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## Negotiating Place: Multiscapes And Negotiation In Haruki Murakami's Norwegian Wood

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NEGOTIATING PLACE: MULTISCAPES AND NEGOTIATION IN HARUKI  
MURAKAMI'S *NORWEGIAN WOOD*

by

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B.A. University of Central Florida, 2002

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## ABSTRACT

In Murakami's *Norwegian Wood*, romance and coming-of-age confront the growing trend of postmodernity 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. The thesis follows the narrator through his navigation of these scapes and seeks to examine the different way that each of these scapes enables him to attempt to negotiate his role in an indifferent and increasingly consumerist society.

The Introduction discusses my overview of the project, gives specifics about Murakami's life and critical reception and outlines my particular methodology. In the overview section, I address the cultural and societal tensions and changes that have occurred since the Second World War. Following this section, I provide a brief critical history of Murakami's texts, displaying not only his popularity, but also the multiple disagreements that arise over the Japanese-ness of his work. In my methodology section, I plot my eco-critical, eco-feminist, eco-psychological and deconstructive procedure for dissecting Murakami's text. The subsequent chapters perform a close reading of Murakami's text, outlining the different scapes and their attempts at establishing identity. Within these chapters, I have utilized subheadings as I felt they were needed to mark a change not on theme, but on character and emphasis. My conclusion reasserts my initial argument and further establishes the multiscapes as crucial negotiations, the price and product of which is self-identity.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### Overview of the Project

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. Donna Storey observes that this book sold more than a million copies in three months, and more than four million copies by 1989 (114). What resonated in the minds and hearts of an audience composed of more than four million Japanese readers? After all, when Mary Elizabeth Williams reviews this novel, she marks it merely as “a tender, straightforward coming of age story” (1). Other critics have noted this text is significant only because it marks a breaking away from his detective-style fiction towards the genre of romance. However, while a casual perusal of this text might suggest such a simple analysis, I contend that the story is more intricate than Williams’s assessment implies. Indeed, the story requires an investigation into why Murakami combines traditional Japanese culture with distinctly Western subject matter.

This apparent paradox is the tool that Murakami uses to encompass the entirety of a Japan whose people and culture are wedged between one extreme of the fading modern era and the other extreme of the growing trend of postmodernism. In other words, Murakami’s text resides on the margin, in a place between boundaries. *Norwegian Wood*’s massive popularity put some more traditional authors and critics ill at ease. These critics were concerned with the fact that *Norwegian Wood* failed to adhere to the traditional boundaries meant for “pure” literature, a topic that I will define and address in more depth later. What I want to point out here is that in *Norwegian Wood*, Murakami depicts that very struggle within the issues of acceptance and place. This issue of boundaries, of pushing beyond them and crossing over them refers us to the idea of place. Murakami refuses to stay within the set, normative confines of Japanese literature, and his

narrator follows suit. In fact, Watanabe, the narrator of *Norwegian Wood*, finds himself stuck between the unstable and unprofessed love of the tragic heroine Naoko, and the volatile, yet confessed love of Midori, the lost but resilient survivor. Watanabe is always caught in the gray zone, between boundaries, trying desperately to find one that is stable or trying to weld the two into a workable unit. William Slocombe writes, “Murakami seems engaged in a postmodern project of merging these two divisions together” (6). Thus, Watanabe becomes Murakami’s image of the stereotypical, post-teen Japanese male standing between the two extremes of past and present, modern and postmodern, trying to negotiate between them or, perhaps, combine them until he fully establishes a sense of place.

What is the purpose of this pull and push against cultural norms? As I have mentioned previously, Murakami exhibits what his critics fear: a Japan that is not the place they want it to be, a Japan that has changed beyond their ability to control it or adapt to it. But Murakami is not purposefully trying to ostracize himself or estrange himself from his fellow authors. Rather, his goal is to help establish Japan’s sense of place within this fairly new globalized economy.

From my reading of *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. Watanabe is in motion throughout the novel, traveling from urban to rural, from bars to theaters, from woman to woman; and Murakami makes a point of including actual place names and locations. At one point, Watanabe even takes a month-long journey across Japan to get over Naoko’s death. For the duration of the novel, he tries to find *a* place. If finding one fails, he tries to create one. He passes back and forth between the boundaries of city and countryside, between being befriended and being alone. Regarding this idea of transience,

Storey makes an interesting point by noting that Watanabe's name, when written in character, has two distinct definitions:

One means "to dissolve" and symbolizes his awareness that the clear-cut boundaries set up between life and death, sanity and madness, do in fact blur into one another. The other means "to pass" through or "to be understood," suggesting that the narrator himself passes back and forth between these permeable boundaries. (128-29)

Clear-cut boundaries do not exist for Watanabe. One set of boundaries lacks the breadth or flexibility to encompass all that Watanabe is and all that he represents. To verify this claim, we have only to examine the multiple crossing of boundaries from Tokyo to the sanatorium and from city to city. One boundary is incapable of holding or representing him. Therefore, the story requires three scapes to accomplish the narrator's goal and establish a sense of place. In the following pages of this chapter, I will outline the three scapes that Watanabe uses to establish place; I will address the major critical reception of Murakami's text; and I will sketch my own methodology for interpreting this text. Following this introductory chapter, I will provide one chapter on each scape and display how these scapes attempt to address the problem of place.

There are three separate and equally important settings, or what I will label "scapes," which persist throughout the textual narrative. But why not use simply one overarching scape? Does the use of more than one scape somehow further his objective? In part because the text is postmodern, and in part because his ideas span a large array of issues and topics, three scapes are necessary to capture and contain his multifaceted project. One scape is insufficient. By themselves, each of the three scapes falls short. Not one is solely suited for the task. Indeed, the entire narrative is a negotiating process within which the narrator tries in multiple ways and in multiple scapes to establish his place within postmodern Japan. I do not pretend that other scapes are not available for consideration. However, the three scapes I have chosen are the

scapes most often employed within the text. These varied scapes function in a larger capacity than mere geographical compasses or trivial backgrounds. The three major scapes I want to examine are landscape, cityscape and psychescape.

Murakami establishes a connection between the narrator's emotions and the landscape, using landscape as a symbol to clue the reader into the emotional state of the narrator. However, the focus of this scape is not simply symbolism, but what that symbolism represents, not the signifier, but the signified. In my assessment of the landscape, I will tie the establishment of place in postmodern society to nostalgia, displaying the way that landscape serves as a host for Watanabe's nostalgia. Following this analysis, I will discuss the idea of landscape as a marginalizing agent, as an entity that marginalizes women in order to reestablish a cultural norm. Essentially, I will explore the employment of landscape as both a means of identification and exploitation. Lastly, I will show how Watanabe constructs the landscape as a cultural ideal, as a form of cultural longing for a forgotten connection to agrarianism. In so doing, I will simultaneously exhibit how Naoko is the embodiment of that ideal. As an ideal, the landscape and Naoko contain the elements of peace, beauty, healing and life, elements absent from his everyday life. Like most ideals, this one eventually fails, but it serves as a temporary means of escape and nostalgia for our displaced narrator.

Opposite the landscape is the cityscape, the urban environment. Like the landscape, the cityscape also has a character epitomizing it. This epitomization is found mainly in the character of Midori, although I will include an examination of Nagasawa as well in order to broaden my argument. Within the cityscape, an ideal is not an option (or at least not a realistic one), as Nagasawa unhesitantly remarks. Contrary to the beauty and life found within the landscape, the cityscape offers little but claustrophobia, death, decay and suffering. Rather than the serenity

offered by the agrarian ideal of the natural world, the cityscape is a wilderness of confining confusion and consumerism. However, the cityscape is the one truly stable scape within the text. It is a textual anchor, if you will, perhaps because it functions as the fulcrum of industrial, postmodern Japan. Unlike the landscape which is slowly diminishing, due in no small way to the growth of the city, the cityscape is the center of capitalist consumerism. What it lacks in healing and peace, it makes up for in large doses of reality. Oftentimes, Watanabe finds himself within the cityscape wistfully longing for the landscape. Thus, the cityscape functions not so much as an escape, but as a realistic environment, one that directly contrasts with the fading landscape, and one within which the characters find themselves trying to negotiate their sense of place.

The last scape I want to address is the psychescape. Accepting and comprehending this scape is necessary for a full understanding of textual negotiation of place, especially considering that the foundation of the narrative resides within the psyche of our narrator. Indeed, the psychescape is the one scape that the reader never leaves. We are in Watanabe's head for the duration of the story. However, the psychescape serves an even greater purpose than hosting our narrative. Its overarching task is to provide a final means of escape and negotiation to the narrator. When the cityscape becomes too much and there is no time or feasible way to escape to the landscape, the psyche becomes the refuge. When defining his identity in terms of place becomes impossible, especially with the vying of the two women from both other scapes, Watanabe turns inward, attempting to work out all of his problems internally. The entire book is a textual projection of his psyche, as he recalls the events of his life from eighteen years in the future. Therefore, the psychescape becomes the final refuge in a desperate attempt to establish his place, and it is, as I hope to show, the link that tries to reconcile the other two otherwise opposed scapes.

I believe that the multiple scapes are necessary in order to provide Watanabe different avenues through which he can express himself and in which he can continue the negotiation process. If Watanabe is Murakami's depiction of the new, postmodern, late twentieth century Japanese male, then Watanabe must confront the equally multifaceted and evolving Japan. The many and various scapes are a backdrop against which we can see the different mannerisms and behaviors of Watanabe, and so that, through Watanabe, we can see the changes occurring in postmodern Japan. All three of these scapes will result in a close reading of specific topics using specific critical methods that I will outline in my Methodology section. Before I venture too far into my critical method or the text's critical reception, however, I think it is important to examine, at least briefly, the life and background of our author Haruki Murakami. Such an investigation will display Murakami's difficulties in creating his own sense of place and, thus, offer further support for my claim that the characters within *Norwegian Wood* are constantly negotiating their sense of place.

#### Background of the Author

Haruki Murakami is to the Japanese what Hollywood stars are to Americans. His literary career began in the late 1970s and earned him popular acclaim that propelled him into the national and international spotlight. He became so popular, in fact, that he fled Japan to live in relative seclusion. For several years, he resided in the United States, guest lecturing at Princeton, as well as residing in Italy and Greece. In these locations, he was less easily recognized or altogether unknown, at least until the translation of his texts into multiple national languages. However, Murakami's life began much differently than it now appears to his readers.

Born to parents who were both Japanese literature professors, Murakami began a life steeped in a Japanese literary tradition, a tradition to which his father strictly adhered. However, Murakami rebelled against the strains of this traditionalism and undertook the task of reading (and later translating) American Modernist literature, including authors such as F. Scott Fitzgerald and Raymond Carver. Jay Rubin writes, “[Murakami] drank deeply at the foreign spring—all the more deeply, perhaps, in rebellion against a rather traditionalist family” (491). Verifying the truth of Rubin’s assessment is not at all difficult. This “foreign spring” appears in the form of various Western (and particularly American) allusions within his texts. From jazz music to pizza, Murakami’s texts incorporate a plethora of subject matter that is not traditionally Japanese. Slocumbe writes, “Even the titles of Murakami’s novels evoke Western popular culture, such as *Norwegian Wood* (a song by The Beatles), *Dance Dance Dance* (a song by The Dells), and *South of the Border, West of the Sun* (based on a song by Nat King Cole)” (5). Murakami even went so far as to use English terminology in his text, another facet of his writing, pulled directly from his exposure to Western literature and his translation work. In one sense, Kenzaburo Ōe and other traditionalist Japanese authors are correct in claiming that Murakami’s writing is not Japanese. For, indeed, Murakami’s work portrays an uncanny stylistic similarity to the works of Western, “hard-boiled” writers. However, I believe that these similarities underscore Murakami’s perception of Japan as an evolving nation, rather than an intentional move away from traditional Japanese literature.

With the end of the Second World War, Japan entered an 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. Rubin writes, “Murakami . . . grew up in a newly affluent Japan that still admired America for its wealth and

the energy of its culture” (491). This search for cultural definition led to an Americanization of Japanese culture and ended with a cultural shift to capitalist consumerism. Aoki Tamotsu writes, “Murakami presents a self-portrait of the Japanese that is both piercing and sophisticated, of a people emerging from the 1970s shaped by rapid growth and development, yet grounded firmly in the 1960s. His is a portrait of a people born from the moderation of contemporary Japanese society” (274). With its wartime success, America was viewed as the bastion of cultural superiority. Indeed the importance of American influence on Japanese culture marked a change in literature as well (Slocombe 4). Matthew C. Strecher says plainly that American popular culture deeply impacted Japan and that this impact “created a cultural ideology which continues to inform the development of Japanese society through the period of ‘rapid growth’ in the 1970s and 1980s” (“Magical” 266).

