following state of detachment of the characters. Toru has no real friends, no siblings and no family bond throughout the story. Naoko's family is absent, her boyfriend has died, and she is residing in an asylum. Nagasawa leaves Hatsumi, the only stable person in his life, and by the end of the story he finds himself alone and wondering. Reiko has stabilized somewhat, but her daughter and husband are gone, her career is over and she lacks sufficient courage to leave her present surroundings. Midori is the best example of being adrift, in between tradition, character. At one point, Midori

tried to join a college group, but she quickly left when she found derision rather than community. Her mother has been died for two years, her father spends half of the book in the hospital and then dies, her sister is always out gallivanting with her boyfriend, and Watanabe professes leaves for a month to mourn over the loss of his love. In a succinct, all the characters in the novel are impaired, adrift, cut off from their cultural root.

In this backdrop, the ideas by Cathy Caruth that trauma cannot be forgotten; it always comes in the form of memory seems to quote worthing. Giving a general definition of trauma in her essay entitled “Unclaimed Experience: Trauma and the Possibility of History” Caruth notes:

Trauma describes over whelming experiences of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the events occurs in the often delayed and uncontrolled repetitive occurrence of hallucinations of the soldier faced with sudden and massive death around him, for example, who suffers this sight in a numbed state only to relieve it later on in repeated nightmare is a central and recurring images of trauma in our century. (181)

As Caruth argues that the effects of unbearable event cannot be forgotten, in Murakami's *Norwegian Wood*, Japanese youths cannot forget their lost experiences. All the character struggles through their alienated, depressed, misguided, non committed, escaped and ultimately haunted monotonous daily existence in the novel. This is no mere than the effects of cultural trauma.

Basically, the novel has revolved around the activities of the six major characters- Kizuki, the best friend of Toru and the boyfriend of Naoko commits suicide at the very beginning of the novel. Similarly, Toru Watanabe is a narrator and the protagonist who struggles for his self- and societal identity throughout his

uncommitted behavior in the novel. In the same way, Naoko, a deadly shocked girlfriend of Kizuki ultimately escapes from her life committing suicide at the end of the novel. Similarly, Nagasawa, a university student and Don Juan type character lacking straight forwardness, lives in uncertainty in his future mission. Likewise, Midori, a fashionable girl is detached from her native Japanese culture and attached with foreign culture but cannot follow any thus places herself in-between condition. In the same way, Strom Tropper, a hostel roommate of Toru is psychologically haunted and lacks all sorts of drive in his real life.

Cathy Caruth admits, “Trauma is generally defined as a psychic injury caused by an overwhelming experience of a catastrophic event, where the memory of the event is repressed and the response occurs in an often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive fashion” (11). Within this theoretical framework, this research examines the historical transformations of Japanese collective memory of the atomic bombing at Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, which later hit over Japanese national identity. Toru Watanabe lives in a time of political struggle and redefinition of his country’s dark past. He is a student in 1960s Tokyo, when his classmates were barricading university halls, either to protest, or to revolutionize against university regulations. In this context, William Slocome writes, “Murakami seems engaged in a postmodern project of merging these two divisions together” (6). Thus, in reference with William, we can say that Toru is Murakami’s image of the stereotypical, post-teen Japanese male standing between two extremes of past and present, modern and postmodern culture. Hence, Murakami uses to encompass the entirety of a Japan whose people and culture are placed between one extreme of the fading modern era and the other extreme of the growing trend of postmodernism cultural shift.

Toru's love story is a tragedy where hero and heroine never unites and lives happily. This prince has two princesses: his first love that represents his past and the new, controversial love that represents his future. He does not love one but two women but never gets familial love from both. Toru is in a desperate state after hearing Naoko's breakdown. He becomes depressed, does not talk to anyone and lives a monotonous daily existence. He describes his situation as:

I spent three full days after all but walking on the bottom of the sea. I could hardly hear what people said to me, and they had just as much trouble catching anything I had to say. My body felt enveloped in some kind of membrane, cutting off any direct contact between me and the outside world. I couldn't touch 'them', and 'they' couldn't touch me. I was utterly helpless, and as long as I remained in that state, 'they' were unable to reach out to me. (325)

While trying to cope with his emotions he can't make contact with other people.

