

Mourning and Melancholia in *Norwegian Wood* and *Never Let Me Go*



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Mourning and Melancholia in *Norwegian Wood* and *Never Let Me Go*

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Certificate of Approval

I hereby declare that this thesis is the student's own work and effort. All sources of information incorporated here have been duly acknowledged. This thesis has been submitted with my approval.

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Declaration

This thesis is a presentation of my original research work. Wherever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly, with due reference to the literature, and acknowledgement of collaborative research and discussion.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to those who are silently fighting their inner monsters and surviving.

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-Noshin Nisa

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Abstract

Haruki Murakami's *Norwegian Wood* (1987) and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005) are the novels about the lives of some young people growing and understanding life, and coming to terms with the obstacles of living. The characters of *Never Let Me Go* are clone humans who were raised to be organ donors for normal humans till their death. This pattern of life was fixed for them, and they accepted this as their fate, like accepting the inevitability of death. However, these clones did not have a choice to live a different life which they still desired despite being sure about their purpose of existence. On the other hand, *Norwegian Wood's* characters have suffered through the loss of a loved one and the struggle of overcoming the grief of the loss. While one character succumbed to the grief, another character overcame it. This paper will conduct a psychoanalysis of the two novels using the framework of Sigmund Freud's mourning and melancholia. The characters of both novels deal with a sense of loss, either the loss of a loved person or the loss of an ideal life. The theory of mourning and melancholia will be used to analyze how the characters are processing the grief of their loss. Along with Freud's theory, Judith Butler's explanation of mourning will also be used to discuss the two novels.

Key Words: Mourning, Melancholia, Memory, Trauma, Acceptance.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Psychoanalysis of literary texts has been useful in explaining and understanding the psyche and behaviors of the characters of a story. Psychoanalysis gives us an insight of the characters' mental state and an overview of their thoughts and feelings that influence their actions. Sigmund Freud's interpretation has been one of the popular ones to be relied on for psychoanalysis. Freud's theory of mourning and melancholia can be used to look into the actions of the characters that insinuate depression or apathy towards life.

The process of mourning is the process of the transition of attachment from one object to a different one because the previous object has been lost. As it is difficult for humans to withdraw attachment from a loved object quickly after it has been lost, the mourning process takes time for the attachment to be withdrawn. Once the person is no longer fixated on the loved object that is not there anymore, they can move on from grieving. And the lost loved object only stays in the memory as something that once existed, but does not anymore. The mourner accepts the loss and reconciles with the reality. This is a successful process of mourning. While the reason for mourning is an external source, that is the loss of something, the reason for melancholia is an internal source, that is the failure of the withdrawal of attachment. When the mourner fails to complete mourning and remains stuck in the grief of the loss, the phenomenon of melancholia attaches itself to the individual. Melancholia is a state of deep depression and grief causing a departure from the normal attitude towards life. The cause of melancholia often is unknown to the sufferer. As the person does not realize what is causing the pain, the suffering gets unresolved, still existing in the unconscious instigating a sense of resentment for oneself. Melancholia makes the person lower oneself so much that one starts desiring or expecting punishment as a way of salvation.

If a loss creates pain for the person and pushes them into melancholia through the failure of mourning, the incident of loss becomes a traumatic event for the person. The individual in question is unable to get rid of the pain of the traumatic event, thus being stuck in melancholia, when the memories of the traumatic events keep coming back to them. The person is even more vulnerable to succumbing to melancholia when they are suffering alone. When there is collective trauma, mourning is also collective, which means that pain is shared. In collective mourning, the mourners get support from their environment that encourages successful mourning. When the mourner is alone and is not in the position of getting comfort from their environment, the mourning process becomes weak, and the mourner is more likely to fall into melancholia.

This research explores the role of mourning and melancholia in *Never Let Me Go* and *Norwegian Wood*. The characters of both novels suffer from a sense of loss. In *Never Let Me Go*, the major characters are clones created to serve humans till the clones die. The loss for the clones was the loss of a normal life. The clones have been raised in an institution indirectly being trained to make the sacrifice. This state of their lives that comes with the condition of sacrifice is itself a huge trauma for them which they had to live with since childhood. However, their trauma is shared. They are also groomed by the institution with the virtue of sacrifice preparing them for their fate, ultimately preparing them to go through the trauma of organ donation leading to a slow death. Though their truth was not revealed to them by the institute initially, they have always been aware of their destiny of ultimate sacrifice of death. So, for them, the process of mourning for this loss has been inbuilt and also collective and supported by their environment, the institution. They still wished they could live a happy life, but they have accepted that they could not. There was no hidden fixation on the lost ideology that pushed them into melancholia, because they created a life with each other within their boundaries, which impacted positively on their mourning process.

In *Norwegian Wood*, the characters clearly showed the symptoms of melancholia. Naoko's mourning process over the loss of her lover Kizuki was incomplete. She could not make amends with Kizuki's death because the reason for his suicide was unknown. Naoko never reached the point of acceptance of Kizuki's loss, because questions were unanswered. This death or loss was the trauma that she could not escape. As Kizuki was an intimate part of Naoko's teenage life, his sudden death made her life stuck in those times when she was with him, making her believe she deserved to be with him in death. Kizuki's memories triggered the pain of the trauma of his death that was left unresolved for Naoko, causing her melancholia and an unhealthy fixation on Kizuki. Her being entangled by Kizuki's memories caused her melancholia, forcing her to withdraw herself from reality. As she became secluded from reality, she had to mourn alone with no one to share the pain with. The seclusion got the mourning process closer to failure. Also, because she could not know why Kizuki died, this lack of recognition made her blame herself and punish herself for her suicide.