Although his characters lack some of the more traditional Japanese qualities, morals or behaviors, Murakami’s characters are striving to attain these particular aspects. 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 novels address a Japan that has shifted culturally and literarily away from the Japanese idealism that gripped the country prior to World War II. After their defeat in World War II, however, this idealism faded, and Japan became “consciously obsessed with defining precisely what it meant to be Japanese” (Strecher, “Purely Mass” 373). This need for definition is what controls much of Murakami’s work. Murakami’s portrayal of Western subject matter is not an intentional separation from all of Japanese literature, but an attempt to define a Japanese society in which heterogeneity has largely replaced homogeneity.

Knowing this background information allows us to suggest that many of Murakami’s books, including *Norwegian Wood*, reflect his life. He matured during an era of economic boom

and political unrest as exhibited by Zenkyoto, the popular student uprising, the purpose of which was to provide “a means of self-identification, connection with something positive and dynamic” (Strecher, “Magical” 264-65). Thus, his characters face many of the same challenges and situations he himself saw. Storey affirms this claim when she writes, “The sense of limitless potential for change in society coincided with the beginning of Murakami’s own college career” (123). Murakami’s mention in *Norwegian Wood* of the 1960s attempted student revolution provides us with a specific reference in which to place Murakami.

Essentially, Murakami’s life, like his book, presents us with a complex, paradoxical existence. 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). Part of this shift toward Western culture and ideas has to do with the influx of television and American programming within Japanese society (Strecher, “Purely Mass” 373). The introduction of American television opened Japanese culture to a wealth of new perspectives and cultural thought processes. What Slocombe and Strecher suggest and what I want to reaffirm is that Murakami addresses the issue of Japan’s place within a growing form of capitalism and consumerism and, simultaneously, the West’s place within Japan. I believe the purpose of this exploration is to discern, more than anything else, this sense of place, and of belonging in a world that has shifted so dramatically away from all that was once a definitive part of Japanese culture. In order to create a workable sense of place, his characters must observe, participate within, and test the different scapes available to them. Like Murakami’s life, the lives of his characters reveal a complexity that becomes the impetus for exploring the multi-scapes within this narrative.

### Critical Reception

Before I outline my own critical methodology, I think it is profitable to examine the criticism already available on Murakami and *Norwegian Wood*. I have already touched upon the overall critical assessment of Murakami's texts, but I want to reiterate that much of it has been cruel. Slocombe writes that much of Murakami's work has received only minimal critical attention (1). Echoing this idea, Storey writes that by 1989, "literary critics had commented only upon the novel's amazing popularity without providing any analysis or evaluation of its literary quality" (116). Since 1989, a fair amount of time has elapsed, bringing more worthy and suitable criticism to the literary community's attention. However, not until recently have critics begun to pay his works the attention due to an internationally known author, and still, many of those individuals performing these critiques have found it difficult to say anything kind about his work, especially those critics hailing from his own country.

The major thrust of the more contemporary criticism addresses the Japanese-ness of Murakami's texts. To many traditional writers such as Kenzaburo Ōe, Murakami's texts are too postmodern, shifting away from "pure" Japanese literature because they propose multiple interpretations and display various social problems without suggesting a workable solution, as Ōe's texts do. Strecher writes, "Ōe's view of pure literature as 'sincere' is always complemented by the desire to effect change in the world, or to point the direction that change should go" ("Purely" 367-68). *Norwegian Wood* lacks this directional element; it fails *not* to address the issues, but rather to *solve* the issues. Along these lines, Yoshio Iwamoto writes, "Some Japanese critics have expressed dissatisfaction with Murakami, claiming that his works lack a deep-seated sociopolitico-historical awareness" (298). Murakami's texts further display this failure to articulate traditionally Japanese ideas in their utilization of decidedly English vernacular and

terminology, a fact “mourned by traditionalists as the death of Japanese language” (Slocombe 5). Thus, Ōe and other critics actually accuse Murakami of directly attacking all that is truly Japanese.

In addition to being instrumental in bringing the Japanese language to its end, some critics believe that Murakami dares to undermine history itself. Strecher addresses this issue when he writes, “In fact, Murakami often subverts the typically significant events of history in favor of observations drawn from the history of popular culture, typically American in character” (“Magical” 265). Indeed, Murakami is as likely to refer to a particularly volatile era of political unrest by referring to a musical piece from that time period, as he is to refer to the event itself. Murakami’s refusal to stay within the traditional cultural strictures is a rebellion of sorts, but his purpose is *not* to incite critics against him. Instead, his goal is to address a Japanese culture that no longer follows the same cultural codes it once did.

While the results of this rebellion are textually evident, their cultural ramifications are somewhat problematic, especially for his Japanese audience. The true problem that arises is one of placement, the issue that will control the flow and subject matter of this thesis. In Japan’s literary tradition, there are two distinct categories: *junbungaku* [“pure” literature] and *taishubungaku* [“mass” literature]. Murakami fits into neither category, at least not for the critics who are trying so desperately to categorize him. Storey observes that *Norwegian Wood* “tests the boundaries between pure and popular literature. Like all such in-between entities, Murakami’s work causes some discomfort and confusion in those who feel they must protect those boundaries” (117). Kenzaburo Ōe is one of those people, unable to cope with the prevalence of so much Western material in Murakami’s writing. Slocombe suggests that Ōe’s criticism of Murakami is “rooted deeply in the conflict between *junbungaku* [‘pure’ literature]

and *taishubungaku* [‘mass’ literature]. . . . in the fact that Japanese ‘high culture’ is slowly being eroded by the global market, leaving nothing actually ‘Japanese’ left” (6).

At a glance, Ōe’s claim appears accurate, for Murakami undeniably incorporates a sizeable quantity of Western music (i.e. The Beatles) and literary references (e.g. F. Scott Fitzgerald) into his works. To Ōe and other traditional authors, Murakami’s tendency to include these and other Western allusions and influences in his work is antithetical to “pure” literature. However, while many critics share Ōe’s views, the massive appeal of *Norwegian Wood* is insufficient to label Murakami’s text purely “mass” literature.

Although Murakami admits to including Western material in his texts, he feels that he is no less Japanese than his critics. When interviewed about this issue, Murakami replied, “I certainly think of myself as being a Japanese writer. I write with a different style and maybe with different materials, but I write in Japanese, and I’m writing for Japanese society and Japanese people” (Gregory, et al 114). Despite claims to the contrary, Murakami’s works do not seek to undermine Japanese culture or advocate a deliberate move away from Japanese literature. Conversely, they are a product of Japan—his Japan—a Japan that has changed dramatically since the end of World War II. Murakami’s texts are not antithetical to “pure” literature; they are a redefining of it.

In an article entitled, “Purely Mass or Massively Pure? The Division Between ‘Pure’ and ‘Mass’ Literature,” Strecher investigates this problem and claims that it is one that stems from the fact that “Japanese literary critics have approached their subject under the assumption that not all literature is created equal. . . . only a select few are deemed worthy of the attention of the established critics, while the rest is bequeathed to the ‘masses’” (357). Historically, this distinction is not a new issue. Donald Keene writes that early Japanese literature (before the 17<sup>th</sup>

century) was aristocratic, for and to the courtesans. However, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries brought about the Japanese literary renaissance, the literature of which “described the commoners and the world in which they lived” (Keene 51). Thus, the division between “pure” and “mass” literature is steeped in two centuries of historical tradition. One of the reasons for the critical distaste surrounding Murakami is that his book sold four million copies, mostly to a younger demographic. This mass appeal to a younger audience does little to bolster his reputation with his more traditionally minded peers and critics, who desire literature to be available only to those with enough intellect to understand it. The I-novel, a first person narrative text, is one of the most consistent devices employed by Murakami. This style is considered to be part of the long literary tradition of “pure” literature. Strecher writes that the I-novel “may be seen as an internally directed medium of expression” (“Purely” 367). Thus, it is interesting to discover all of the criticism leveled at Murakami for his lack of Japanese-ness when his foundational structure is one of historically “pure” literature, told from the vantage point of Japanese characters.

While traditional writers lay no claim to Murakami’s texts due to Murakami’s use of Western styles and inferences, they are hard pressed to label his work un-Japanese. Slocombe goes on to write that “Murakami’s literary technique draws from American sources and utilized postmodern devices, but it is still fundamentally concerned with Japan and Japan’s role in the postmodern global society” (6). In other words, Murakami’s work directly addresses issues that are “fundamentally” Japanese. Also taking up Murakami’s defense, Fuminobu Murakami writes that “the serious topics raised by other modern Japanese writers are also dealt with in Murakami’s fiction” (128). As an example, I propose reviewing the scene where Watanabe portrays Naoko as a woodblock print. Keene writes that woodblock prints were generally for

courtesans during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (43). Thus, subtle as it may appear, culturally historical references do appear in this story. Watanabe's knowledge of the woodblock prints is a subtle hint that he (and Murakami) knows and respects traditions more than critics would care to admit.

Murakami's referencing of Western popular songs, subjects and themes does not push the novel away from Japan; rather it underscores the changes that have occurred in Japan, in Japanese society, displaying the influx of other cultures and marking specific references that were culturally present and influential during the 1960s and 1970s. If anything, *Norwegian Wood* is an honest appraisal of culture, rather than a deliberate shift from culture.

### Methodology

From the above discussion, it is apparent that the scholarly work done on Murakami's texts, and specifically *Norwegian Wood*, is limited and slightly one-sided. For the purposes of this thesis, I propose to apply a four-fold critical method to *Norwegian Wood*, using at least one of these critical approaches to inform my reading of each scape. I believe that these four critical approaches will help illuminate certain aspects of the text that have, to this point, been largely overlooked. Specifically, I think that such a reading will illuminate a textual interpretation that situates the novel within the context of particular cultural crises. The four forms of criticism that I have chosen are ecocriticism, ecofeminism, urban ecocriticism and ecopsychology.

First of all, I want to perform an ecocritical and ecofeminist reading of *Norwegian Wood*. As briefly discussed above, the frequency of landscape images and the uses to which they are put should be analyzed in terms of a criticism made especially for dealing with natural landscapes. Until recently, the ecology within texts has been largely ignored, remaining one aspect of

literature that has remained mostly uncriticized until the fairly recent development of eco-critical tools. The ecocritical part of my reading is worthwhile because, as Patrick D. Murphy write, “The term [ecocriticism] has come to summarize the response of literary study and analysis to the ecological consciousness of the last two decades and to the recognition that human culture is inextricably involved with, and ultimately subordinate to, the physical, natural world” (15). Essentially, therefore, the goal of ecocriticism is to establish a relationship predicated on an understanding of one’s place with and within a particular scape, specifically the landscape in this case. This goal is important, especially as I am using these scapes as conduits through which the characters attempt to negotiate their places in a post-war, postmodern society.

Ecocriticism, as seen through critics such as Murphy and Julia Adney Thomas, will afford an interesting perspective on the relationships occurring between Naoko and the land, Watanabe and the land, and Watanabe and Naoko. An ecocritical reading will help enlighten some of the problems with these relationships, and also highlight some of the reasons for certain textual nuances, such as the way in which the landscape functions for part of the story as an ideal, and for the rest of the story as anathema. To what extent, if any, are the experiences and actions of the human characters downplayed in favor of underscoring the importance of the landscape and their relationship(s) to it?

To answer the above question, I want to move on to my intent to use ecofeminism in conjunction with ecocriticism. I want to apply an ecofeminist lens from the perspective of such ecofeminists as Karen J. Warren and Bronwyn Davies. The landscape in this text cannot be adequately analyzed without addressing ecofeminist concerns. My ecofeminist approach will directly examine the relationship between Naoko and the environment and Midori and the environment. In what ways does landscape serve to marginalize? And who becomes the victim

of such marginalization? My exploration of this issue will prove that the landscape is used to establish hierarchical power, rather than fulfilling relationships. While ecofeminism shares similarities with ecocriticism, ecofeminism deals specifically with the relationship between women and nature, a relationship that finds its grounding in images projected from the minds and imaginations of men. Thus, rather than merely examining the effect of landscape with a human inhabitant, ecofeminism seeks to highlight and eradicate the relationship between the oppression of women and the oppression of nature. Karla Armbruster writes that it is “politically essential to explore and emphasize these connections if the dominations of women and nature are to be substantively challenged” (97).

Much of this reading will take place in the sanatorium, for that is where people and nature are in the closest proximity to one another. Here, in this supposed utopia, I hope to display the disparity that exists between men and women, and some ways in which the landscape is utilized to heighten this inconsistency. I will specifically address the language and images used to relegate women to a state of passiveness, using the landscape as a way of naturalizing and, thus, marginalizing them. Performing this reading does not, in any way, detract from the main goal of my thesis. In actuality, this reading heightens it because it gives us a new angle from which to consider the negotiation of place. This new vantage point offers the possibility that marginalization is, in and of itself, a tool to create (or recreate) and maintain an environment that no longer exists, an environment common to pre-war Japan, but foreign to post-war Japan.