Traumatic past causes despair in *Norwegian Wood* as it shows a complete withdrawal of Toru from the outside world and other people. At this point, the dialogue seems appropriate: ["How many girls have you slept with Toru" Naoko asked in a tiny voice. "Eight or nine," I answered truthfully. "You're not even 20 years old" Reiko said, "What kind of life are you leading?" I said to Naoko, "Here I was, seeing you almost every week, and talking with you, and knowing that the only one in your heart was Kizuki. It hurt. It really hurt. I think that's why I slept with girls I didn't know". (146)

In fact, this sort of default relationship is no other than the mere product of cultural trauma. Toru passes back and forth between the boundaries of city and countryside. Here, city is the imprint of new culture where as countryside is the representation of past culture of Japanese. Japanese youths lack the real identity and

belong to nowhere. That very lackness of independent identity and no whereness of Japanese is because of cultural trauma.

After Naoko's death, Toru regrets for remembering his past days: "But I never answered her. What could I have said? What good would it have done? And to Midori I wrote a short note: I couldn't say anything just yet" (357). In the above given narrative, Toru narrates the bleak and uncertain past of his life. It seems as if Toru notices how his attempts at understanding the world are useless in his past. The same problem happened to Naoko, the inability to put her feelings into words caused Naoko to feel depressed and eventually led her to suicide.

In *Norwegian Wood*, silence plays vibrant role. Most of the characters cannot express their original thinking in a straightforward way rather they remains silent in most of the cases it is because they are haunted because of their past defeated memory in the war. As an example, in Toru's final telephone conversation with Midori: "Midori responded with a long, long silence [...]" (386) which signals the culturally empty world. As Jay Rubin writes, "Murakami . . . grew up in a newly affluent Japan that still admired America for its wealth and the energy of its culture. He drank deeply at the foreign spring—all the more deeply, perhaps, in rebellion against a rather traditionalist family" (491). Simplifying the statement of Rubin's is easy. This "foreign spring" appears in the form of various Western and particularly American influences of jazz music to pizza, city life and alcohol, cigarette, bar/restaurant and other references far from traditional Japan. This insertion of cultural definition led Japanese culture to an Americanization and ended to the cultural shift to capitalist consumerism.

Matthew C Strecher admits that after the defeat of Japan in World War II, it became, "consciously obsessed with defining precisely what it meant to be Japanese.

Although, Murakami's characters lack some of the more traditional Japanese qualities, morals or behaviors, his characters are striving to attain these particular aspects"(373). In its simple version, it is because of their current position within an evolving culture; they are often forced to interpret their lives and the lives around them in new ways. Murakami's novel addresses Japan that has shifted culturally and literally away from the Japanese idealism that gripped the country prior to World War II.

In Slocombe's words, Murakami's novel explores "both Japan's place in the global market and the place of Western culture within Japanese society" (1). Similarly Matthew C Strecher states that "this part of shift toward Western culture and ideas has to do with the influx of television and American programming within Japanese society" (373). The introduction of American television opened Japanese culture to a new perspective and cultural process. What Slocombe and Strecher suggest and what the present study intends to reaffirm is that Murakami addresses the issue of Japan's place within a growing form of capitalism and consumerism and the West's place within Japan.

Similarly, *Norwegian Wood's* characters connections are continuously shifting in the attempt at understanding each other can be taken Japan as culturally void:

I wondered if she was trying to convey something to me, something she could not put into words – something prior to words that she could not grasp within herself and which therefore had no hope of ever turning into words. Instead, she would fiddle with her hair slide, dab at the corners of her mouth with a handkerchief, or look into my eyes in that meaningless way. I wanted to hold her tight when she did these things, but I would hesitate and hold back. I was afraid I might hurt her. And so the two of us kept walking the streets of Tokyo,

Naoko searching for words into space. (36)

In this narration, Naoko's emotional breakdown and incapability is depicted. Instead of talking, Toru and she walk through Tokyo in a desperate attempt. But as time goes by, events turn into memories and start fading from the moment they are remembered. Ten years after his relationship with Naoko, Toru tries to revive her image in his mind and write his book on her, but "I realize that all I can place in the imperfect vessel of writing are imperfect memories and imperfect thoughts" (10). Midori writes Toru a letter: "I'm writing this letter to you while you're off buying drinks. This is the first time in my life I've ever written a letter to somebody sitting next to me on bench, but I feel it's the only way I can get through to you. I mean, you're hardly listening to anything I say. Am I right?" (332). Naoko asked him "never to forget her" (10) because she knew that his memories of her would start to fade eventually. And when Toru is on the verge of losing his connection with the world outside, letters help him stay on firm ground. So they had no power of trans memory due transcribing their deep injury in their impaired mind.