The objective of the research is to distinguish how the mourning process is different for different characters of *Never Let Me Go* and *Norwegian Wood*, and what makes melancholia more likely to happen. The research objectives aim to investigate the following points:

1. How the success and failure of the mourning process affect the behavior of the characters.
2. What impact the existence of melancholia and the lack of melancholia exert on the characters.
3. The influence of environmental support or the lack of it on their mourning process.

Methodology

This paper uses qualitative research methods with Sigmund Freud's and Judith Butler's theory of Mourning and Melancholia. Judith Butler discusses Freud's theory of mourning in the chapter "Violence, Mourning, Politics" of the book *Precarious Life: The Power of Mourning*. Butler explains that in a successful mourning process, the person agrees to go through a transformation, and accepts the loss. The paper will try to reflect on how the characters of *Norwegian Wood* ultimately succumb to melancholia not being able to overcome grief, while the characters of *Never Let Me Go* can successfully protect themselves from melancholia by the already completed mourning process. Other than mourning and melancholia, theory from Freud's 1919 essay "The Uncanny" and Freud's analysis of hysteria from "The Aetiology of Hysteria" have also been used briefly to support the study. Jacques Lacan's explanation of trauma has also helped in this study. The paper also lends related ideas from 8 peer-reviewed articles as secondary sources.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This paper is a psychoanalysis of the novels *Norwegian Wood* and *Never Let Me Go* mainly using the theories of Sigmund Freud, along with Judith Butler. This literature review consists of 10 articles containing studies conducted on the particular novels as well as on psychoanalysis.

The most significant sources of theories for this research have been Sigmund Freud's 1914 essay "Mourning and Melancholia", and the chapter "Violence, Mourning, Politics" of the book *Precarious Life: The Power of Mourning* by Judith Butler. Freud's 1919 essay "The Uncanny" and Freud's analysis of hysteria from "The Aetiology of Hysteria" have also been used briefly to support the study.

"Trauma and the Material Signifier" is a paper by Linda Belau that discussed the psychoanalytic explanation of trauma. Belau's study has supported this research with Jacques Lacan's understanding of trauma.

"The Game of the Unconscious in Haruki Murakami's *Norwegian Wood*" by Supromit Maiti discussed the effects of the unconscious in the actions of the characters of *Norwegian Woods*, especially Naoko's suicide. This paper used the theories of multiple theorists like Freud and Lacan. This paper noticed that Kizuki's memories and the trauma of his death were repressed in Naoko's unconscious mind, which was troubling her in her conscious state, and the unconscious trauma pushed her conscious mind towards suicide.

"Tales from the Hard Side": A French existentialist perspective on Haruki Murakami's "Norwegian Wood" by authors Kieran James, Laurie James, Eunice M. James and Susan P. Briggs has taken an existential view of *Norwegian Wood*. The philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche and Jean Paul Sartre has been applied in this paper. Nietzsche's theory of the strong and the weak never

changing their condition has been used to compare the conditions of the characters of *Norwegian Wood* considering which character could improve their condition and which character succumbed to their misery. Jean Paul Sartre's theory of bad faith or exaggerated devotion has been mentioned to describe Naoko's state of melancholy for not being able to overcome the trauma of Kizuki's death.

"Testimony and the Affirmation of Memory in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*" by Yugin Teo dives into the significance of memory in the novel. The clones were created in the world to die helping the humans. The world did not want to remember their existence after their purpose was fulfilled. However, this paper showed that the clones' shared memory of growing up in their institution was the affirmation and testimony of their valid existence and collective identity.

"Memories in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go: A Clone's Humanity*" by Francesca Boschetti also discussed memory in *Never Let Me Go*. This paper claimed that the humanity of the clones was proved by the power of their memory, especially Kathy's narration through her recollection of her life as a clone. The clones in Hailsham were raised as an experiment to check the possibility of humane qualities in them. The place Hailsham was equivalent to a home for the clones helping them to form their identity. Through her narration, just before giving herself up for donation, Kathy assembled her own identity as a significant human and a clone at the same time. Her storytelling was viewed as a confession of her humane quality in this particular paper.

Authors Sarah Mahinthan, Isolde Nicolaysen, Alice Rita Olsen and Inga Dóra Thórarinsdóttir discussed the existential questions in *Never Let Me Go* in their paper. They have acknowledged the absurdity of the circumstances of the characters, and the characters' acceptance of their tragic destiny with Albert Camus' theory of "philosophical suicide". The characters

stopped finding the meaning of their life, they stopped insisting to get deferral from the donation. And they stopped resisting the absurdity by accepting their fate of death. The characters' acceptance has been viewed through Camus' philosophy in this paper.