For the cityscape, I will use ecopsychology to determine the status of relationships between urbanites and their surrounding environments. Technically, ecopsychology deals with the interaction between the psyche and feelings of an individual and the particular landscape in which that individual finds him/herself. Although ecopsychology was not created specifically to

deal with urban settings, as a tool that deals with the environment directly related to the psyche, I foresee no problems in employing it to ascertain the mindsets of a population that is not only enmeshed in postmodern culture, but is also far removed from natural landscapes. Using ecopsychologists such as Andy Fisher, I am hoping to show the disillusionment and disconnectedness that accompany a culture ruled by a capitalist market. If I can prove this mindset, I will be able to refer back to ecocriticism and ecofeminism by displaying a culturally unmet need for natural landscape. With this wedge, I want to highlight the psychological considerations of the city as a hard and cold place, as a place of death and lack of forgiveness. I am seeking not only to show the disparity between urban and rural but also the differences in the actions and attitudes of urban characters.

In addition to this ecopsychological examination of the city, I will also utilize urban ecocriticism. Michael Bennett and David W. Teague will help define this particular branch of ecocriticism. This line of criticism appears more readily relevant to the topic at hand. Through this means, I will suggest and discuss the idea of cityscape as wilderness, as further removed from the natural due to misconceptions concerning the environment of wilderness. Essentially, this critical tool will aid us by displaying an even larger wedge between the truly natural and the perceived wild.

Not surprisingly, I will also use ecopsychology to critique the psychescape. Although I will use the same critical means, I will do so from a different perspective, one that is perhaps less scientific than the one I am using for the cityscape. To accomplish this goal, I will refer back to Fisher, but also include criticism from Eugene Victor Walter. It is important to employ an appropriate critical method for the psychescape since the narrator's psyche is what connects all the pieces together, no matter how imperfectly or tenuously. Ecopsychology will be useful

because I am treating the psychescape as an actual place. For obvious reasons, I hesitate to call it a *physical* place, but I want to stress the fact that it is a place that is as real and valid and, hopefully for the readers, as accessible as either of the other two scapes. Ecopsychology avails us with an appropriate means by which we can grasp the psychological aspects of this scape, as well as this scape's orientation to the environments connected to it and contained within it.

Establishing the psychescape as a valid place will, I hope, illuminate new aspects of the text. As a *place*, the psychescape is the final ground of combination and negotiation. At times, the psychescape works to weld the other two scapes into one unit, a suitable place that takes what is good from both other scapes and make it into one. At other times, the psychescape seeks to bargain with both scapes and rationally determine one over the other. In yet another way, the psychescape is its own holding tank, hosting memory and providing a final means of escape from the failures of both other scapes. When the natural world withers and dies and the urban wilderness becomes too chaotic and wild, Watanabe can turn inward to a world that he controls absolutely. He can shut everything else out and live within the confines of his own mind.

## CHAPTER TWO: LANDSCAPE AS NOSTALGIC, MARGINAL AND IDEAL

The landscape is Watanabe's first attempt in *Norwegian Wood* at finding an escape through a particular scape, and readers can view the landscape as the narrator's attempt to establish a place for himself. Often, we assign landscape to the category of mere setting, relegating it to the capacity of physical locator. However, such an offhanded dismissal of landscapes is both naïve and critically irresponsible. Indeed, landscape is one of the primary informers in the text. In *In(scribing) Body/Landscape Relations*, Bronwyn Davies writes, "Awareness of being embodied and, in particular, being embodied in relation to landscape, is something we have little practice in observing or articulating" (14). In terms of characterization, landscape deepens our understanding of character mood, emotion and mentality. Regarding portrayals of women, landscape offers a revealing ecofeminist read that exhibits the exploitation of women through naturalization, and the stakes involved in such a pursuit (i.e. cultural normalcy). Neglecting to assess the uses of these landscapes adequately will result only in a partial understanding on the part of the reader. Due to the prominent role that nature and landscape hold in the text, our appreciation of the text is greatly dependent upon our understanding of the landscape. Indeed, landscape in this text serves a larger function than that of literary compass. Natural landscapes can be and are purposeful literary tools that function in multiple roles, in this case, creating a place through nostalgia, marginalization, and idealism.

Using Haruki Murakami's *Norwegian Wood*, I hope to reveal three of the many purposes of natural landscapes in literature. In *Reconfiguring Modernity: Concepts of Nature in Japanese Political Ideology*, Julia Adney Thomas assesses the uses to which the Japanese put landscape when she writes, "As the critical distance between nature and Japanese literature was bridged, so too was the critical distance between nature and Japanese culture in general. 'Landscape' both

actual and metaphoric became the site of national self-discovery” (171). In other words, Japanese literature utilizes natural landscapes to define the “self.” This proposition holds true in our current text. Watanabe’s use of landscape attempts to establish himself within a particular context, one that he hopes will afford him some stability.

In a like manner, Walter writes that “experience is nourished by place, leads us to recognize that we internalize the environment not only materially but also emotionally and symbolically. . . . We absorb what Plato calls the *pathemata*, meaning the qualities and feelings of places” (150). On one hand in *Norwegian Wood*, Watanabe seems always to take on the character of the place he is in. For instance, at the Sanatorium, a place that inspires and requires peace, cooperation and openness, Watanabe is open and honest, even to Reiko, a woman whom he has just met. On the other hand, in the city, he is fairly reticent. He often refuses to answer the class roll call, and when asked why he fails to respond, he says, “I just didn’t feel like it today” (51). He makes this reply to Midori on the first day they meet, and she is intrigued by his short, clipped answers that, to her, are reminiscent of Humphrey Bogart, “Cool. Tough.” (Murakami 51). He replies that he is just like every other guy, but his curt answers and strange manners (e.g. drinking coffee black) suggest otherwise.

In the following part of this chapter, I will demonstrate how Murakami employs landscape as a tool that is neither random nor arbitrary. Rather, Murakami uses landscape to provide a backdrop accenting and hosting Watanabe’s nostalgic feelings, identifying women, especially Naoko, in terms of the natural in such a way as to marginalize them and remove them from any position of power, and creating an ideal of sorts.

## Nostalgia

From the very first page, a natural setting is the controlling factor. Indeed, the narrator (whom we later learn is Toru Watanabe) 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” (Murakami 3). If Watanabe pays so much attention to the landscape, it stands to reason that we should give it ample consideration. Indeed, his observations paint a picture that informs the reader about his emotional state. Although an individual might argue that the narration actually begins on a plane, my reading finds that the narrator’s stresses lie not on the plane, but on the many and varied depictions of the landscape *outside* the plane. Thus, in the beginning of the text, nature serves to illuminate Watanabe’s mood and host his nostalgia.

At first glance, his narration tells us only that he is in Hamburg, Germany. Hence, the landscape seems merely a locating device, a contrivance that marks his physical locale. Although this information gives us a timeframe and place, the physical setting is not the important factor. Rather, the landscape becomes an environment that reveals Watanabe’s frame of mind. Like the “gloomy air of a Flemish landscape,” Watanabe is “kind of blue” (Murakami 3). His thoughts seem as dark as the “dense cloud cover” and as dreary as the “Cold November rain” (Murakami 3). The use and repetition of this symbolism suggests that his detailed depictions are more than simply the interested glances of a tourist, and his observations serve the purpose of portraying his emotional and mental state. A closer examination of the natural setting will illustrate this point more clearly.

His use of “dark cloud” imagery implies a dark mood. Additionally, the clouds’ position over the North Sea signifies a breadth and vastness to Watanabe’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” (Murakami, 3). Without much difficulty, we infer that the sea functions as a well, a metaphorical holding tank for his emotions. If we combine this imagery with the previously mentioned “dark cloud” imagery, we create an impression of melancholy and depression. As further support of this reading, the stewardess sees his expression and asks him two separate times if he is alright. Apparently, another textual character sees the same troubled person as the reader sees. Hence, the attention to this natural detail operates as more than a decorative filler. In his book *Farther Afield in the Study of Nature-Oriented Literature*, Murphy specifically states that the scenes within “Love of Mountains,” a Japanese story by Uno Koji, are often taken over by mountain scenery (129). *Norwegian Wood* also tends towards this overarching landscape as the fundamental backdrop and character piece within certain segments of the story. For example, although Watanabe only spends three total days on his first visit to the sanatorium, this visit takes up seventy-six pages, becoming one of the major settings for the story. Hence, the nostalgia inherent in landscape is a vital part of the narrative.

Following this bleak description of the “Flemish landscape,” Watanabe waxes nostalgic, and, for four sentences, he transports the reader and himself back to 1969:

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, hear the cries of the birds. Autumn 1969, and soon I would be twenty. (Murakami 3)

Similar to his Hamburg description, Watanabe’s reminiscent depiction begins with details about natural landscape, a landscape in which he deliberately 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 Watanabe. 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 Watanabe.

While in the meadow, Watanabe is not alone. Grass, wind, and birdsong accompany him. While the natural setting seems happy and peaceful, the relation of this “natural” environment functions as more than a fanciful memory. In “The Vocabulary of Japanese Aesthetics, I, II, III,” Wm. Theodore De Bary refers to this sense of nostalgia as “*aware*” (44). De Bary writes, “an *aware* emotion was most often evoked in the poets by hearing the melancholy calls of birds and beasts [. . .] Gradually [. . .] *aware* came to be tinged with sadness” (44). Despite the fact that Watanabe is not a poet, we can safely infer that he identifies his nostalgic mood, in some way, with nature, and this nostalgia partially establishes a starting place from which the reader embarks upon the rest of the story

We are in a meadow eighteen years prior to the current time of our narrator’s life, and the season is autumn. If we couple the season of “autumn” with his imminent birthday, we produce a new and informative picture. After all, autumn is a season of change; the leaves change color, and the temperature turns colder, marking the changes in the natural world. The birdsong and the “wind on [his] face” bespeak childhood, innocence, a feeling of youth and vitality. But, he will not be young forever. He is turning twenty, leaving his teenage years behind and coming of age. Thus, autumn symbolizes the move towards maturity, the time when the child must grow up and leave the meadow, must leave the safety and comfort of what is familiar. For nostalgic reasons, however, the narrator is unwilling to do so. Essentially, the natural setting becomes a medium for his nostalgia, a safe place for him to be nostalgic, to reminisce and bemoan lost parts of his life.

Despite the eighteen years that have elapsed between this scene and the one in Hamburg, Watanabe chooses this one natural setting as his focal point. Ignoring the people moving about and preparing to exit the cabin, Watanabe remains riveted to his seat, lost in his nostalgia, in remembrances accented by the natural landscape. Watanabe muses that during the time this scene actually occurs, “Scenery was the last thing on my mind. Now, though, that meadow scene is the first thing that comes back to me [. . .] all I’m left holding is a background, sheer scenery, with no people up front” (4-5). By his admission, the scenery *does* become important. In fact, it becomes “like a symbolic scene in a movie” (5). Storey writes that early on within the narrative, the reader is “cued that this landscape has symbolic value” (122). Thus, the natural setting that he does not, at first, find truly essential develops into the metaphorical crux of the image, the symbolic environment that characterizes his emotional state and his nostalgia.

Shortly after this “meadow” scene, Watanabe 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, Watanabe’s well possesses a “frightening depth. It was deep beyond measuring, and crammed full of darkness, as if all the world’s darknesses 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 Watanabe’s pain. Although this argument has merit, I view it from a different perspective. An incredibly deep, unmarked well out in the middle of a tranquil field seems out of place. However, by juxtaposing these contradictory images, we illuminate the possibility that, in the midst of the meadow’s peace and security, there resides a danger, a vacuum, an unquenchable thirst or craving, the hole that tarnishes and eventually claims the ideal. In the middle of this harmonious setting, a void exists. After further reading, I believe that this well is tied inextricably not to Watanabe, but to Naoko, Watanabe’s love.

Watanabe links the well unquestionably with the natural. When first discussing its existence, Watanabe writes, “the image of a thing [the well] that I had never laid eyes on became inseparably fused to the actual scene of the field that lay before me” (6). For Watanabe, this fusion is absolute. Indeed, his inability to picture the well outside the “scene that lay before” him indicates an undeniable correlation between the well and the natural landscape. Therefore, Watanabe’s joining of the two entities gives us grounds to establish the bond between the well and the landscape. The well functions as a physical representation of Naoko’s suffering, making it even more pronounced. For instance, the well could be seen as Naoko’s unquenchable need, despite the apparent harmony and security afforded by the surroundings. After all, the well resides in a beautiful place, in a place between the meadow and the forest. Such a setting should inspire peace of mind rather than suffering and need. However, 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 with nearly the same language that Watanabe uses to depict the well—in terms of depth and a confusion that links directly to darkness. Thus, a fundamental shift occurs in which nature and nostalgia merge and move the narrative forward in order to represent Naoko in even greater detail than that in which they previously represented the narrator.

Although I am not suggesting that Naoko’s character is motivated by evil intentions, I cannot escape the fact that she embodies danger to herself and to others. After all, she is arguably the cause for Watanabe’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 Watanabe longs to reach but cannot find— that, indeed, no one can find. Like the well, she has no visible

markers to follow, no wall or fence to indicate her whereabouts. In fact, Naoko possesses nothing but “confusion,” pain, suffering, and some sort of fatal attractiveness.