Toru becomes frustrated after hearing of Naoko's breakdown. He becomes depressed and does not talk to anyone. He remains far away from outer world. For him outer world is imperfect so he wants to be far away from this cracked world. He describes his situation as follow:

I spent three full days after that all but walking on the bottom of the sea. I could hardly hear what people said to me. My whole body felt enveloped in some kind of membrane, cutting off any direct contact between me and the outside world. I couldn't touch 'them', and 'they' couldn't touch me. I was utterly helpless, and as long as I remained in that state, 'they' were unable to reach out to me. (325)

Though it is narrated by Toru, it carries the voice of all Japanese youths's traumatic experiences and uncertain future. Because no characters are committed to their daily routine in the novel. Nagasawa lacks straightforwardness in the novel. Midori seems adrift, in between condition of absorbing culture as a whole or detaching completely from it. Naoko is also places her in Ami hostel, a place for insane one. Hence, all the characters are cut off from their root. In this context, Ron Eyerman says; "Cultural trauma can involve the articulation of collective identity and collective memory, as individual stories meld through forms and processes of collective representation. Collectivity refers to process of 'we' formation- a process both historically rooted and rooted in history" (14). As the researcher has mentioned earlier, the traumatic narration of Toru is the true exploration of cultural trauma of all the Japanese youths.

In the novel, despair causes trauma in *Norwegian Wood*; devastating moments show a complete withdrawal of characters from the outside world and other people. Kevin writes, "In *Norwegian Wood*, I observe that place is the one aspect that is both missing and desired. Places play an important role within the text, more important than that of mere setting"(9). Obviously, Toru is in disposition throughout the novel, traveling from urban to rural, from bars to theaters, from woman to woman lacking all sorts of drive. Toru even takes a month-long journey across Japan to get over Naoko's death and to find a place for solace. Why Toru does so is because of his Exploration of Post-War Japanese Cultural Trauma he seeks solace from his haunted memory.

In *Norwegian Wood*, settings are highly responsible to analyze the text to manifest the cultural trauma. Kevin explores in his thesis, "The entire narrative is a negotiating process within which the narrator tries in multiple ways and in multiple setting to establish his place within postmodern Japan"(8). Basing on this line, the three major setting, I want to examine are land, city and psyche setting. Murakami

establishes a connection between the narrator's emotions and the land setting. In land setting, I found a good tie of place in postmodern society as a host for Toru's nostalgia, both a means of identification and exploitation. Toru constructs the land setting as a cultural ideal, as a form of cultural longing for a forgotten connection to agrarianism. In so doing, the land setting serves as a means of nostalgia for culturally displaced narrator, Toru.

Similarly, city setting also plays an important role mainly in the character of Midori in *Norwegian Wood*. The city offers, death, decay and suffering of the characters in the novel. In this point, Kevin is remembered, "rather than the serenity offered by the agrarian ideal of the natural world, the city is a wilderness of confining confusion and consumerism"(11). The city is where Toru resides physically, but not mentally. City is the center of capitalist consumerism where Toru commits no any significant achievement but just passes his days in futility. Hence, city lacks peace in the lives of the characters.

Likewise, the last setting is psyche setting. The entire text is a textual projection of Toru's psyche as Rubin writes, "Toru recalls the events of his life from eighteen years in the future" (8). Thus, the lives of characters in the novel reveal a complexity that maintains an impetus no longer exists before, an environment common to pre-war Japan, but foreign to post-war Japan. Moreover, futile sex, unprofessed love, alcoholism along with bar/restaurant activities, suicidal feeling and alienated life placed Japanese towards Exploration of Post-War Japanese Cultural Trauma.

Similarly, a natural setting is the controlling factor in *Norwegian Wood*. Toru saturates the opening with attention to the "Cold November rains," the "dense cloud cover," the "dark clouds," the "gloomy air of a Flemish landscape," "the North Sea,"

and his seemingly indifferent declaration of, “So—Germany again” (3). Indeed, his observations paint a picture of his emotional state. At first glance, his narration tells us that he is in Hamburg, Germany which marks his physical locale. Although this information gives us a timeframe and place, the physical setting becomes an environment that reveals Toru’s frame of mind. Like the “gloomy air of a Flemish landscape,” Toru is “kind of blue” (3). His thoughts seem as dark as the “dense cloud cover” and as dreary as the “Cold November rain” (3). The use of this symbolism suggests that his detailed depictions are clearly portraying his emotional and mental state of discontinuity: The plane reached the gate. People began unlatching their seatbelts and pulling baggage from the storage bins, and all the while I was in the meadow. I could smell the grass, feel the wind on my face and hear the cries of the birds. Autumn 1969 and soon I would be twenty. (3)

Similar to his Hamburg description, Toru’s reminiscent depiction begins with natural landscape, a landscape in which he positions himself. And it is not just any landscape, but a “meadow,” a place of beauty, of quiet and of peace in which we find Toru. A meadow is for grazing and growth, an area where animals come in order to feed, rest, and play. And, here, in the midst of this secure environment is Toru means he wants to be back to his safe and glorious past. While the natural setting Grass, wind, and birdsong seem perfect. The relation of this “natural” environment functions as an obvious temptation towards his glorious past.