“Mortality and Memory in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*” by Virginia Yeung explores the condition of humans being in constant awareness of mortality or death, the “being-toward-death”-mode according to Heidegger. This paper acknowledged that the novel has mirrored the reality of humans. While the audience of the story were supposed to be the fellow-clones, even the readers of the novel, the humans, could relate their comprehension of death to the clones' experience of their realization of mortality.

Martin Šemelák discussed the suffering of the realization of death and existence *Never Let Me Go*. The paper viewed the novel as Viktor Shklovsky's technique of defamiliarization, and the world created in the novel as symbolic of human life. The donation of the clones is the finitude of life, and the clones' constant awareness of it is equivalent to humans' awareness of death, and the fear that comes along.

“Psychological theories of posttraumatic stress disorder” is a summarization of recent research on psychological processes to overcome PTSD aiming to evaluate the theoretical model of this disorder.

Among the reviewed articles, the papers exploring the existential questions, and also the papers containing Freudian psychoanalysis are the most similar to the topic of this particular research. However, this paper will take necessary inspiration from all the reviewed articles.

Chapter 3

Mourning and Melancholia on *Norwegian Wood*

Haruki Murakami's *Norwegian Wood* begins with Toru Watanabe suddenly remembering about Naoko, whose memories have been hurting him, and he has not been able to escape the pain. The narration flashes back to the past where the trauma began that turned the memories painful. It started from Kizuki's death, Naoko's love and Toru's best friend, continuing to the time of Naoko and Toru's conflicted love, followed by Naoko's breakdown and road to recovery and eventual suicide due to not coping with intense and complicated grief, leading to Toru's never-ending melancholia till the present. This part of the paper will discuss the characters' different stages and experiences of mourning and vulnerability towards melancholia. The end result eventually identifies how the pain of trauma that pushes an individual towards melancholia can be triggered by memories of the traumatic event; the effects of the trauma can take various forms contaminating other people or freeing an individual from the suffering. The environment and surroundings of the individual significantly play into the individual's capacity and tolerance. This chapter aims to discuss the mentioned aspects to understand the major characters' mourning and melancholia.

Chapter 3.1: Memories Triggering Trauma

Toru's Inability to Forget

In the beginning of the narration, which is the present time of the story, Toru Watanabe gets transported into the past as soon as the memories appear to him through a song. The memories of the past are not attacking him with trauma anymore, because a long time has passed. But they are still hurting him, he hasn't stopped suffering underneath his poised demeanor with which he has been continuing his life despite being in a melancholic state and finding no comfort in living. The melody of the song brings back the experiences and feelings he had to go through during his time

with Naoko and her death. His memories of Naoko are neither forgotten nor vivid, which left him conflicted and perpetually hurt.

From the lens of Freud's theory of melancholia, it can be stated here, "The ego wants to incorporate this object into itself" (Freud 249), drawing parallels between narcissism and melancholia. In Freud's concept, the melancholic ego of the mourner gets absorbed by the idea of the lost person; the same phenomenon can be applied here to understand Toru's situation, who is absorbed by his promise to remember Naoko. The promise itself makes him uncomfortable to forget her memories. He remembers that Naoko requested him to keep her memories alive forever, an indication of her not wanting to exist anymore and only finding peace by existing in the memories of someone she loved. His promise to remember her is also a reason for him to be disappointed at himself when he starts forgetting the details about Naoko's memories. He clings to her memories because of the promise of always remembering her, unable to let go even if they fade. Not the memories themselves, but the promise made to Naoko is not setting him free.

Naoko and Toru's Fixation with Kizuki

The center of both Toru and Naoko's trauma is Kizuki's death, both going through a painful process of mourning. Through Toru's flashback narrations and stream of thoughts, we can see that Toru has been better than Naoko in accepting frustrating situations, with the line "What had happened had happened, and there was nothing I could do about it" (Murakami 29). Judith Butler explained a similar kind of mourning process by emphasizing on acceptance, "Perhaps mourning has to do with agreeing to undergo a transformation, the full result of which one cannot know in advance" (Butler 21). Though Toru had grief, he did not let himself be consumed by it, simultaneously accepting the distress, and not denying the tiresome transformation. Yet "a knot of air" (Murakami 31) was stuck inside him, not letting him get rid of the impact of Kizuki's death.

“17-year-old Kizuki took me with him” (Murakami 31), this confession indicates how he was shadowed by Kizuki, as Kizuki’s death introduced him to the closeness of death and changed him forever.

Kizuki’s memories were an omnipresent entity between Toru and Naoko when they were together. Toru was aware and cautious about Naoko’s discomfort, and that she wanted Kizuki to be there instead of himself. “I felt almost guilty being me” (Murakami 35). As Freud said, “When mourning is completed, the ego becomes free again” (Freud 245), Toru and Naoko’s egos had not been free from Kizuki, hence, the mourning was not complete.