Surprisingly, at one point, Watanabe 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. However, the well, which he has never actually seen, is far clearer than her image, thus the ideal is inseparable from the blight that claims it. With this in mind, we can infer that what Watanabe knew best (although I am not claiming that he understood it) is the void in Naoko, her endless depth of confusion and overbearing need—need that threatens to swallow him—need that eventually destroys her. Sadly, it is a need that Watanabe cannot fill, despite his best efforts. He cannot give stability to the ideal, even though Naoko is depending upon him to do so. 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 like this, I’m not the least bit scared. Nothing dark or evil could ever tempt me” (Murakami 7). But, she cannot stay with him. The ideal is a paradox because it depends on the fulfillment from its subject, but it cannot coexist with the subject because once it does, it would cease to be an ideal. An experienced ideal is a reality. Thus, we see the reasons for Naoko’s statement that “it’s impossible” (Murakami 7), when Watanabe asks her to live with him.

### Marginal

If we accept the well as a part of the natural landscape, we can also accept the fact that Naoko’s self-descriptions in connection to the well serve to naturalize her. I read such naturalizing as more than merely additional insights into character. My supposition is informed by ecofeminist philosopher Warren who writes, “the exploitation of women is justified by

naturalizing them” (12). While naturalizing of Naoko *does* further enlighten our perceptions of Naoko’s character, I believe that the natural landscape performs a separate, but equally important function: that of working to establish Naoko not as a femme fatale (although that is arguable), but as a marginalized woman.

By casting Naoko as a deep, dark, confused individual, Watanabe sets her up as a tragic figure in need of help, hopefully his help. Later in the story, we see her attempting to get help by going to the sanatorium. For now, however, it is enough to consider her, like the well, as something needy—needing to be found, to be recognized, to be marked, to be filled—and dangerous—in terms of a depth that is capable of engulfing herself and others. In reality, this natural depiction of Naoko leaves her with no other option than to *need* someone else. She needs someone to fulfill her wants and to keep her from the danger(s) she poses. Essentially, this natural portrayal of Naoko places her in a position that requires the power of another, rather than allowing her to assert her own autonomy and authority. Despite her best efforts, she cannot help herself out of her predicament. Thus, these naturalized descriptions marginalize her into positions of powerlessness where she waits for someone with power to help her. Understandably, the needy person always resides in a less authoritative sphere than the one needed.

Looking deeper into Murakami’s text, we gain an appreciation for just how often Watanabe uses nature to depict and marginalize women. Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney writes,

The aesthetics of cherry blossoms has been extended to other ‘beautiful’ human beings and things, including women. Like rice, women in agrarian cosmology represent both productive and reproductive power, both of which were seen as beautiful in cosmological terms [. . .] There is no doubt that cherry blossoms in *full bloom* are celebrated and symbolically linked to women. (32, 9)

Although *Norwegian Wood* fails to give attention to rice, it does contain a poignant scene involving cherry blossoms. In this scene, Watanabe watches the blooming of cherry blossoms and bemoans their short-lived glory. While in this mindset, he casts the image of the blossoms on Naoko, likening her frail beauty to that of the blossoms. I think the text supports the idea of defining of women in “natural” terms. From an ecofeminist standpoint, it is necessary to find such depictions and de-feminize them, to show that nature is a “feminine issue” (Warren 4), not a feminine marker.

Although natural scenes grant the reader access to Watanabe’s feelings, Watanabe does not directly compare himself to landscape. Landscape for Watanabe is an informant, not a controlling or “othering” agent. On the one hand, landscape may help to represent him, but it does not ultimately define his identity. On the other hand, however, Watanabe depicts Naoko as part of the natural, and such a representation casts her into an inferior status. When he links Naoko to nature, Watanabe is not stressing a “positive relationship with nature, a kinship involving interdependence and mutual caretaking” (Howell 39). Rather, Watanabe identifies Naoko with nature on the basis that “women and nature are connected by virtue of their inferiority” (Howell 39-40). In other words, women and landscape are frontiers that need to be dominated.

Taking the sanatorium as an example, we see that the patients are surrounded by trees, flowers, wildlife, and mountains—all natural elements creating a virtually perfect natural landscape. In these passages, however, there are virtually no men. At one point, 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 guard or gatekeeper and two of whom are “apparently sanatorium patients” (133). The use of “apparently” implies an

uncertainty. In truth, we never ascertain whether or not they are patients, only that they *look like* patients. Thus, the only tenants of whom the reader is aware are women.

The above observations are more implications than anything else, but they help show a distinction. The man in the coat is a doctor. He is there in a professional capacity, as is the gatekeeper. Conversely, Reiko and Naoko, the two prominent women in the sanatorium, are there as patients, while at least three of the five men we meet are in positions of power. These nameless men are in charge of the natural landscape and the women who reside within it. Hence, the sanatorium illustrates a natural setting that women need, an environment that identifies them, an environment that men control. Ironically, we never learn the names of any of the men. I say ironic because nameless individuals most often characterize a marginalized and underrepresented group. In this case, however, it is noteworthy that these men, even without names, are in positions of authority over the women who possess names.

While visiting Naoko at the sanatorium, Watanabe writes that Naoko looks like “a pale, distant scene [. . .] She looked like one of the beautiful little girls you see in woodblock prints from the middle ages [. . .] [her] barrette was shaped like a butterfly” (Murakami 103). Although these images are not overly specific, they do serve to tie Naoko directly to the natural environment. By comparing her to “a pale, distant scene,” Watanabe depicts Naoko as setting, as background. Perhaps this scene displays the fact that she is the natural setting that Watanabe desires. Even if it does not, however, the words “pale” and “distant” suggest an outdoor setting, if not a natural environment, almost as if Naoko is part of a panoramic photograph. Gretchen T. Legler writes that “ranking [women] ‘closer to nature’ or . . . declaring their practices ‘natural’ or ‘unnatural’” continues to oppress women and reaffirm the masculine hierarchy (228).

When Watanabe compares Naoko to “woodprint blocks from the middle ages” he does not place her on canvas or paper or glass, but on “wood,” a natural element, coming originally from a natural landscape. What is particularly interesting about this passage is the contrast between “little girls” and “middle ages.” Using both sides of this paradigm simultaneously, Watanabe invests Naoko with the two-fold character of nature—old and young. Although nature carries the weight of many millennia, it still appears young because of its ability to renew itself. Thus, we have a depiction of Naoko having the regenerative and reproductive qualities of nature, the natural mothering qualities, in other words. Regarding these qualities, Ohnuki-Tierney equates “women’s reproductive power with the productive power of rice” (32). Although Ohnuki-Tierney concerns herself specifically with rice, I maintain that her comparison implies an overarching ideology that supports the fact that women’s reproductive capabilities are attached to nature. Barbara Sato echoes this concern by acknowledging that, traditionally, Japanese women were “assigned specific gender roles as wives and mothers” (16).

In the last part of the above description, Watanabe associates her barrette with a “butterfly.” Once more, we see the connection between Naoko and the natural. Piecing this picture together, I visualize Naoko standing in the distance of a natural scene with a forest in the background and butterflies around her head. Referring to a dream he had in Naoko’s apartment at the sanatorium, Watanabe states, “I dreamed of a butterfly dancing in the half-light” (Murakami 104). Watanabe talks of falling asleep in her apartment where he is surrounded by her things, thinking of her. In fact, he fixes his concentration on Naoko through her possessions. “In the kitchen were the dishes Naoko ate from, in the bathroom was the toothbrush Naoko used, and in the bedroom was the bed in which Naoko slept” (Murakami 104). There is enough evidence to suggest that this dream “butterfly” references Naoko.

Still further into this scene at the sanatorium, both Reiko and Naoko identify themselves with nature. In talking about music, Reiko says, “It makes me feel like I’m in a big meadow in a soft rain” (Murakami 108). Although my argument does not center on the arousal of feelings through music, 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 natural landscape, in a meadow, and it is “soft” and inviting, much like the ideal woman should be.

Similarly, if somewhat more darkly, Naoko says 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” (Murakami 109). Although Naoko’s description is more threatening than Reiko’s, she still places herself in the context of a natural setting, when she could just as easily have been lost in a city. And, she still needs someone to “save” her. Like the butterfly, she is small and fragile, and she requires help to find her way out. Again, she is powerless to help herself. She needs a guide, a woodsman—someone who can fell “Virgin timber” in the attempt to find her (Warren 12).

Shortly after these initial self-marginalizing portrayals, Watanabe takes a good look at Naoko’s maturing beauty and writes, “Her eyes were the same deep, clear pools they had always been” (Murakami 109). Here, her eyes are “pools,” and I think that we can reasonably infer that Watanabe is not alluding to swimming pools, but rather to lagoon-like pools, clear pools of natural water. Throughout the text, Watanabe makes these seemingly innocent references that tie Naoko (or some part of her) and, to a lesser degree, Reiko to nature.

In another instance, Watanabe awakes to find Naoko at the foot of his couch and compares her posture to that of being “frozen in place, like a small nocturnal animal that had been lured out by the moonlight” (Murakami 130). In this description, Naoko is “small,” fragile,

animal-like. Following that animal-like imagery, Watanabe writes that Naoko “slipped the gown from her shoulders and threw it off completely like an insect shedding its skin” (131). Again, we have another portrayal of Naoko as “other,” as less than human, as an animal, as a piece of the natural in a natural setting. As Naoko leaves his bedside, Watanabe writes, “I could see her pale blue gown flash in the darkness like a fish” (Murakami 163). Like the “butterfly barrette,” her attire is likened to the natural. From her eyes to her hair, and from her body to her outfit, Naoko represents the natural. Although Watanabe also compares Naoko to “newborn flesh” (Murakami 131), the term “flesh” is non-specific, designating neither human nor animal. However, since this depiction follows closely behind the image of the molting insect, it is not unreasonable to make a connection between the “flesh” and the “insect.” Yet, even if this connection is strained, the idea of “*newborn* flesh” reiterates the idea of the woman as a part of the natural process of birth and regeneration. In still another instance, Watanabe receives a letter from Naoko; and when he reads it, he is in his dormitory, surrounded by the “filth . . . the floors . . .littered with *ramen* wrappers and empty beer cans and lids from one thing or another” (Murakami 14). However, all of these images magically disappear when he begins to read Naoko’s letter. At this point, the dormitory is filled with the sound of “the pigeons cooing in a nearby roost” and the breeze stirring the curtains (Murakami 85), rather than by Storm Trooper’s calisthenics or jokes about Storm Trooper’s canal picture. Even for the short while that Watanabe’s narrative includes Naoko within the boundaries of the city, she is always walking, moving away from the city and toward the natural. In addition, Reiko also takes on an animal persona when Watanabe writes that she “sniffed the breeze like a dog” (Murakami 148). Warren writes, “Animalizing or naturalizing women in a (patriarchal) culture where animals are seen as inferior to humans (men) thereby reinforces and authorizes women’s inferior status” (12).

After considering the evidence, there is little room to doubt that the status of women is at stake in this text. By continually naturalizing women (and, subsequently, feminizing landscape), Watanabe creates a dichotomy and perpetuates a duality in which man, the ruler, subjugator, and lord of nature, exploits both women and the natural, setting himself in a superior position. If women are a part of man's natural realm or at least can be described in terms of that natural world, man has no difficulty exerting control and dominance over them. Traditionally, men and women in Japan grow up accepting the "superior status of men, and the inferior status of women" (Iwao 19). And, the natural depictions of women in the text further promote this hierarchical ideology. After all, the natural depictions of Naoko designate her as small, frozen, confused, and animal-like. Through such sexist portrayals, it is not surprising that the natural needs man and that the woman, in her weak, confused, and natural state, needs the helpful dominance of the masculine hand. In fact, nearly every time there is a scene with nature in it, Watanabe's thoughts begin to wander towards Naoko. Likewise, whenever he sees Naoko, images and descriptions of nature abound.

But what is at stake in these marginalizations? Why is marginalization important to an argument that proposes to discuss aspects of place? The marginalization occurs specifically because Reiko and Naoko are threats to an established (or at least desired) normative culture. Although their "insanity" already places them on the margin, I think that Watanabe pushes the issue further. My contention is that their initial, self-marginalization is problematic because of what it entails for these characters. First of all, we must remember that both Naoko and Reiko are at Ami Lodge by choice. Thus, their marginalized position becomes one that can quickly be changed or subverted by the choice to leave. In addition, their choices to marginalize themselves have cut them off from mainstream society, so that they are physically, geographically, and

philosophically removed from cultural critique. Despite the tendency of society to marginalize certain individuals, society wants to keep these individuals on a fringe that society controls, rather than on one that the marginalized individuals have created for themselves. Having someone on the fringe and out of sight is dangerous. Lastly, we must examine the results of their self-imposed marginalization.