His use of “dark cloud” imagery implies a dark mood. Additionally, the clouds’ position over the North Sea signifies a breadth and vastness to Toru’s feelings. If we read further, we find that the text supports such interpretation. As he contemplates the clouds over the North Sea, he thinks about “what [he] had lost in the course of [his] life: times gone forever, friends who had died or disappeared, feelings

[he] would never know again” (3). Without much difficulty, we infer that the sea functions as a well, a metaphorical holding tank for his emotions.

Shortly after this “meadow” scene, Toru continues nostalgic reflections by mentioning a well that “lay precisely on the border where the meadow ended and the woods began” (6). In this account, Toru’s well possesses a “frightening depth. It was deep beyond measuring, and crammed full of darkness, as if all the world’s darkness had been boiled down to their ultimate destiny” (6). From this image, readers might infer that the well, like the North Sea, symbolizes the depth of Toru’s pain. An incredibly deep, unmarked well refers a danger, a vacuum and an unquenchable thirst, the hole that tarnishes and eventually leads Japanese youths towards Exploration of Post-War Japanese Cultural Trauma.

If we analyze the season of “autumn” with his imminent birthday, it is a season of change; the leaves change color, and the temperature turns colder, marking the changes in the natural world. He is turning twenty, leaving his teenage years behind and coming of age. Thus, autumn symbolizes the move towards maturity in one side while other as the novel is written during the time of mid 1980s the narrator doesn't want to go back to his university days.

Likewise, Naoko’s own words describe herself are as follows: “I’m confused. Really confused. And it’s a lot deeper than you think. Deeper. . .darker. . .colder” (8). In this quotation, Naoko characterizes herself in terms of depth and confusion that directly linked with darkness. Thus, this reference is sufficient to show the fundamental shift occurred in fragmented memory in the lives and behavior of the Japanese youths. Similarly, Naoko’s embodiment seems danger to self and to others because she is the cause for Toru’s breakdown, as well as her own death. Like the well, she is one whose depth is mysterious, frightening, and intriguing. She is the

entity that Toru longs to reach but cannot find indeed. In fact, Naoko possesses nothing but confusion, pain, suffering, and some sort of fatal attractiveness.

Dominick LaCapra regards acting out and working through as two forms of remembering trauma. He says, "[T]hese two factors are important with respect to events—often traumatic events that are heavily charged with emotion and value and that always bring out the implication of the observer in the observed" (141). LaCapra further developing the two forms of remembering trauma; acting out and working through, argues that once one is traumatized then one cannot completely be recovered. However, he believes that trauma can be reduced through narrativization in historical studies as: "In acting out one relieves as if one were the other, including oneself as another in the past; and in working through one tries to acquire some critical distance that allows one to engage in life in the present, to assume responsibility but that does not mean you are utterly transcend that past" (148)

Based on LaCapra, a traumatized person either cannot completely forget the past or cannot detach oneself from the past. LaCapra insists that trauma cannot be healed completely which resembles in the narration in *Norwegian Wood*. In the novel, Toru remembers his past and says that he requires 'nearly a full minute to conjure up an image of Naoko's face', a face that he has seen many times before. Naoko says, "You'll be O.K. you could go running all around here in the middle of the night and you'd *never* fall into the well. And as long as I stick with you, I won't fall in either... When I'm really close to you, I'm not the least bit scared. Nothing dark or evil could ever tempt me" (7). But, she cannot stay with him. Thus, we see the reasons for Naoko's statement that "it's impossible" (7), when Watanabe asks her to live with him.

Talking about the member of sanatorium, Watanabe sees a man in a white coat

who, Reiko admits, is a doctor. Other than this man, however, we encounter only five other men, two of whom are staff, one who is the gatekeeper and two of whom are “apparently sanatorium patients” (133). The use of “apparently” implies an uncertainty. In truth, we never ascertain whether they are patients or only they look like patients. The man in the coat is a doctor who is there in professional capacity, as is the gatekeeper. Conversely, Reiko and Naoko, the two women in the sanatorium, are there as patients and haunted of their memory.

Similarly, the reference of “butterfly” can be interpreted as the connection between Naoko and her fascination towards her own culture. Referring to a dream Toru had in Naoko’s apartment at the sanatorium, Watanabe states, “I dreamed of a butterfly dancing in the half-light” (104). Moreover, he fixes his concentration on Naoko through her possessions. “In the kitchen were the dishes Naoko ate from, in the bathroom were the toothbrush Naoko used, and in the bedroom was the bed in which Naoko slept” (104). There is enough evidence to suggest that this dream references Toru's attachment towards the perfect life which old Japanese used to desire.