It was strange for Naoko and Toru to turn 20, they wished to remain 17 forever which was impossible. “Only the dead could remain 17 forever” (Murakami 45), referring to Kizuki. They were in the strange position of having to let go of their attachment to Kizuki while not wanting to get out of the period of teenage that made them feel closer to Kizuki. Having to inevitably leave her teenage years that connected her to Kizuki’s memory, Naoko suffered from an intense meltdown on her birthday, when she gave herself in and slept with Toru to fulfill her desperate need to be held and comforted by someone. She wished it was Kizuki, but it wasn’t. That’s why when Toru asked her why Kizuki and she did not consummate their relationship, the trauma of separation surged back. This became a breaking point for Naoko’s fragile mental health, which is indicative of PTSD, that is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, a condition where the aftereffects of traumatic past recur to hamper the individual’s normal present: “There tends to be a bias toward enhanced recall of trauma-related material and difficulties in retrieving autobiographical memories of specific incidents” (Buckley & Blanchard as quoted in Brewin & Holmes, 2003). The specific memory of regret of not being able to physically be with Kizuki provoked her to collapse, capturing a process of unsuccessful and incomplete mourning.

Midori's Acceptance of Trauma

Midori was a breath of fresh air in Toru's life. As Butler mentioned about the uncertainty of the transformation of loss and mourning, "There is mourning, but there is also the transformative effect of loss that can't be planned or charted" (Butler 21). Midori evidently chose the positive path after her transformation of mourning. Her process of dealing with trauma saved her from falling into melancholia. She remembered the experience of having to deliberately let her mother die to end her suffering. The memory of this experience appeared not with bitterness, but with acceptance that it had to be done. She expressed her disappointment at her father for being too engulfed by grief and abandoning her after her mother had died. But she also understood that her father had been devastated because of the loss of someone he loved. She also appreciated how her father had loved her mother so much that he had forgotten about reality. She reminisced about all these memories with Toru. These memories were of traumatic times, but they did not revoke her pain. She brought them back as some incidents that had already happened and she had dealt with them, and now she did not have to worry about them.

Midori also opened up about her idea of death. When Toru insisted to leave the house when there was a fire near the area, she insisted to stay and wondered if she would faint in the smoke and die peacefully unlike her previous family members who had suffered in death. She was not imagining death with an obsession of ending her life as a result of melancholia. It was rather a confrontation of her wish for a peaceful and inevitable death. According to Butler's explanation of post-mourning positive transformation, that is the acceptance of the loss (Butler 21), and Freud's understanding of ideal mourning, that is the ego's freedom from the grief of loss (Freud 245), Midori's mourning is complete.

People from the Past Calling Naoko

Melancholia had been attached to Naoko even before Kizuki's death. Naoko's sister had committed suicide, and nobody had ever noticed any symptom of distress in her just like Kizuki never showed any symptom. Naoko vividly remembered the details of her sister's death and how traumatic it was for her. While this trauma had been suppressed, the trauma of Kizuki's death got added into it, further complicating her issues. "I'm a far more flawed human being than you realize. My sickness is a lot worse than you think" (Murakami 176), losing Kizuki was not the only problem, she had unresolved attachment to another dead loved one, her sister, and this issue only swelled after Kizuki's death. Naoko's deteriorating condition can be observed in the light of Freud's understanding of pathological hysteria, where he claims that, "hysterical state is a long-persisting aftereffect of an emotion experienced in the past" (Freud 191). In Naoko's case, her hallucinations were also the aftereffects of her experience of her sister's death that got fueled even more by the grief of Kizuki's death. Her traumatic memories were so vivid that they created illusions for her as if calling her to the realm of death, making her deviate from life and reality. Though Ami Hostel helped her get better, she still had nightmares of people from death calling her and luring her to death. Naoko's ego's obsession (Freud 249) with the lost ones made her mind feel that she belonged to be where the lost loved ones have gone.

Chapter 3.2: Toru Juxtaposed in Mourning and Melancholia

While melancholia is the condition of the mourner suffering not knowing the cause of the suffering, Toru still suffered from melancholia after Kizuki's death while he knew what caused the suffering. Toru's encounter with the idea of death happened through Kizuki, which turned him somewhat apathetic and disinterested towards his surroundings, and he knew why he felt that way towards the world. The realization of the fragility of life disillusioned him. However, Naoko's loss put him into an unexpected turmoil of grief, denial, and helpless acceptance.

Toru was hopeful for a life with Naoko. He insisted that Naoko recovered, and hoped and assured her and himself that he would be with her. Toru also had expectations, he expected to comfort Naoko embracing her with the issues. Making her feel better in her periods of nightmare was something that Toru was looking forward to. Naoko's death snatched his hopes away from him. Guilt was also added to his situation. Reiko's latest letter about Naoko's deteriorating condition made Toru feel guilty; the symptoms and warnings of Naoko's vulnerability from Naoko herself were there when he met her during such conditions, yet he believed that she would get better, the opposite of which was happening. Despite the guilt, Toru was trying to look forward and hope for the best somehow, amidst the disappointments. This is where he claimed how he was different from Kizuki, who hadn't chosen to live with problems but Toru himself was living, not giving up.". Toru had the tendency of comparing himself with Kizuki when it came to his capacity of survival or Naoko "Hey, there, Kizuki, I thought. Unlike you, I've chosen to live" (Murakami 297).