Recalling the story that Reiko relates to Watanabe, we see that Reiko was a promising concert pianist. However, a nervous breakdown ruins her prospects, and she resigns herself to teaching piano as an alternative. During her teaching sessions, one of her male students asks her to marry him. After overcoming her initial reservations, she accepts his proposal. However, a few years later, she has a recurring bout with insanity brought on by an unsolicited lesbian experience with a student. This event causes her to lose her grip on reality once again. Despite the assurances of her husband that things would grow steadily better, she fails to find solace or a cure and commits herself to the sanatorium. This background displays what was lost in Reiko's self-marginalization—namely, a family. 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 judging by when this book was copyrighted], 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)

In a later chapter, 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 resigns herself to a life within the sanatorium. Here, she admits that "it's hard to tell anymore whether

I'm patient or staff" (Murakami 95). In this community, she is respected and privileged beyond many of the occupants, but without the pressures that society would place upon her by asking her to perform to and by a certain set of standards. Thus, Reiko is threatening to the system because she is an un-manned woman. She has chosen a life for herself, apart from her husband and family; she has shirked her social obligations and now lives a life of relative peace and stability on her own as an advisor of sorts. Her life is represented as stronger without a man than with one, and that representation is threatening to a patriarchal society.

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 Watanabe was strained at best. And, since then, she has remained aloof and impenetrable, both mentally and sexually. Although she does help Watanabe masturbate on one occasion, she never again allows herself to be penetrated. Like Reiko, she too has chosen her lot with the sanatorium, a place separate from the "global village" (Murphy 13), a place that Watanabe can come to and visit but in which he cannot remain because he is not a part of their culture, a member of the insane. Therefore, access to Naoko is now upon her terms and conditions. Storey 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. (153)

Essentially, the self-guided actions of Reiko and Naoko serve to place them in positions that no longer require the involvement of men. They fit well with Sato's definition of the Japanese "new woman" which is "a woman who transgressed social boundaries and questioned

her dependence on men” (13). Although Sato’s analysis concerns women of the Modern era (e.g. the 1920s), the applicability of her claim is relevant within this postmodern setting as well because both of these women are “guilty” of having crossed an established line and of having forsaken their need for men.

Without men, they achieve at least some of the “unbounded freedom” that they seek. This position places them in a threatening position, one that Watanabe feels that he must address. In terms of scapes, Watanabe is using all of the tools at his disposal to create a world that is comfortably inhabitable. Watanabe’s further marginalization of Reiko and Naoko serves to re-establish the boundaries that they have, with partial success, escaped. In other words, Watanabe is creating his own place, a place removed from the chaotic and shallow world of city life, but one that also, in his mind at least, conforms to some of the standards of which he approves. Keeping them on the margin made of his own terms maintains a dying cultural ideal or status quo. He needs this status quo because Reiko’s and Naoko’s lack of dependence on men poses “a threat to gender relations” (Sato 13). As I touched on previously, Naoko has only one sexual scene with Naoko, and it is not altogether successful. In a way, she is almost too passive, especially when we consider the fact that Watanabe sleeps with her due to his inability to silence her crying in any other way. Carol Bigwood writes, “The female’s supposed passive sexual receiving of the male has been consistently viewed by western culture as inferior to the male’s penetration and seeming overcoming the other” (126). Thus, cultural normatives require that Watanabe truly subdue her, penetrate her in some other way, at some other point in time. With sexual penetration no longer an option, Watanabe attempts to make his penetration cultural, to penetrate the empowered lifestyle that Naoko has acquired. Thus, in marginalizing her,

Watanabe accomplishes the penetration denied to him, reasserts his masculine authority, and reestablishes a semblance of cultural normalcy.

### Ideal

Watanabe's stressing of landscape so early on in the story instantly establishes the landscape as an important place. There is something truly touching and profound, pristine almost to a primordial state, in Watanabe's depiction of the day in the meadow. The language he uses is poetic, much more so than in his descriptions of the other scapes. Although we cannot be certain at this point, these early portrayals lead us to believe that there is something idealistic about the landscape. The ideal quality of the landscape is more firmly established when Watanabe begins telling us of his journey to Ami Lodge. Here, there is a definite emphasis on the sanatorium's "separateness from civilization" (Storey 146). Watanabe stresses the inaccessibility of this Lodge, I believe, specifically to prove its idealistic qualities. After all, an ideal must be inaccessible because an ideal with open access is no longer an ideal, but a reality.

One night at the sanatorium, Naoko appears at his bed, rousing him from sleep. While he had been asleep, he dreamed of birds and willow trees, and after Naoko's presence awakened him, he continued to believe his dream was continuing, thus exhibiting two ideas. One is that Naoko's attachment to the natural is so strong as to elicit nature dreams from Watanabe. The other is that like the ideal, Naoko and the landscape only exist as a dream. At another point, Watanabe writes that "there was something natural and serene about the way she had slimmed down" (Murakami 19). Why "natural" about the way she slimmed down? Why not pleasing, or beautiful, etc.? This section of the passage further indicates the idea of climaxed beauty, the possibility that beauty and the natural or beauty and the landscape are interchangeable.

Watanabe finds something pristine and fulfilling about nature because he is coming from the urban setting of Tokyo with its subways, taxis, diners, bars, coffeehouses and altogether cramped and crowded atmosphere. As a scape, the landscape appears fairly perfect, utopian even. Storey writes that there is a direct juxtaposition between the city and the landscape. In her words, “Ami Lodge and downtown Tokyo coexist but never intersect” (131).

Unquestionably, there is a direct distinction between the landscape and cityscape, one that bears examining. The novel displays a deliberate refusal to acknowledge intersection in order to maintain the idealism of the landscape. In an early scene within the text, Watanabe writes, “We had left the train at Yotsuya and were walking along the embankment by the station. . . . The cherry trees’ brilliant green leaves stirred in the air and splashed sunlight in all directions” (Murakami 18). Watanabe seems to make a point of contrasting the landscape and the urban. They had to leave the city behind in order to reach the landscape, thus further attempting to establish a *true* ideal. By stressing the word *true*, I am suggesting that a true ideal is (far) removed from the real. Normally, an ideal arises out of situation that begs improving, that is far from ideal. But the question still remains: why would Watanabe go out of his way to establish landscape as an ideal?

I believe Murakami uses Watanabe to stress this division. This lack of intersection brings us to a revelation: the landscape and cityscape are separate worlds or scapes if you will. However, it also raises a question: What is the purpose behind this distinction? Why can there be no intersection? I believe that the stressing of this idea serves the purpose of offering the narrator and, consequently, the reader something more, a new scape, a different place to be, to enjoy, to negotiate one’s own sense of place. Most of the time, Watanabe is not so much blind to the lack of nature around him, as much as he simply chooses not to see it. Therefore, what

begins as an apparent inability to intersect actually ends up being the refusal to allow intersection because the two worlds must remain apart. As I mentioned briefly above, the ideal must remain apart from the physical world, or it ceases to be an ideal. The landscape then is the removed ideal, the sequestered paragon whose separateness is necessary for its survival, and for the survival of its inhabitants.

In order for the landscape to assure its own preservation, it must remain in a place that is difficult for urban development to touch. Additionally, the landscape's separateness allows its inhabitants and travelers to reassess themselves and their positions within the other scapes. The landscape functions as a healing agent, a "religious ritual meant to heal our wounded spirits" (Murakami 27). At the same time, "The peaceful, utopian existence makes Naoko wonder if this shouldn't be how things are normally. But she quickly comes to understand that this paradise can only exist in isolation, like the self-enclosed childhood paradise she shared with Kizuki" (Storey 149). This idea of paradise is both a biblical and Buddhist philosophy, as is the connection between paradise and the natural world. Regardless of which interpretation the reader prefers, however, there is sufficient evidence to support the claim that the landscape functions as a place set apart, as an idyllic utopia.

Watanabe's endeavor to construct this scape as utopian is indicative of the change in Japanese culture and society. For instance, he 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 get there, Watanabe 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 Watanabe comments, "[Ami Lodge] turned out to be much farther into the mountains than I had imagined"

(Murakami 90). All of this tells us that Ami Lodge has removed itself from civilization purposefully. In order to effect a true separation, it has gotten as far away as it could. Ami Lodge had to go out of its way to avoid 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 subsequently, rural areas were being depleted and consumed. At Ami Lodge, however, the inhabitants can “live an idyllic life which harkens back to the agrarian roots of Japanese society” (Storey 148). In post-war Japan, Japanese society had come far from these “agrarian roots” and must go even “farther than I imagined” to regain them. Essentially, the rural cannot intersect with the urban. Any intersection must inevitably lead to the consumption of one or the other.

The landscape, however, fails and necessarily so, for it must fail in order to be an ideal at all. I make this claim in regards to the Japanese perception of the ideal and of beauty. Donald Keene refers to this issue as “perishability” and outlines this idea when he discusses how the Japanese expect *and cherish* perishability in regards to beauty. Keene writes that the Japanese believe that “perishability is a necessary element in beauty” (24). He goes on to say that this belief “does not of course mean that they have been insensitive to the poignance of the passage of time. Far from it. Whatever the subject matter of the old poems, the underlying meaning was often an expression of grief over the fragility of beauty and love. Yet the Japanese were keenly aware that without this mortality there could be no beauty” (Keene 24).

Like nature and the rural world succumbing to industrialism and capitalist consumerism, and like the cherry blossom whose beauty is great but short-lived, Naoko is the embodiment of the Japanese landscape, and thus of their version of beauty: perishable. Watanabe’s comparison of her life and death to that of a cherry blossom is especially applicable in regards to Keene’s assessment because Keene continues by writing the following:

Their favorite flower is of course the cherry blossom, precisely because the period of blossoming is so poignantly brief and the danger that the flowers may scatter even before one has properly seen them is so terribly great. . . . The samurai was traditionally compared to the cherry blossoms, and his ideal was to drop dramatically, at the height of his strength and beauty, rather than to become an old soldier gradually fading away. (Keene 24)

I am not suggesting that Naoko is either a man or a samurai; rather, I am proposing that she is an embodiment of the Japanese idealism of beauty. Like the samurai, and like the cherry blossom, her beauty is great but brief, the former intensified by the latter.

Unlike the blossoms, however, a part of Naoko's beauty survives because she asks Watanabe to remember her forever. In such a way, her beauty is preserved, given longevity far surpassing her actual lifespan. With this danger averted, Naoko need no longer concern herself with falling apart "before one has properly seen" her. Although she runs that risk throughout the novel, the novel itself serves as a device to prevent that scattering from occurring before the reader and the narrator can continually reassess and re-appreciate her. Yet, only in this way can beauty be preserved. Beauty and idealism have access to longevity only through the deliberate memory of the viewer. All other beauty must, inevitably, fail.

One point that is poignant and worth mentioning here is the idea of maturation. In order for a blossom to bloom and become beautiful, it must mature. Throughout the novel, Watanabe makes comments concerning the "natural" or beautiful way Naoko's body has matured. In the beginning of the story, we see Watanabe and Naoko celebrating her twentieth birthday, a birthday denoting a major shift between childhood and adulthood. Storey writes:

In Japan, this is an especially significant birthday because it officially marks a young person's entry into adulthood. . . . This birthday celebration draws attention to the fact that Naoko is situated in that transitional period between childhood and adulthood. These changes are not especially welcome to her, however. "It seems so idiotic (*baka*), turning twenty," said Naoko. "I didn't even prepare myself. It makes me feel strange. It's like

someone's pushed me into this from behind.'” (I/69;73) This statement is the first hint of her deep reluctance to embrace the world of adulthood. (144)

This statement also signifies a diminishing of her life expectancy because her person and beauty have matured. Like the cherry blossom, Naoko has reached maturity, at least in terms of cultural perspectives. At this crossroad, she has two options: grow up; or die. Her desire not to progress is impractical.

Keene's comments also offer another vantage point from which the reader may view Watanabe's paradoxical nature. Although Keene's assessment states that the Japanese were sensitive to the sadness of the loss of beauty, Watanabe's emotional reaction goes far beyond mere sensitivity, crossing into the realms of bitterness. In fact, in his comparison of Naoko to the cherry blossom, he is not appreciative or nostalgic, but angry and resentful. Life, not beauty is his primary concern. Landscape has been tainted by death. Its idealism has failed, and now offers no more escape than the city. In fact, at this point, landscape becomes an undesired, intrusive entity. While contemplating the cherry blossoms and cursing nature for its unfair cruelty, Watanabe says, “I went inside and closed my curtains, but even indoors there was no escape from the smell of spring. It filled everything from the ground up. But the only thing the smell brought to mind for me now was that putrefying stench” (Murakami 247). Without the ideal, the scape loses its purpose and shifts from nostalgia to painful remembrances, and even to disdain. Additionally, Naoko's death has inverted the object/subject dynamic. By taking her own life, Naoko used what little power she had. Now, as Watanabe's muse, she has the upper hand because he must keep his promise, despite the fact that he never got what he wanted from her: penetration and domination.