In the same fashion, talking about music, Reiko says, “It makes me feel like I’m in a big meadow in a soft rain” (108). Although music does not center on the arousal of feelings through, it is significant that Reiko puts herself in a natural setting. She is not sitting in a house, staring out a window, and looking at the soft rain. She is in the center of a nature, in a meadow, and it is “soft” and inviting, much like the ideal woman of Japan used to love.

Again, Naoko sings that the song “Norwegian Wood” makes her feel as though she were “wandering in a deep wood. I’m all alone and it’s cold and dark, and nobody comes to save me” (109). This line suggests her distraction towards the Western music. And, she still needs someone to “save” her is because traditionally, as

Sumiko Iwao states, “men and women in Japan grow up accepting the superior status of men, and the inferior status of women” (19). And, the natural depiction of women in the text further reminds this hierarchical ideology. After all, the natural depictions of Naoko designate her as small, frozen, confused, and animal-like. Through such portrayals, as traditional Japan practices, woman, in her weak, confused, and natural state, needs the helpful dominance of the masculine hand.

Reiko and Naoko are threats to an establish or at least desired normative culture. The “insanity” of Reiko and Naoko places them on the margin. My analysis is that their initial self marginalization is problematic. First of all, we must remember that both Naoko and Reiko are at Ami Lodge by choice. Thus, their choices to marginalize themselves have cut them off from mainstream society, so that they are physically, geographically, and philosophically removed from cultural critique.

Sumiko Iwao admits Japanese women are supposed to have a family, supposed to be there to raise the children and take care of the household while the man is at work. Concerning the familial duties of a Japanese woman, Sumiko Iwao writes:

Thirty years ago [the early 1960s], a young woman was expected to marry between 20 and 24, and those still single at 25 were often pitied or disparaged as *urenokori* (unsold merchandise) or *to ga tatsu* (overripe fruit). Perhaps the main reason was because, for that generation of women (now in their fifties), marriage was a must. It was the source of economic power. Women who do not marry were sometimes thought to be cold and unattractive. (59-60)

Similarly, in the novel, a 38 years old girl, Reiko was a promising concert pianist. However, an event ruins her prospects and makes her to resign from her profession-teaching piano. During her teaching sessions, one of her 13 years old male students

purposes her to marry. After thinking deep, she accepts his proposal. However, a few years later her unsolicited lesbian experience with a student ruins her life and she resigns from her family bond and voluntarily places herself to a sanatorium, a house for insane. Iwao notes that the woman's role in the family "centers on motherhood" (125). In leaving her husband and her daughter, Reiko subverts this cultural normative and finds herself within the sanatorium. Here, she admits that "it's hard to tell anymore whether I'm patient or staff" (95). Thus, Reiko is threatening to the system as an un-manned woman. She has chosen a life for herself, apart from her husband and family; she has gone far from social obligations for new life of peace and stability. I believe the purpose of this exploration, unusual lesbian relationship, unprofessed love and non committed profession were the penetration of Western culture which were not the definitive part of Japanese culture.

Similarly, Naoko also poses the problem of the un-manned woman. Since the death of her childhood love Kizuki, Naoko has given her affection to no man. Her one night of intercourse with Toru was strained at best and since then she has remained aloof and impenetrable, both mentally and sexually. Although she helps Toru masturbate in one occasion, she never again allows herself to be penetrated. Like Reiko, she too, has chosen her at the sanatorium, a place for insane where Toru can visit but cannot live as he is not a part of their culture, a member of the insane. In this connection I was writes the following:

The last thing [Naoko] wants is to rely on a man. The lyrics of the title song are relevant here. The man who sings the song wakes up after a night of romance to discover that his girlfriend is gone: "This bird had flown. . ."

Naoko is the bird who has flown away from her suitor. Toru even has a dream where she turns into a mechanical bird, perhaps too literally interpreting the

image of the “bird,” that is also a pun on the 1960s British slang for “girl.”

Nonetheless, this image of the bird in flight inevitably suggests natural, unbounded freedom. (87)

Without men, women achieve at least some of the “unbounded freedom” that they seek. But this position places them in a threatening situation because in Japan women are supposed to be the inward creature. In other words, Toru is creating his own place, a place removed from the chaotic and shallow world of city life created by the Westerners.