As Freud explained, "The distinguishable mental features of melancholia are profoundly painful dejection....a delusional expectation of punishment" (Freud 244). Freud also emphasized on how closely similar both mourning and melancholia are, still being different,

Profound mourning, the reaction of the loss of someone who is lived, contains the same painful frame of mind, the same loss of interest from the outside world, in so far that it does not recall him, the same loss of capacity to adopt any new object of love (which would mean replacing the loved one), and the same turning away from activity that is not connected with thoughts of the loved one. (Freud 244)

Melancholia is different from mourning for causing intense and unconscious self-reproach. Following the same Freudian fashion, Toru went through such stages both for the loss of Kizuki

and then Naoko, however, he consciously felt the experiences, acknowledging that he was not giving up despite wanting to give up.

Eventually, the news of Naoko's death left him in a state that was a mixture of pain and denial and the acceptance of both the pain and the denial. "Naoko no longer existed in this world; she had become a handful of ashes." (Murakami 324)- A heartbreaking realization, but at least he accepted it, not denying it, acknowledging that there was nothing to do about it. Toru's vagabond-state of grief right after Naoko's death indicated that Naoko's loss and her memories were engulfing Toru. This was the initial level of mourning after a fresh loss where his ego could not withdraw the attachment from the lost loved one (Freud 244). He was still at the stage of not being able to accept the loss, and her vivid memories were making it harder to digest. Toru started approaching melancholia, feeling like belonging to the lost loved one instead of overcoming the loss. He started contemplating if death, where one could be with the people they craved for, was better than living life. He started feeling a sense of comfort in his imaginations of death where he could reunite with Naoko and Kizuki and undo the pain built-up through such a long time. He got back to his distress when he was out of the fantasy of death; death being more comforting and familiar than reality or life, showing clear symptoms of melancholia (Freud 244).

Toru's self-awareness made him realize that he had always been in a constant state of melancholia since Kizuki's death, a solemn state of loneliness filled with contemplation of death. He had been very close to melancholia's paralytic grip, but distant enough to continue his life and not be absolutely absorbed by it. He admitted that if Kizuki's death taught him about the proximity of death which he had to accept and move on with, Naoko's death revealed that no matter how unavoidable death was, the pain of losing someone he loved was always excruciating. His sufferings were not repressed and unknown, but acknowledged by him. Toru's middle ground was,

accepting the inevitability of loss and death, along with acknowledging the paralyzing pain and suffering coming from loss and death, both of which aspects he could not control, so he was accepting it all, still being in immense pain and wanting to get rid of the pain by hoping to embrace his loved ones in death, still trying his best not to succumb. A strange place in between successful mourning and the trap of melancholia. “Again and again, I called out for Midori from the dead center of this place that was no place” (Murakami 350). Even when he decided to move on, he was still trapped in the death-like empty blurry place, living like this to the present time of the novel. Butler’s idea of melancholia, “One finds himself fallen and exhausted, does not know why, something is larger than one’s own deliberate plan, knowing and choosing” (Butler 21) is fitting for Toru’s situation. He understood that he had nothing else to do other than dreading himself in the uncontrollable state.

Chapter 3.3: Stagnation and Confrontation of Trauma

Naoko’s Unresolved Trauma Turning into Melancholia

Naoko’s succumbing to the weight of her suffering is evident through Toru’s reminiscing about the time when she was talking about the well on the field. She was talking about the process of dying if anyone fell into the well so seamlessly and casually, as if she was habitually wondering how ideal it would be if she could choose that option of death. The lack of interest in continuing to live, and anticipating her own end, show the clear signs of melancholia (Freud 244).

Naoko shared her melancholic point of view on life which indicated how she had been expecting disappointment and punishment.

“Unhappy? Why's that?”

With her fingers, Naoko combed her hair back several times. She had taken her hair slide off, which made the hair fall over her face when she dropped her head forward.

"Because we would have had to pay the world back what we owed it," she said, raising her eyes to mine. "The pain of growing up. We didn't pay when we should have, so now the bills are due. Which is why

Kizuki did what he did, and why I'm here. (Murakami 155)

The loss of Kizuki made her expect punishment from life, further making her believe that she would still be punished even if Kizuki had not died, because disappointment was all she could look forward to from life. That's why Naoko seemed happy and emotional reminiscing all the memories before committing suicide, she was releasing all the pain that could not be resolved and was preparing herself for the end.

She also insisted that Toru remembered her no matter what. She did not want to fight her insecurities and overcome them to live, she was too tired for that. The thought of being remembered by someone she loved was her only solace. Naoko had gone through an exhausting transformation, but, as Butler mentioned the fragility of the mourner's state after going through the transformation of grief (Butler 21), she chose not to keep fighting, picking the negative path after the transformation.