In addition, this loss of ideal is closely related to the story of the well, since the well performs a narrower function than merely characterizing Naoko. Alongside that task, it also functions as the antithesis to the ideal, to Naoko herself. Carrying this reading a bit farther, I contend that the well *is* Naoko and vice versa. First, she describes herself in the same words and ideas with which Watanabe portrays the well. Second, the mysterious aura surrounding Naoko makes her unavailable to the reader and to Watanabe, just as a real picture of the well is never apparent; the well presents a similar mystery because its location is unknown. Watanabe tells us that “no one knows where it is” (Murakami 6). When Watanabe asks if people ever fall in and die, Naoko says, “They do, every once in a while” (Murakami 6). Thus, there is a strong correlation between Naoko and the well. However, even if she is a personification of the well, she is still a pitiable figure, a figure toward whom Watanabe feels strongly and about whom he regrets his mistakes.

Therefore, Watanabe’s questioning of such fragility presents a cultural question, a question testing the confines of traditional Japan and traditionally held ideologies. Storey writes that “the narrator’s view of Naoko is always informed by his sexual attraction to her. The long, narrow space where Naoko had discreetly hidden herself is her constricted, secret world of insanity and her body reflects this influence. However, Toru finds the result beautiful and appealing” (142). Although there are times when Watanabe’s fascination with Naoko leads the reader assume a level of sexual attraction, I believe that sexual attraction is not his primary focus or her primary appeal. Sex with Naoko may be a fantasy, but I doubt that it is powerful enough to comprise an ideal. For example, there is that scene when she comes before Watanabe naked. He is so impressed by her beauty that he feels no sexual desire for her. In the one sexual episode he has with her, Watanabe is detached, almost as if watching it clinically from another place. In

fact, his having intercourse with her seems due, in part, to the fact that he can think of no other way to stop her from crying. Watanabe writes:

Supporting her weight with my left arm, I used my right hand to caress her soft straight hair. And I waited. In that position, I waited for Naoko to stop crying. And I went on waiting. But Naoko's crying never stopped. 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)

He admits that it's "all [he] could do." In addition, he comes very close to blaming the episode on her, claiming that she (in what way we are still unsure) gave him some sort of understood symbol for release, which he interpreted to mean sex. I think that Watanabe's attraction to Naoko is far more than sexual. I think it is a combination of the fact that he views her in such a natural state, along with the fact that in this natural state, she is both his muse and his ideal.

Thus, we see the first failed scape, the natural scape. Coupling this failed scape with Watanabe's questioning bitterness, allows us to see the change in culture, the shift in value. The agrarian roots are gone, replaced by capitalism and consumer fetish. Watanabe's sarcastic questioning represents his desire to hold onto this ideal, to bring back a piece of the past, to escape what Murphy calls the "the daily violence of the contemporary global village" (13). Watanabe's desires are representative of an overall desire of the Japanese people. In an interview, Murakami claims that one of the reasons for the overwhelming popularity of *Norwegian Wood* is that "Japanese readers still yearn for that kind of world where there could be idealism" (Gregory, et al 116). But yearning for and receiving are two different and often incompatible things, as is the case for Watanabe and his failed projection of an ideal onto Naoko and the landscape. In the end, the landscape is incapable of satisfying the ambitious designs of

its narrator, leading him to create yet another scape, another negotiation if you will. This next scape is the cityscape.

### CHAPTER THREE: CITYSCAPE—TALKING ABOUT TAMPONS

The second scape I want to examine is the cityscape. The cityscape is where Watanabe lives, where he resides physically, if not always mentally. Not surprisingly, Murakami parallels his observations of the landscape with the cityscape by embodying this scape in the lives of two people: Midori and Nagasawa. Although Watanabe mentions other people within the cityscape, these are the two characters with whom he most frequently interacts. First, however, I want to establish Murakami's use of the cityscape as critically applicable.

In the Introduction, I mentioned that Murakami draws textual themes from his own experiences. While this is no less true concerning his viewpoints of the postmodern Japanese city, his material for depictions of his cityscape is also a product of the Western literary tradition from which he draws some of his themes, most notably F. Scott Fitzgerald (Miyawaki 275). By linking Murakami's text to Fitzgerald's *Gatsby* which Murakami has translated, we can establish cityscape as a critically noted and critically addressed theme. In an essay comparing Fitzgerald to Murakami, Toshifumi Miyawaki notes that the cityscape is one of the key elements in Murakami's fiction:

What Murakami has been trying to write about is how to live in a thriving, active, capitalist city like Tokyo. . . . Living, surviving and thriving in a big city . . . is also a central concern for contemporary Japanese living in big cities. . . . This theme of young people living in the city in contemporary Japan is clearly seen in Murakami's *Norwegian Wood* (1987). (272)

This quotation sheds light upon my premise, that of surviving, of determining placement within a scape, in this case the cityscape. For the characters in *Norwegian Wood*, finding such placement is difficult for reasons directly connected to the era of growth and change in the Japanese cultural and economic systems. Miyawaki writes, "Despite being deeply lost in the city, Murakami's

protagonist puts up with it and tries to survive, fighting against the oppression of modern civilization” (274-75). Strecher writes that Murakami “continues to point not only to the irony of the isolated individual in a city of over twenty million inhabitants, but also to the powerful and invasive force of the postmodern, late-capitalist consumerist State into the lives of ordinary people” (“Beyond” 362). Thus, the cityscape requires Murakami’s characters to negotiate their lives amidst an “invasive” and oppressive distraction manifested in the form of the State.

I appreciate Strecher’s making note of the paradox that exists between a crowded atmosphere and isolation. Without the existence of such a paradox, the characters’ meandering disillusionment and overwhelming sense of displacement seems trivial at best, and fabricated at worst. However, the existence of this particular duality confirms the possibility of isolation in a scape inhabited by so many others who are possibly experiencing the same feelings of disconnectedness. In fact, this isolation within the masses may be directly related to the size of the population. Within a group of this magnitude, the individual is just another face, lost within a crowd, forced to fend for him/herself. In other words, “Tokyo is presented as a *façade* of sanity, masking the turmoil and despair of the postmodern age that lurk beneath the surface” (Strecher 369). In addition to that part of Strecher’s claim, he also makes a valid point concerning the “invasive force” of consumerism and capitalism. In other words, Strecher provides an effect—the isolation of the individual—and then supplies the causes—“late-capitalist consumerist State.” The above criticisms provide ample proof of the prevalence and importance of the cityscape in *Norwegian Wood*.

As stated previously, the cityscape is in direct opposition or juxtaposition to the landscape. But, this separation is more than geographical. It is also philosophical. Whereas the landscape produces life, healing, food, etc., the cityscape consumes; and it consumes not only

material and land, but spirit as well. The production of the cityscape is only commodity, consumer goods, which is the cause for the displacement of people living in the city, the waning of the spirit of the text's characters. In the scenes where Naoko and Watanabe are walking, they traverse embankments that are surrounded by train stations. Within the urban community, there is little landscape available, and what nature exists resides within close proximity to the synthetic. As the capitalism continues its progressive movement, it swallows up the landscape around it. Murphy 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 because of societal progression 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" (Murakami 172). This passage identifies two cultural ideas. First of all, it shows the lack of landscape within the cityscape, the fact that the city has opted to separate itself from the natural, decorating with only what was aesthetically pleasing, rather than with what was natural to that place. Secondly, the one patch of nature within this cityscape is an "Imperial Garden." This nominalization designates ownership, possession of the natural by the cityscape. Therefore, the cityscape reduces the natural to a commodity that can be opened and closed at the whim of the State.

Unlike the landscape, the cityscape is not an escape. There is little to no nostalgia within the borders of the urban environment. Actually, just the opposite is usually true. Watanabe spends much of his time in the cityscape wishing for and dreaming about the landscape. However, the cityscape is a scape in Murphy's definition meaning "a viewpoint of where the world stands in relation to human beings" (13). In other words, it is relationally dependent. In

order to understand it fully, we must ascertain what relationship exists between the characters in the story and the city itself. Contrary to the peaceful atmosphere of the landscape, the cityscape is a splash of cold water, a harsh and abrupt reality whose pace is set by factors beyond the control of individuals.

One of the key differences is the aspect of food. Between the landscape and cityscape, food is a distinguishing factor. Food plays an important aspect of the cityscape. When Watanabe is in the landscape, he rarely mentions food. On his month-long journey across the Japanese countryside, he claims that he survived on a diet of “whiskey, bread and water” (Murakami 273). In the cityscape, however, he is continually in bars, restaurants and clubs, eating everything from eggs to spaghetti. He and Midori eat 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. Food definitely plays an important role in the development of the cityscape. Midori and Watanabe are always around food and drink. During their first date at her house, Midori cooks a feast in the Kansai style. Even prior to this event, their first formal meeting took place in a small restaurant. The repeated image of Midori and Watanabe’s presence around food in the cityscape represents sustenance, the necessary elements of life. Except for one meal at the sanatorium and the birthday cake during the catastrophic celebration of Naoko’s twentieth birthday, we do not see Naoko and Watanabe eating together. As a couple, they lack the necessary nourishment for survival. Although the landscape provides its own sustenance, food is a concern only in the realistic scape of the city.

Also unlike the landscape which, in its idealism, is almost as fabricated as it is real, the city presents us with a tangible reality, an anchor of sorts in the textual narrative. Celeste Loughman observes that the placenames and locations given by Watanabe are real and

“indisputably Japanese. . . . The environment is stable, fixed. Within that geographic frame, however, is the far less stable world of social interaction in which traditional Japanese culture has all but disappeared and there are no fixed markers anywhere” (88). As Loughman suggests, the city presents us with a paradox of meaning. On one side, the environment is stable. However, the characters within this geographical framework are unstable. Social interactions are no longer what they used to be. In traditional Japanese society, the concept of *uchi/soto* [“inside/outside”] determines the type of behavior people exhibit to one another. Jane M. Bachnik writes that “these distinctions are crucially important: *uchi/soto* is a major organizational focus for Japanese self, social life, and language” (3). Similarly, James Valentine writes that “it is vital in Japanese social interaction to adopt suitable form, to know how to behave appropriately” (38). The knowledge of whether someone is on the “inside” or the “outside” of one’s particular sphere dictates how one deals with that individual. However, in the cityscape of *Norwegian Wood*, the cultural dynamics of *uchi/soto* have become the victims of Strecher’s “late-capitalist consumerist State.” Yet, despite the odds against it, the characters still try to interact with one another and establish relationships. One of these main interactions that never fully succeeds is Watanabe’s relationship with Midori.

Storey makes a valid claim when she writes, “Midori is associated with the ‘real world’ of urban Tokyo as opposed to Naoko’s internal world of the psyche at Ami Lodge . . . [she is] usually situated in opposition to Naoko” (163). Truly, Midori is everything Naoko is not: assertive, lively, active real. In fact, the differences between them are obvious. For one thing, the settings in which we find them are markedly different—Naoko is in the ideal landscape, and Midori is in the reality of the cityscape. For another thing, Watanabe describes Naoko and Midori in completely different terms. The only noticeable similarity between them (other than

the fact that they are both women) is that they both make demands of Watanabe. However, these demands are also vastly different from one another. For Naoko, the demand, as I stated earlier, involves a contract of remembering, of mental memorializing, so that she may achieve an immortality of sorts. On the other hand, Midori demands the attention of the here and now, real, physical attention in a real, physical world. Unlike Naoko, Midori is only concerned with the present life. Her hope is not on a future of immortality that she will be unable to see or control. We see this vividly when Midori says, “But I’m so lonely! I want to *be* with someone! I know I’m doing terrible things to you, making demands and not giving you anything in return, saying whatever pops into my head, dragging you out of your room and forcing you to take me everywhere, but you’re the only one I can *do* stuff like that to!” (Murakami 226-27). Although not explicitly stated, this quotation suggests urgency, a desire to “*be* with someone” *now*. Conversely, Naoko’s only real request is to be remembered. She never wants to *be* with anyone, except perhaps with her dead boyfriend Kizuki. Midori, though, desires a physical presence and attention to her every move.

There are similarities between the depictions of Naoko and Midori as animals. But, while such depictions do occur to both characters, there are noteworthy differences in these portrayals. Although Midori’s sister and Midori herself sometimes label Midori an animal, the language is different from that used to describe Naoko, and Watanabe’s connections of Midori to the natural world are infrequent at best. Indeed, the comparisons made are less indicative of the natural world and more indicative of the wildness or wilderness of the city. For example, when Watanabe tries to talk to an angry Midori, her sister says, “Well, now you’ve got her boiling mad. And once she gets mad, she stays that way. Like an animal” (Murakami 242). There are four specific points about this passage that I want to discuss.

In the first place, Midori's connection to animal life is based upon a conditional state. The linguistic paradigm of "now" and "once" necessitates a *then* and *before*. "*Once* she gets mad" implies that there is a before; there is a prior state, an order of things preceding this "now" state of animal-like behavior. In order for her to be an "animal," she must "get" to that state. In other words, she must change states. The level of anger that is required to put her on "animal" status is fairly large, as the adjective "boiling" suggests. She is not "like an animal" all the time. In essence, Midori, unlike Naoko, is not *naturally* natural. An outside force or catalyst (in this case Watanabe's neglect) must propel her into a more primal/animalistic state.