Toru portrays Ami Lodge as a haven, an escape from the pressures of the postmodern world. It is worth noting how far removed Ami Lodge is in reference to what we might label civilization. In order to go there, Toru must take two trains, an initial bus to make it to another bus that would take more than an hour to reach its final stop, and then a twenty minute walk after the bus could go no further. Even Toru comments, “[Ami Lodge] turned out to be much farther into the mountains than I had imagined” (90). Moreover, Ami Lodge has removed itself far from Western civilization purposefully. It has got as far away as it could in order to avoid the intersection with the city. I believe that such measures had to be taken because the city was on the rise, because cities were growing faster and faster and rural areas were being depleted and consumed. In post-war Japan, Japanese society had come far from these “agrarian root”.

Misguided sex in the novel is primary factors which is also the outcome of cultural trauma. All the characters have their own sexual experiences with minimum more than four partners. Nagasawa sleeps with “84 girls” in his short period of life (71). They used to go to restaurant and bar frequently for entertainment. For example, Toru narrates:

Supporting her weight with my left arm, I used my right hand to caress her soft straight hair. In that position, I waited for Naoko to stop crying. I slept with Naoko that night. Was it the right thing to do? That I cannot tell. Even now, almost twenty years later, I can't be sure. I guess I'll never know. But at the time, it was all I could do. She was in a heightened state of tension and confusion, and she made it clear that she wanted me to give her release. (39)

In another passage of *Norwegian Wood*, Midori another characters, threatens to cry in public if Toru refuses to spend the night with her. As incentive, she states, "Once I get started, I'm good for the whole night. Are you ready for that? I'm an absolute animal when I start crying, it doesn't matter where I am! I'm not kidding" (223). Midori is notorious for saying things that are out of place, inappropriate for her gender. Her desire to watch pornographic films, especially the really hardcore S & M ones displays a fascination with the taboo, with the unmentionable. According to her, her boyfriend is always censuring her for talking about sex and masturbation and similar topics in public. Likewise, at one point, Midori has a discussion with Toru about how the smoke they see is from the burning of "sanitary napkins, tampons, stuff like that" (59). Toru calls her a "lumberjack" and tells her that girls do not smoke Marlboros or crush their cigarettes out like that (70). Midori tells Toru that "most girls wouldn't talk about how they wore the same bra for three months when they're eating alone with a man but she says" (70). Hence, Midori in many ways is different from her peers. Her manner, topics of sex and the way she dresses are all in opposition to the habits of a traditional Japanese woman.

Traditionally, Japanese women are homebound, relegated to the task of cooking and family care. Iwoko writes that "the traditional ways of life of the farming and fishing communities have been almost completely extinguished by Japanese

modernization, particularly after World War II” (155). The results of this abandonment of agrarian society are evidenced clearly when Midori is drunk and wants to climb a tree. Watanabe observes that “unfortunately there were no climbable trees in Shinjuku, and the Shinjuku Imperial Gardens were closing” (172). He claims that he still has not “completely adapted to the world” (169), the real world in which dandy girl Midori lives. Watanabe says, “I don’t know, I feel like this isn’t the real world. The people, the scene: they just don’t seem real to me” (169).

Food is an important aspect of the city. When Toru is in his month-long journey across the Japanese countryside, he says that he survived on a diet of “whiskey, bread and water” (273). In the city, he is continually in bars, restaurants and clubs, eating everything from eggs to spaghetti. He and Midori have lunch once in a department store food court, thus combining the entities of food and consumerism. At one point, he even acquires a job as a server at an Italian restaurant. Midori and Toru are always around food and drink. During their first date at her house, Midori cooks a feast in the Kansai style. And, although she cooks for Toru, it is by choice, and not through force or adherence to a societal code. Interestingly, she invites him to eat at her place.

Midori portrays herself as a wild, uncontrollable animal in an urban wilderness. She also shares her coldness and unfeeling nature. Although Midori frequently visits her dying father in the hospital, the care she exhibits for her family is minimal. For example, in a dialogue following her lunch with Toru, Midori remarks that when her mother died, she “didn’t feel the least bit sad” (75). Like the city, she has become accustomed to people coming and going. Her sister is rarely present, both of her parents are dead by the end of the novel, and we see her only once with friends other than Toru. Thus, Midori, like the city, has experienced the inconsistency and

transience of her culture. Midori represents this conflict, this confusion, this status of “greenhorn, this newbie ideology” (181). The doctor’s comment suggests that Midori’s choice is irrational. As in asking for dates, Midori is always the first one to breach a sexual topic.

Toru relates to the reader how the memories of Naoko and her death threaten to overwhelm him. When Naoko dies, Toru takes a journey across the country. While sitting by the ocean, he writes, “The memories would slam against me like the waves of an incoming tide, sweeping my body along to some strange new place” (273). Being deeply depressed, Toru’s mind and place are pulled by the whim of the waves. Ironically, Toru’s narrative is a product of his fading memory. The novel opens with an extremely nostalgic scene in which our narrator confesses, “The more the memories of Naoko inside me fade, the more deeply I am able to understand her” (10). Toru’s understanding is founded upon past memories and experiences.