Naoko's vulnerability was feeding into her insecurities and growing conflicts of decisions and desires. She admitted that she felt safe with Toru, but she was also worried that he would not be happy with her because of her feebleness. Her fluctuating conception regarding the things

around her eventually gets linked to Kizuki. When she remembered about the night she spent with Toru, despite having admitted that she enjoyed it, she got agitated that Toru did not leave her alone. She wanted to be held close by someone to trust and love, especially Kizuki. But he wasn't there. So, she leaned on Toru, while she still always craved to get back to Kizuki, who had been gone. The trauma of separation has been spreading back and forth from past to present multiple times, presenting Naoko's inescapable "narcissistic obsession" (Freud 249) to Kizuki's memory

Confrontation and Sharing

The story briefly suggested a cure for trauma that provided momentary peace for the characters despite not permanently solving the issues. Naoko ended up in an unavoidable need to seek help for her symptoms of hysterical distress. For helping people with hysterical symptoms, Freud commented, "Hysterical symptoms can be resolved, if starting from them, we are able to find the path back to the memory of the traumatic event" (Freud 195). Confronting the trauma, and acknowledging the root of the trauma can be the main key for a cure. Ami Hostel, a recovery institute where Naoko was admitted for treatment, used confrontation of trauma and openly talking about trauma in a safe space as the major tools to cure patients and help them go through the mourning process. Naoko showed signs of improvements as a result of learning to actively discuss her suffering that led her to empathize with the sufferings of Toru whose pain was also connected to her. When Toru came to visit Naoko, they both shared their memories regarding Kizuki, which helped both of them understand each other's situations better. Naoko revealed to Toru that she and Kizuki did not consummate their relationship because she was not physically ready. Her physically opening herself up to Toru on the night of her birthday made her feel guilty that she could not do the same with Kizuki when he was alive. She also explained the depth of her connection with Kizuki and their exceptional physical and emotional intimacy to the point that they were two

people sharing the same entity. Naoko's own understanding of the great impact that Kizuki's death had on her, and her sharing this realization with Toru, were important for both of them to confront the root of their sufferings. It was also significant for Toru to know why Naoko could not love him the way she loved Kizuki, to stop suffering from inferiority. "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" (Murakami 135). The memories of trauma needed to be shared to be lessened.

Chapter 4

Mourning and Melancholia in *Never Let Me Go*

Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* is narrated through Kathy's perspective who shares the memories and experiences of hers and her friends as clone-humans who donate organs for ordinary humans. The novel gradually reveals the system where the clones have grown up, simultaneously keeping it vague. Among the clones, there are donors, and "carers" who take care of the donors until their time for donation comes. The institute called Hailsham, where Kathy, Ruth and Tommy have grown up, plays a significant role in representing the system. Hailsham claimed to provide a privileged upbringing to the clone-children, at the same time deliberately hiding their truth from them. However, the students themselves already knew their fate before anyone revealed it to them. And they never retaliated against this fight, despite wishing that they could live like normal people. Ultimately, they all accepted their fate and performed what they were assigned to perform without complaining. This chapter will reflect on the clones' process of adjustment of their loss of an ideal life and their journey to peaceful acceptance. The chapter will also discuss the institute's position in the life of the clone-children.

Chapter 4.1: Loss that Has Already Been Mourned

Kathy, Ruth, Tommy, and all other clone humans of the institute Hailsham or outside the institute, have suffered the loss of an ideal life. They have to live with the knowledge that their purpose is to go through a series of donations for ordinary humans, till they die. They still have their life. But, where an ordinary human's primary purpose is to survive, the clones' only fate is to be prepared to die when the time comes, without having to look forward to surviving, because they are not allowed to live further from the donations. This great loss of the right to live life is bleak and

demoralizing enough for them to be absorbed by the grief and slip into melancholia. According to Freud, the mourner starts suffering from melancholia when the individual's ego gets absorbed in the loss, and the sufferer's consciousness is unable to shift its attachment from the loss to something else (Freud 249). Melancholia is more plausible in this situation, because the loss itself leaves no other option than waiting for death even after the possibility of a successful mourning. The sufferer's consciousness does not have an alternative option to choose after mourning for the previous loss. However, *Never Let Me Go* makes the concept of survival and death more complex, simultaneously making it simpler by drawing parallels between the clones' fates and mortality in general.

The institute consistently tried to justify their decision of hiding their truth from the clone/students by claiming to have attempted to protect them from trauma and eventual melancholia. As Miss Emily confesses, "Why should you have done, knowing what lay in store for each of you? You would have told us it was all pointless, and how could we have argued with you?" (Ishiguro 179), she ultimately describes the potential state of melancholia the students could have faced, which is apathy towards life (Freud 244). The education and rich upbringing of the children would have been hampered if they had stopped finding any interest in living. Interestingly, though the students already got to know about their bleak fate even before they were told, they still did not lose their interest in living. Judith Butler commented on such successful mourning by emphasizing on acceptance and consented transformation,

Perhaps, rather one mourns when one accepts that by the loss one undergoes, one will be changed, possibly forever. Perhaps mourning has to do with agreeing to undergo a transformation (perhaps one should say submitting to a transformation)

the full result of which one cannot know in advance. There is losing, but there is also the transformative effect of loss. (Butler 21)

The clones have constantly been aware of their loss, and they are in a continuous process of adjustment and transformation. Instead of completing the transformation and acquiring something new, their circumstances have compelled them to turn their period of adjustment into their life itself. Thus, they have chosen to focus on what they have to keep doing during the loss instead of the loss itself. The clones who have become donors are looking forward to completing donating till they could die in peace. And the carers ensure that the donors are taken care of properly until the carers' turn to donate comes. This circumstance has the most significant symptom of melancholia, that is the deliberate inclination towards death. However, it also indicates a sign of a completed mourning, where the sufferers have accepted their fate and are actively doing what they are assigned to do till they don't have to. Though they are looking forward to death, they have not abandoned their purpose in life. In the beginning of the narration, Kathy claims to take pride in being a good carer for donors, "So I'm not trying to boast. But then I do know for a fact they've been pleased with my work, and by and large, I have too" (Ishiguro 1). This proves that even this deprived state of life has managed to generate a sense of achievement in her.