As further evidence of Midori's unnatural state, we should examine her particular role within the city. Due to her mother's death and her father's hospitalization, Midori has a job tending to the family-owned bookstore. Valentine writes, "Professional women, though classified above as marginal at work, clearly also challenge family and wider sex-role norms, and thus seem to count as marginal at all levels" (51). But Midori's marginality goes far beyond the job place. Indeed, she evidences it in even more obvious ways. According to Midori, her boyfriend is always getting mad at her for saying unladylike things about sex and for making comments not befitting a lady. I will further illuminate this point later on in this chapter, but for now, I merely want to highlight the fact that Midori's nature is anything but natural, at least in the as defined by our society.

Secondly and closely tied to this first point is the nature *of* Midori's naturalness. As I stated above, Midori is not *naturally* natural because an outside force is responsible for her shift into the natural realm. In addition to that factor, however, we must consider the result or consequence of Midori's natural state. Naoko is serene like a "pool." Watanabe writes, "Now I saw that her eyes were so deep and clear they made my heart thump" (Murakami 19). Perhaps

Watanabe meant “deep” to signify the well, or “deep and clear” as in a natural pool or spring. In either case, both images instill this sense of tranquility. He continues in that same section to write, “. . . there was something natural and serene about the way she had slimmed down” (Murakami 19). Again, he leaves us with images of maturation, of natural growth and a sense of peace. Later on, in a similar manner, he writes, “Her eyes were the same deep, clear pools they had always been, and her small lips still trembled shyly, but overall her beauty had begun to change to that of a mature woman” (Murakami 109). Again, on the one hand, he gives the reader the images of natural peace and of matured beauty, an idea that, I have shown in my landscape chapter becomes significant at different points throughout the novel.

On the other hand, Midori’s natural side is wild and untamed. More often than not, Watanabe’s comparison of Naoko to the natural world is connected to flora (i.e. cherry blossoms, meadows, fields, woods, etc.). When he aligns her with the animal world, he does so with animals such as butterflies and fish, animals that are typically calm and promote a sense of peace and tranquility. The one time Watanabe compares Reiko to an animal, he likens her to a dog—symbolically, a loyal companion and true friend. Conversely, his depictions of Midori as an animal give the reader a sense of predatory dangerousness. I believe that such is the case because the city represents an urban wilderness. Unlike the natural landscape in which Naoko resides, the cityscape represents a dangerous and entangled wilderness with animals that are predatory, rather than passive. Within the city, Midori is one of these animals.

In an introduction to a collection of essays entitled *The Nature of Cities*, Bennett and Teague write that little critical attention has been paid to the connection of the urban and the ecological, a connection that they claim is essential for “understanding urban life and culture” (4). In an attempt to understand this connection, Bennett and Teague address the idea of the city

as an “urban wilderness. They write that Andrew Light “maintains that the successful description of the inner city as a kind of wilderness relies on the historical misperception of wild nature as fulfilling the traditional role of classical wilderness—a savage space separate from and inferior to the realm of civilization” (6). Although Bennett and Teague are specifically discussing the urban setting in America, their analysis ties in well with our text. The urban environment in *Norwegian Wood* is a “wilderness” of sorts, diametrically opposed to the pastoral peace and secure serenity of the landscape. In another passage of *Norwegian Wood*, Midori threatens to cry in public if Watanabe 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” (Murakami 223). Again, we have that “once” conditional showing that she is *not* always like that. However, in this scene, she portrays *herself* as a wild, uncontrollable animal, an animal in an urban wilderness.

As a dangerous animal, Midori does not threaten physical health, but rather the bonds of normalcy to which Watanabe so tenuously holds. As a threatening or disrupting agent, she becomes “a sign of social upheaval” (Sato 74). Indeed, her marginality not only places her between categories, but also places her in a threatening position. Valentine writes that “specific types of marginality reveal the mainstream through the threats they pose to cultural categories in between which they fall” (50). As an animal, Midori is a threat to Watanabe’s limited security because Watanabe cannot allow her to act like an “animal” within the city. He cannot allow this “upheaval.” Excluding zoos, which are dominated and controlled, the city is not a place for animals, unless of course we allow ourselves to view the city as an urban wilderness. Watanabe cannot compromise his preferred level of static life by allowing Midori to shift his existence

even further outside the realms of normalcy. With Naoko, such a compromise is never an issue. She is always a passive animal, small and frail, one that Watanabe cannot touch, but one that he can, through systematic marginalization, control.

Only on their first official meeting is Midori's animal state not threatening. Instead, Watanabe writes, "She was like a small animal that has popped into the world with the coming of spring. Her eyes moved like an independent organism with joy, laughter, anger, amazement, and despair. I hadn't seen a face so vivid and expressive in ages, and I enjoyed watching it live and move" (Murakami 51). Echoing this sentiment, Miyawaki calls Midori "young and fresh, full of life" (274). Although, in this image, Midori is non-threatening, it is worth observing the fact that she is truly alive, a true living organism. Not only does this passage refer us to the passage where Midori reminds Watanabe that she is a "real, live girl, with real, live blood" (Murakami 263), but is also further separates Midori's animal type from Naoko's.

If we were to categorize Midori and Naoko as flora or fauna, Midori is unquestionably fauna. She moves and breathes and actively lives. She is, as she says, "real" and "live." She acts upon other items, objects and entities. On the other hand, Naoko is better classified as flora. She is acted upon by numerous outside influences and factors (i.e. death, sickness, Watanabe, Reiko, Kizuki, etc.). Like a plant, she is living, but only in a passive manner, in a way that implies a radiant blossoming and guarantees a rapid withering. Her life is passive until the end when her only deliberate act is to end it. Her few animal traits liken her to passive animals that are, in some way, connected to flora (i.e. butterflies and insects in general). She relinquishes her power to Watanabe when she gives him the power of her immortality. After this act, she bases her entire existence upon the promise mental accuracy of someone else's memory. Thus, an enormous disparity between Naoko and Midori is the aspect of an active versus a passive life.

Third, I want to comment on the phrase “like” an animal. “Like” makes this comparison a simile, rather than a metaphor. Although Watanabe describes Naoko in simile as well, his connection of Naoko to the landscape is far more deeply constructed than his connection of Midori to landscape. For example, when examining the beauty in cherry blossoms that have already bloomed, Watanabe bemoans the fact that blooming leads only to their own demise. He writes, “An old cherry tree stood there, its blossoms nearing the height of their glory” (Murakami 246). However, the “height of their glory” signifies the end of their glory as well. In other words, the inevitable end of something that has reached maturity is decline. There is no point of stasis, no perfect balance where beauty can be flawlessly maintained. With this thought in mind, he says the following:

The garden filled up with the sweet, heavy stench of rotting flesh. And that’s when I thought of Naoko’s flesh. Naoko’s beautiful flesh lay before me in the darkness, countless buds bursting through her skin, green and trembling in an almost imperceptible breeze. Why did such a beautiful body have to be so sick? (Murakami 247)

In this passage, what is truly “imperceptible” is the line between the cherry blossom tree and Naoko’s physical body. In reality, Watanabe transposes the image of the tree onto Naoko’s body until they are inextricably bound. There is no “like” or simile in use here. In fact, Watanabe’s descriptions of Naoko in terms of the natural go beyond the bounds of metaphor and become devices of hyperbolic personifications.

Similarly, this hyperbolic comparison occurs earlier in the story when Watanabe is thinking about Naoko and writes, “In the darkness, I returned to that small world of hers. I smelled the meadow grass, heard the rain at night” (Murakami 166). More than likely, Watanabe identifies Naoko’s “small world” with the natural world. “Meadows” and “rain” occupy a place for Naoko the same way restaurants, subways and pornographic movies do for Midori. The

natural is Naoko's world. She belongs to it and it to her. Much like the transposing of Naoko's body with the cherry tree, Watanabe constructs Naoko, molds her if you will, into a queen of a forgotten paradise. After all, this is "her world," a world in which neither he nor she have to grow up or grow old, a world that has yet to see the rise of the modern city, a natural world full of utopian life and devoid of pain. Midori, on the other hand, does not share this intrinsic connection. Her connection is always in "simile," always "like," rather than "is," unless she describes herself. However, she is much less reserved than our narrator and tends to exaggerate and push her language to the extreme.

Lastly, I want to discuss the frequency of the depictions of Midori's animal-like state(s). Comparisons between Midori and the landscape are infrequent at best. When such instances occur, there is almost always a catalyst. She is rarely independently, and of her own free will, an animal. Also, it is telling that Watanabe compares Midori to an animal only twice. The rest of the comparisons are made by Midori herself and Midori's sister. Thus, the connection of Midori to the animal kingdom is weak and really only further serves to broaden the distinction between Naoko and Midori.

Here, I want to readdress the issue of how Midori embodies the qualities of the city. In the same way that Naoko embodies the landscape, Midori shares a pulse with the city. Despite the correlation between cityscape, sadness, and death, there is also a vibrancy, an undercurrent of life and activity. I make this suggestion based on the stalwart nature exhibited by Midori. Storey writes that Midori "embraces life, and is even able to eat heartily at the cafeteria in the hospital where she nurses her dying father. She is above all a survivor" (163). Against all odds, alone and isolated in a city concerned only with its own continuous economic growth, Midori survives. Like the city itself, she has a pulse, a rhythm that she refuses to sacrifice to any cause.

She also shares its coldness and unfeeling nature. I do not mean to imply that Midori has *no* sensibility, or that she is made of stone and concrete like the city. However, she does exhibit a tendency towards insensitivity, a tendency that is most likely a defense mechanism for survival. For example, in a dialogue following her lunch with Watanabe, Midori remarks that when her mother died, she “didn’t feel the least bit sad” (Murakami 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 Watanabe. Thus, Midori, like the city, has experienced the inconsistency and transience of her/its visitors.

As I discussed earlier, 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 Midori, her boyfriend is always censuring her for talking about sex and masturbation and similar topics in public. At one point, Midori has a discussion with Watanabe about how the smoke they see is from the burning of “sanitary napkins, tampons, stuff like that” (Murakami 59). Rather than merely attempting to be informative, Midori seems to derive some pleasure from the shock value of her statements. In addition, Midori also smokes. Although it is not necessarily marginalizing for a woman to smoke, the way she smokes is apparently masculine. Watanabe calls her a “lumberjack” and tells her that girls do not smoke Marlboros or crush their cigarettes out like that (Murakami 70). Like her boyfriend, Watanabe also tries to correct her actions and speech, but with much less urgency. He also tells her that “most girls wouldn’t talk about how they wore the same bra for three months when they’re eating alone with a man” (Murakami 70). Like the city, however, Midori is brusque and unashamed, unhindered in expressing her/itself. For Watanabe, she is the splash of cold water that the city represents.

The last and, perhaps, the most intriguing way that Midori embodies the city is in its newness. At their first official meeting, Midori tells Watanabe that her name means “green” and then comments about the irony that she looks horrible in green. One can argue that associating Midori with the color green gives her an undeniable connection to the natural world. After all, green is often a sign of growth and new life, and people often assign the color green to grass, trees, leaves, and other naturally occurring images. However, the idea of green as growth and newness can be viewed in another light, one that does not predispose Midori to a natural connection, despite the fact that normal modifiers associated with green (i.e. “color,” “youth,” “vibrancy”) are relevant. Indeed, the same language is helpful to connect her not to nature, but to the city itself, to the distinctiveness of the new capitalist State.

I find an incredible link between the new Japanese city, the new Japanese woman and Midori’s name. Midori is uncomfortable in her surroundings, and she looks bad in green. She is, in many ways, different from her peers. Her mannerisms and topics of speech and the way she dresses are all in opposition to the habits of a traditional Japanese woman. Patricia Morley writes, “A web of entrenched values, attitudes, and customs have bound the majority of Japanese women to home, housework, and caring for the family” (3). Traditionally, Japanese women are homebound, relegated to the tasks of cooking and family care. Although Midori frequently visits her dying father in the hospital, the care she exhibits for her family is minimal. And, although she cooks for Watanabe, it is by choice, and not through force or adherence to a societal code. Interestingly, she invites *him* to eat at her place. Therefore, I suggest that we read “green” as a colloquial label as in “so-and-so is green” or is a “greenhorn.” In such light, “green” means new, unfamiliar, and virginal. During the 1960s and 70s, when the major parts of this story occur, the postmodern, consumerist and capitalist city was a fairly new environment, a rather unfamiliar

place to most traditional Japanese citizens. After WW II, the Japanese city underwent drastic changes—so much so, in fact, that it would have inner conflict and friction due to its unfamiliarity with the older ideals of honor and the bushido code. Midori represents this conflict, this confusion, this status of “greenhorn,” this newbie ideology. Additionally, “green” viewed from this angle, also makes Midori a virginal character, a new woman. She, like the city, cuts across the grain of what is expected and forces people either to adjust to her or to bypass her. Like the city, Midori will not slacken her pace for anyone.