Naoko loses as she slips further into the realm of insanity. When she locks herself inside her own head for protection against the world and the constraints and requirements therein, she drives herself insane. She traps herself within her own mind, becomes a victim of her own thoughts. Towards the end of the novel, when Toru finds out about Naoko’s death and travels by himself across the countryside of Japan for a month, he is dangerously close to doing the same thing. Toru writes, “I often tried to write about Naoko. But I was never able to produce a line. Now I realize that all I can place in the imperfect vessel of writing are imperfect memories and imperfect thoughts”(10). Here, imperfect memories are the core notion of imperfect thoughts.

Recalling Naoko, we observe that Naoko’s sickness divested her to
 Exploration of Post-War Japanese Cultural Trauma. In the few letters she wrote to Toru, she said, “Please forgive me for not answering sooner. It took me a very long

time before I was in any condition to write, and I have started this letter at least ten times. Writing is a painful process for me” (43). This implies that writing was painful to her as she had to bring her mind back under her control. By examining one of her later letters, we can verify the fact that her ability to control her mental condition directly affected her power of words. She writes, “In any case, I myself feel that I am far closer to recovery than I was at one time... This is the first time in a long time that I have been able to sit down and calmly write a letter”(86). By allowing her inner thoughts to control her outer actions, she begins hallucinating and finally commits suicide. Hence, ultimately, the same sickness, sense of cultural trauma and escapist mentality of the characters claimed both Naoko and Kizuki.

Although all the characters resist these changes within the physical and geographical realms of the land and city, they are powerless to prevent them thus their efforts are futile. With so much of their country changing culturally and even geographically, due to cultural amalgamation and technological progression, the characters struggle for their identity, for life after death notion.

When one is traumatized, its effect can be found for a long. It cannot completely be recovered. LaCapra in his book, *Writing History: Writing Trauma* argues:

Trauma begins about a dissociation of an affect and representation; one disorienting feels what one can represent; one numbingly represent what one can't feel working through trauma involves the effort to articulate, rearticulate affect and representation in a manner that may not transcend, but may to some viable extent counter act, a reenactment or acting out of that disabling dissolution. (42)

According to LaCapra, a traumatized person cannot bring the exact representation of

the events. Working through trauma involves the effort to articulate in such a way that cannot completely transcend the past. In fact, each of the main character deals with the subject and possibility of death, and they do so in very contradictory ways. For Naoko, death is the final act, an entity that has taken away her lover and that will eventually take her as well. She sees death as natural, as part of the cycle to which she belongs. Similarly, Midori sees death as something unnatural, as something to fight against and overcome. As she states while watching a nearby fire from her rooftop, she is unafraid of death (73). Like Naoko, he sees death as a part of life. However, death makes Toru angry because it only seems to make life all the more futile.

As Toru ends his narrative, he finds himself in a phone booth calling Midori. When she asks him where he is, he writes, “Again and again, I called out for Midori from the dead center of this place that was no place” (293). A simple interpretation of this line might infer lack of success he has had in his life. Indeed, his being in the “center” of such a place implies that he remains amidst and deeply enmeshed intensity of the chaos and confusion world from which he relentlessly tries to escape. Moreover, in Murakami’s *Norwegian Wood* we see that the native Japanese become the eyewitness of the traumatic event and narrate those events in such a way that their narrating leads them towards the solitude and isolation.

Despite the persistent frustration, domination and cultural repression; Toru sees a kind of audacity of hope of living in the world. He tries to release the traumatic experiences narrating multicultural story with readers. In *Norwegian Wood*, Murakami addresses the issue of self-determination as cultural changes destabilize the places to which Toru desires to belong, Toru strives to create and maintain a place for himself that will withstand these shifts and transformations. Murakami’s narrator attempts to struggle against traditional values and ways of life with postmodern

capitalist consumerism in Japan.

Within the city, Toru attends school, holds a few different jobs and tries to figure out his relationship with Midori, the girl whose character is just as volatile and rapidly changing as the city. The city always fails to afford him the constancy he seeks. Aside from the endless cycle of consumerism and commoditization, permanence does not exist within the city's boundaries. Marketing and its products change too rapidly; student movements come and go; friends commit suicide. Through these attempts, Toru travels the land, the beaches, the city, and even his own mind in order to find stability. Essentially, in his novel *Norwegian Wood* through Toru, Murakami wants to display a trauma of cultural type in postmodern Japan.