Chapter 4.2: The Institute's Contradiction

The novel is written from Kathy's perspective, and the readers are also included in the story. Kathy believes her readers to be among the clones, and also directly addresses them. From the perspective of the character Kathy, this book can be considered as the record of all the clones' shared experience. Though the clones' life experiences have been ultimately similar, they still have differences in fairness which Kathy addresses, "I know carers, working now, who are just as good and don't get half the credit. If you're one of them, I can understand how you might get resentful"

(Ishiguro 1). The students or clones from the institute Hailsham have had the privilege of a better life growing up than the clones of other institutes. Kathy admits that she and her friends, including Ruth and Tommy, have been lucky to belong from Hailsham. The special kindness and care provided by the institute make the students privileged. However, in the name of kindness, the institute planned to hide the fact that the students are clones for donating organs until Miss Lucy revealed it to the children out of her guilt. Miss Emily, the head of the institute, later reveals that they did not approve of Miss Lucy's wish to let the students know about their truth, because it could harm them. "Lucy was well-meaning enough. But if she'd had her way, your happiness at Hailsham would have been shattered" (Ishiguro 179).

Hailsham is considered to be a privilege for the students for its special care provided for the children that protected them from the potential trauma of learning their harsh reality. The possibility of the students' exposure to trauma can be viewed through both Freud and Lacan's theories. While discussing psychoanalysis, Jacques Lacan commented on trauma with an example of Oedipus' character from the Greek drama *The Oedipus*. Lacan explained that Oedipus' trauma arises not with the act of him killing his father and marrying his mother, but with him realizing that his actions were heinous. The return of the knowledge, or the repetition of the event through memory triggers Oedipus' trauma that leads him to his extreme reaction and eventual end. "This is precisely why Lacan will say that only repetition can commemorate the trauma, which is, otherwise, unrecognizable in itself" (Lacan as qtd in Belau, 2001).

For the clones of Hailsham, the traumas of organ donation and deprivation of a normal life were supposed to come to surface when Miss Lucy revealed the reality of their fate to them. Before they were made to realize how they had been traumatized, the supposed trauma had been inaccessible to them while they still had known the truth. "Concerning this inaccessibility of

trauma, Lacan says, "only a rite, an endlessly repeated act, can commemorate this not very memorable encounter"" (Lacan as qtd in Belau, 2001).

Lacan's explanation can be compared with Freud's theory of the uncanny, which is contradictory to what actually occurs with the children of Hailsham. Freud explained that the "uncanny" is some resurfaced repressed memory that is now experienced by the individual as something strange or scary. The uncanny has been familiar all along without the individual realizing it. When it is revealed in the consciousness of the person, the same familiar experience becomes unfamiliar (Freud 1919). For the Hailsham students, the truth of their existence has always been familiar, and it remained familiar without generating trauma even after being exposed in their consciousness. "Well so what? We already knew all that" (Ishiguro 58).

The institute has been self-aware in blurring the line between kindness of secrecy and cruelty of treachery. If the authorities had revealed the reality of the students like Miss Lucy wanted, the students could have been traumatized and put into a state of melancholia. On the other hand, if the clones had been forced into their job of donation without any prior knowledge of their state, they could have been more traumatized. Fortunately, the students already realized what their fate was. It was not explained how they knew. "Certainly, it feels like I always knew about donations in some vague way.....nothing came as a complete surprise. It was like we'd heard everything somewhere before" (Ishiguro 58). Nevertheless, the students' self-sufficiency played a bigger role in saving them from the trauma, than the institute's attempted protection.

The institute also fluctuated from empathy to indifference or disgust for the students, claiming to have ensured their wellbeing, simultaneously othering the students for being clones. "You wouldn't be who you are today if we'd not protected you" (Ishiguro 179), said Miss Emily, as a justification of hiding the reality. She also admitted being repulsed by the students for not

being normal humans. “We’re allafrail of you. I myself had to fight back my dread of you all almost every day I was at Hailsham. There were times I’d look down at you all from my study window and I’d feel such revulsion . . .” (Ishiguro 180). The students, despite being brought up with supposed special care, had to prove that they had souls like humans with their artwork, something that they mistook as a chance for deferral. The artwork helped in easing the revulsion for the students, as a consolation that the clones were not strange creatures, rather humans. “We did it to prove you had souls at all” (Ishiguro 174). Miss Emily also felt sympathy for the students. She pitied the students knowing what had been awaiting them. When she saw young Kathy dancing pretending to hold a child, Miss Emily cried for Kathy’s disappointing future. At the same time, she could not do anything to try to change fate, because the clones’ sacrifice was going to help humankind. “When I watched you dancing that day, I saw a new world coming rapidly. More scientific, efficient, yes. More cures for the old sicknesses. But a harsh, cruel world” (Ishiguro 182).

Chapter 4.3: Faint Expectations and Final Acceptance

Despite the students never rebelling against their fate, they still had desires, and they wondered how it would be if they could also live like people outside the institutes. Though they were aware of their own limitations, they kept their broad imaginations taking inspiration from magazines and TV shows. There have been two important expectations of the students, their “possible” and the opportunity of deferral. The “possible” is considered to be the person each clone has originated from. And deferral is the rumor that the artwork collected from the students would determine which two clones can be compatible to be a couple and be granted a deferral. The rumor that Ruth’s “possible” has been spotted makes her excited and hopeful to see what kind of life her alternate version had been living that she is not able to live. When the rumor turns out to be false, her

disappointment forces her to believe that the rumor of deferral is also false. She deliberately hurts Tommy for keeping his hopes for deferral on his animal artworks. Considering her disappointment of the “possible” as a certain loss, her reaction of distress is also a part of her ego’s process of mourning the loss of hope and adjusting to the emptiness of disappointment or the loss (Freud 244).

After Ruth’s death, though Kathy is skeptical, Tommy remains hopeful about the deferral. They manage to talk to Miss Emily, only to learn that the rumor of deferral had never been true and, and the artworks were only to prove that the clones had souls like humans. Each information is hurtful for Kathy and Tommy. “Why did you have to prove a thing like that, Miss Emily? Did someone think we didn’t have souls?” (Ishiguro 174). The hurtful realization can also be considered as the loss of a longtime hope, for which they have to mourn.

Soon after their meeting with Miss Emily, Tommy starts screaming the way he used to scream as a child during his anxiety attacks. Kathy observes that those outbursts as a child could be the effects of his repressed knowledge of their fate. “About back then, at Hailsham, when you used to go bonkers like that....maybe the reason you used to get like that was because at some level you always knew” (Ishiguro 184). Tommy’s condition can also be viewed through Lacan’s understanding of trauma. Tommy’s outbursts were the result of the truth he knew but never acknowledged. Confrontation of that truth “commemorates” (Lacan as qtd in Belau, 2001) the distress, leading him to the outburst of pain and the process of mourning.

The novel ends with the consistent theme of acceptance. Both of them have come in terms with the fact that fate must keep them apart despite them knowing now that they love each other. They do not intend to fight against fate anymore, as the hopes from the rumors are over. They have also accepted the regret of not being together from the start despite always loving each other.

I keep thinking about this river somewhere, with the water moving really fast. And these two people in the water, trying to hold onto each other, holding on as hard as they can, but in the end it's just too much. The current's too strong. They've got to let go, drift apart. That's how I think it is with us. It's a shame, Kath, because we've loved each other all our lives. But in the end, we can't stay together forever. (Ishiguro 189)

As Tommy's final donation is about to happen, Kathy and Tommy calmly say goodbye to each other. Without holding any other desire, Kathy herself becomes a donor to embrace her ultimate purpose. For the last time, she acknowledges that she wished her life was different. But she did not dwell on the fantasy and accepted fate the way it is.

The fantasy never got beyond that—I didn't let it—and though the tears rolled down my face, I wasn't sobbing or out of control. I just waited a bit, then turned back to the car, to drive off to wherever it was I was supposed to be. (Ishiguro 192)

Both Kathy and Tommy have freed themselves from the discomfort of grief and regret, accepting what has happened and what is about to happen without straining. According to Butler's explanation of the transformation of mourning, that is the acceptance of the loss instead of fighting against the inevitable gone (Butler 21), and Freud's understanding of ideal mourning, that is the ego's freedom from the grief of loss (Freud 245), Tommy and Kathy's final journey is equivalent to the completion of mourning.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

There are two different portrayals of mourning and melancholia found in *Norwegian Wood* and *Never Let Me Go*. While in *Norwegian Wood*, the characters' melancholia is so profound that the idea of the end of life gave them relief, in *Never Let Me Go*, the characters' efficiency of adaptability and their successfully completed mourning left no room for melancholia. The clones' of *Never Let Me Go* were looking forward to death because death would ensure that the clones have completed their destined purpose. Their anticipating death was not a withdrawal from life as a result of melancholia, rather it was them continuing with the duty that life assigned to them. On the other hand, Toru and Naoko from *Norwegian Wood* had been exhausted with melancholia due to the failed mourning of the loss of their loved ones. The exhaustion led to Toru's disillusionment with the world and life in general. He was so tired of caring about changing the world that he could easily find the hypocrisy of people trying to change the world. Though Toru was not eager to die, he contemplated if Kizuki was doing better in death than Toru was doing in life. Similarly, melancholia drained Naoko leading her to feel the need of ending her life in order to gain peace. That's why she seemed happy and emotional reminiscing all the memories before committing suicide, she was releasing all the pain that could not be resolved and was preparing herself for the end. Both Freud and Butler emphasized on agreeing to go through the transformation of loss and acknowledging the loss instead of dwelling in grief, as the key to a successful mourning. This success is evident in the clone-humans of *Never Let Me Go*. *Norwegian Wood*'s Toru also acknowledged his extreme distress of Naoko's death. However, he also admitted not being able to overcome the grief despite understanding what he was feeling, being stuck in the middle of mourning and melancholia.

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