Murakami's narrator Toru is the representation of mid-twentieth Japanese males in post-war, postmodern Japan. As such, Toru is championing a cause in which much of Japan's population is inadvertently implicated. Although Toru receives no reward or recognition for his actions, his successes or failures preclude a cultural outcome. His embracing of the past and the present shows a determination not to forsake or completely immerse him in the traditional, while simultaneously resisting an overall conformity to a socio-economic mindset that leaves little room for the place of an individual in post war Japan.

The protagonist of novel, Toru Watanabe moves from one place to another and frequently falls in his past memories and overwhelming in illusionary world. Nostalgia conflates time, so that the past is experienced as though it is the present, replacing, albeit temporarily, feelings of alienation with feeling of comfort and overcoming loss through the power of memory. *Norwegian Wood* is an honest appraisal of deliberate shift from culture and transitional movement from one place to

another. Murakami's projection of his protagonist of novel Toru Watanabe's narration and his transitional movement, suffering and experience in new place, struggle and other minor characters supports the claim that *Norwegian Wood* is a novel that represents trauma of diasporic mediation and cultural displacement in novel. The study projects the hardship in representing the cultural trauma in Murakami's *Norwegian Wood*. The research analyzes how the intensity of the traumatic experiences of Japanese youths during 1960s is reduced through the narrativization of trauma. The study also sheds lights on how the traumatic experiences should be testified. All the Japanese youths in Murakami's *Norwegian Wood* are physically haunted, emotionally betrayed and psychologically tortured. Thus, they are traumatized.

To conclude, this thesis explores how the narrator and the protagonist of the novel Toru and Naoko, a deeply haunted woman character throughout the novel are culturally traumatized. Reiko, a thirty eight years lesbian girl has culturally shifted from the root of her systematic lifestyle who by herself ruins her future. Similarly, Midori, a hypocrite girl and the college mate of Toru during university life who is open to share everything with Toru. When those Japanese youths are traumatized they take the help of narrativization so as to release the tension or to reduce the trauma. Though Japanese people successfully reduce their trauma, the effects of cultural trauma remain as the relic into the mind of Japanese youths generation.

Murakami's *Norwegian Wood* is the story of all traumatic characters who are displaced culturally and remained far away from mainstream. Insanity of all characters in the novel is evidenced throughout the behavior, action and manner of the characters. As a result of which the youngest were not professionally committed, socially alienated, and culturally excluded. Hence, in the socio-cultural lives of Japan

different problems like- suicidal feeling, escapist mentality, misguided sex adventure, crisis in interpersonal relationship, alcoholism, feeling of being exploited culturally and disruption in social life, unemployment, homosexuality had grown up pervasively. Native Japanese wheresoever go and whatsoever do against the Western norms and values, however, most of them fall prey of the Americanization and finally Europeanization, which makes them more traumatic.

The present research work concludes Murakami's *Norwegian Wood* as a trauma fiction. The whole research revolves around novel in the exploration of cultural trauma. All Japanese youths narrate their own stories to get relief from their mental stress. Despite of Japanese youths escapement from much traumatic experiences through the narrativization or sharing of their stories each other, they live most of their tormented and traumatized life not by other reason but by memorizing the past and desiring a balanced and an equitable society in Japan. As we know, trauma is not only physical illness; it is also taken as a psychological illness which recurs in the mind of the people after the event occurs. In Murakami's *Norwegian Wood*, the protagonist, Toru Watanabe is psychologically ill because of the death of her son when he is carelessly behaved by white bosses. Another woman character, Naoko is haunted by deep memory of her late boyfriend Kizuki. Similarly, the place where Ami Hostel is situated is an oppressive environment. All the characters who reside in hostel are in any means insane and unusual since their childhood. Reiko, Nagasawa and Strom Tropper seem humiliated and embarrassed lacking straight forwardness in every aspects of their drive so they are traumatized. And to get relief from those hunted psychological mental injury they sometimes go back to the past through memory, action, activities and even more performance and also share their dissatisfaction while working in professional areas.

On the one hand, white's obstinate, eccentric and interiorizing nature and behavior severely affects the psyche of Japanese youths and cause the trauma of culture. On the other hand, the rivalry within the same race, for example between Naoko and Midori causes the huge gap between the same culture causes the cultural trauma. So Japanese are victimized due to American superiority. Hence, Japanese youths are dominated within the boundary of their own native land. Through novel, Murakami wants the reader to witness the complexity of all Japanese races in the era of postwar. Furthermore, the time span of 1960s is highly traumatic in the title of Japanese youths as they witnessed the direct experience of defeat thereby facing cultural disintegration.

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