When Watanabe returns from his visit to the sanatorium, Midori is mad because he is distracted and fails to pay her enough attention. He claims that he still has not “completely adapted to the world” (Murakami 169), the *real* world, the world in which 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” (Murakami 169). They are not natural, and Midori is a part of that everyday, unnatural world. Ironically, however, the scape he is in with Midori is much more real than the one he has just left behind. Watanabe’s sense of place within the urban environment is compromised by his desire to possess a place in the rural environment.

Much like the landscape, the cityscape is also a place of marginalization. In the preceding pages of this chapter, I have briefly listed some of the marginalizing qualities about Midori. Here, however, I want to do so in a bit more detail. As we already know, Midori’s actions and speech marginalize her because they set her apart as an a-typical woman. But, there are still other aspects about Midori’s character that continue the marginalization process. For instance, her chosen mode of attire marginalizes her. Not only does her choice of dress marginalize her because it diverges from a cultural norm that stipulates that women should be modest, but it also sets her up within the city as a commodity, as the object of the male gaze, an

object to be possessed. When Midori goes to Watanabe's dorm wearing a skirt that is, in his opinion, entirely too short, Watanabe suggests that doing so in a male dormitory is not the wisest course of action. Likewise, the doctor at the hospital expresses his disapproval as well, claiming "You ought to come and let us open *your* head one of these days to see what's going on in there" (185). The two men with whom she interacts place her on the margin for her revealing choice of dress. The doctor's comment suggests that Midori's choice is irrational. However, as a new woman, Midori represents a "departure from state-imposed values" (Sato 15), thus further positioning herself on the margin.

Like Naoko, Midori's self-imposed actions and behaviors are already marginalizing by the time Watanabe meets her, and this form of marginalization is, in a way, empowering. Midori has attributes of power that Naoko does not. Although her topics of speech place her on the margin, her willingness and ability to speak position her into a place of power, especially because she is generally using that ability to assume the masculine role and asking Watanabe on dates. In addition, Midori's fascination with sex directly contrasts Naoko's reservations. However, unlike Naoko, Midori is not a tease. She makes herself available, obliterating any hope for the passive intercourse that Watanabe wants with Naoko. As in asking for dates, Midori is always the first one to breach a sexual topic. Her openness gives her power.

Through marginalization, however, this power is a two-edged sword. Eventually, her powers are insufficient. Watanabe marginalizes her because coping with the city is already too difficult. Watanabe's sense of place must be at least partially established; it must meet some of his expectations. As a "new woman," however, Midori attempts to sidestep those expectations and answer only to her own fancy. However, her approach to the city is no better than Watanabe's. She is still disillusioned, wandering the city trying to find some form of acceptance.

Although he does not play as large a role as Naoko, Midori or Watanabe, Nagasawa is another representative of the cityscape. He is technically the male counterpart of Midori, although he is more ruthless and insincere. Strecher notes a “distinction between the absurd reality of the University/city, and the pastoral—yet deadly—country sanitarium where Naoko commits suicide” (“Beyond Pure” 368). He later writes that Nagasawa epitomizes “the ‘real’ world of Tokyo” (“Beyond Pure” 369). Strecher is correct in correlating Nagasawa with the city. Nagasawa is wealthy and gifted and planning to become a member of the bureaucracy that runs this new Japanese capitalist consumerist State. If Midori is insensitive, Nagasawa is doubly so. He treats everything as a game, rarely showing true interest in anything or anyone; and he cares little about what he has to do to win this game. He displays his willingness to do anything when he tells the story of how he ate three slugs so that the upperclassmen would leave him alone (Murakami 32).

Aligning himself with the harsh realities of the city, Nagasawa laughs at Watanabe’s idealism, claiming, “Life doesn’t require ideals. It requires standards of action” (Murakami 55). Naoko’s “life” is tied up in the cityscape. He is even willing to become part of the large capitalist machine in order to produce and reproduce “standards of action.” Yet, despite his charisma and innate abilities, Nagasawa’s cavalier and fateful acceptance comes at a price. For, he is as disconnected, if not more so, than the other characters. His constant cheating on Hatsumi with dozens of other nameless one-night-stands points to the futility in his own life. He even plays games with life in order to deal with and surmount the cityscape’s many contradictions and unfulfilling elements. However, even his best efforts fail, and the last words we hear from him are tinged with regret tempered by a fatalistic acceptance. Thus, the cityscape, although more tangible and physically real, is also problematic as a place. The negotiations in

the cityscape are even more difficult than in the landscape, and the price is still the same: life. But Watanabe will not allow either a failed ideal or a harsh reality to steal the life of peace and stasis he has worked so hard to construct. Although it appears that his options are gone, he has one place left in which to establish his place. That last option is within the realms of his own mind: the psychescape.

## CHAPTER FOUR: PSYCHESCAPE—MEMORY, IMORTALITY AND ESCAPE

The psychescape is perhaps the most difficult to discuss, and yet the most important to the story, for that is where the story literally occurs. Storey writes, “As both ‘author’ and protagonist of *Noruei no mori*, Watanabe Toru’s consciousness and experience give the novel its shape” (139). In fact, the novel could be shaped by nothing other than the consciousness of the narrator because it is an I-novel, and the I-novel “may be seen as an internally directed medium of expression” (Strecher, “Purely” 367). This scape is where the story begins, occurs, and ends. All of the images we see in the narrative are merely signifiers existing only in Watanabe’s mind. Murphy notes that other Japanese texts “pay close attention to the natural world with detailed descriptions, and yet the focus of critical concern has been on the ‘inner state’ of the narrator rather than the outer state of the world depicted that gives rise to the inner meditation” (127). This statement is integrally true within Murakami’s *Norwegian Wood*. The text contains multiple descriptions of landscape and the natural world, some in surprisingly acute detail. However, the thrust of these descriptions divides its importance between the landscape and the innerscape of the narrator. What this innerscape signifies has, to some extent, already been dealt with in the preceding chapters. I hope to address the remaining significations here.

As a scape, the psychescape is the site of the last negotiation. Landscape and idealism have failed to satisfy, and the cityscape has left a sense of displacement and disconnectedness. These two scapes have failed to produce a desirable place. Watanabe is, as it were, out of options. Therefore, the psychescape, although unstable because of its connection to and dependency upon the feelings and opinions of the narrator, is the last hope for our narrator.

If we separate ourselves from the self-absorbed musings of our narrator, we realize that what we know of the things around him are completely dependent upon the limited first-person view he gives us. We are “never out of this ‘virtual’ state in the Murakami text” (Strecher, “Beyond” 359). Although Strecher applies this line of thought to *A Wild Sheep Chase*, rather than to *Norwegian Wood*, I think we can safely apply his comment to our text. Strecher continues writing that “one’s anticipation of the solution is haunted constantly by lingering doubt as to whether Rat, the Sheepman, the Man in Black, or the sheep, actually exist outside the narrator’s mind” (“Beyond” 360). In a similar fashion, *Norwegian Wood* leaves the reader questioning where to draw the line between fantasy and reality. Without delving too deeply into metaphysics, I propose that the story may contain some fantastic elements, but its reality is certain because the psychescape is a real place, a space that needs defining and critical attention. Indeed, it is not my goal to discuss narrator reliability in the sense that the narrative is or is not factual. Instead, I want to treat the psychescape as a real place, a place where the final stage of negotiation occurs. First, I want to establish my claim that the psychescape is a viable place. After I have done so, I will discuss how the psychescape performs the function of creating its own place, a place of memory, escape and immortality.

Thus far, we have established Watanabe’s different views concerning two realities, those of landscape and cityscape. In order to establish the psychescape as a “real” place, I want to use ecopsychological criticism. Fisher writes, “The broad historical requirement of Ecopsychology, then, is to ‘turn the psyche inside out,’ locating mind in the world—healing our dualism by returning soul to nature and nature to soul” (9-10). For this brief section, I want to consider only the middle part of this passage, that of turning “‘the psyche inside out,’ locating mind in the world.” It is my contention that the psychescape is “in the world,” that it inhabits and

encompasses the world; it is a part of the physical world, and simultaneously, it is its own world. Fisher goes on to write, “If the psyche exists beyond the boundaries of the skin, then this makes it a social as well as an ecological phenomenon, and ties our alienation from nature to our alienation within human society” (21). Similarly, Mary Gawain, Irwin Altman and Hussein Fahim write the following:

. . . persons, psychological processes, and physical environments need not be separated, rather they can be treated as an integral unit. In other words, this orientation assumes that physical settings and psychological events can be viewed as inseparable, as mutually defining and as intrinsic aspects of person-environment units. (182)

Essentially, certain ecopsychologists set out to prove the inherent and necessary combination and connection of the psychological realm with the physical realm. From this viewpoint, therefore, Watanabe’s psychescape must possess an inseparability of mind from its surroundings. Thus, the mind itself becomes a *place* through which the psyche and the physical scapes may interact with each other. Fisher writes, “. . . the ‘nonhuman environment’—the trees, clouds, raccoons, rivers, skyscrapers, and manifold of other nonhuman phenomena that weave together as the larger matrix for the affairs of humans—has great significance for human psychological life, a significance we ignore at peril to our own psychological well-being” (3). The psychescape, like the rest of the world, has a *life*. It exists to find this significance, to connect itself with the rest of the world. Watanabe immerses himself in this “nonhuman environment,” but he finds it imperfect. The taint that took Naoko has also tarnished the natural world, a taint that Watanabe has internalized.

Although he spends much of his psychological time in the natural of Naoko and Reiko, he fails to notice the affect of this environment upon him. His self-absorption leads him to misinterpret the landscape, using it to fulfill his own desires and establish his preferred relational

orders, rather than accepting his place within it. This ignorance leads to displacement which, incidentally, is the issue that the novel is trying to overcome. From an ecopsychological perspective, Watanabe's failure to establish place is directly related to his failure to dissolve the dualism that pervades the novel. Watanabe has tried the scapes separately. He has even tried having a foot in both at the same time. In both cases, however, his attempts to institute a place of permanence fall short of his desires and expectations. Fisher writes, "The subject matter of Ecopsychology is neither the human nor the natural, but the lived experience of interrelationship between the two" (31-32). This novel is an attempt to bring them together, to use the psychescape as a connecting entity, rather than a divisionary one.

I think that one of the reasons that Watanabe is reluctant to combine these scapes and see himself within a larger framework is due to his need for personal space within the place. If he goes outside himself and includes everything as a part of his psychological world, he must face the possibility that the core of himself will cease to exist, that it will become lost within the overarching matrix of his own imaginations. As discussed in the cityscape chapter, there is loneliness and lack of self amidst an enormous population. However, ecopsychology explains that Watanabe need not worry about being lost within this daunting framework. Fisher writes, "Ecopsychology is still concerned with our suffering and happiness, our dreaming, our search for meaning, our responsibilities to others, our states of consciousness, and so on; it just frames these concerns within the fuller, more-than-human scope of human existence" (7). Therefore, the psyche would, in a way, provide for its own survival. Because the psychescape is a part of the physical world, it seeks not to avoid that world, but to find a balance between that world and itself. In addition to critical support that the psychescape is a real place, I want to turn to a textual support as well. Staying true to form, Murakami has embodied this final scape in a

human being other than Watanabe. The concept of another person managing to embody the psychescape of someone else appears a bit farfetched. However, we can resolve this apparent dichotomy. If Naoko is Watanabe's muse, Reiko is his Oracle. When he is troubled about his situation with Naoko and Midori, he seeks advice from Reiko. In addition, she is the one who helps him deal with and overcome the sadness of Naoko's suicide, and she "becomes his spiritual guide through the process of self-discovery fostered at the lodge—by opening up, she suggests, Toru, too, can recover from the ills that her practiced eye has discovered in him" (Storey 156). Storey later writes that Reiko has a resume of in-between states (157). Not only does Reiko bear the unmistakable marks of a mediator, but in so doing, she also establishes herself as a bridge for Watanabe. She has been in the real world, has experienced things he has not, and was, for a time, part of a conventional society (i.e. accomplished, occupied, married, etc). She is also his guide through the natural landscape of the sanatorium. Therefore, she is the human link between the cityscape and the landscape. Essentially, Reiko is the incarnation of Watanabe's psychescape, his aid in coping and negotiating between the other two scapes. However, she is not a perfect conduit because she herself fails to establish the same levels of connectivity for which Watanabe is searching. Although I am not trying to critique the psychescape through Reiko, I think it is important to note that the psychescape at least in this manifestation is also imperfect. Yet, despite this imperfection, I hope to show that the psychescape is real enough to be represented by another character, to have a physical embodiment of sorts, to be personified not merely in the mind of our narrator. We cannot rely solely on Reiko in critiquing this scape. Instead, we must turn to the scape itself and examine the tools that it uses to establish itself as a workable place. There are three tools that the psychescape employs to accomplish its ends. The first of these tools is memory.

Just as landscape hosted nostalgia, so psychescape hosts memory. Miyawaki writes, “From the moment the airplane arrives, the readers are lured into the world of the protagonist’s memories” (274). From the very beginning, Murakami establishes memory as the controlling factor in his narrative.

The story opens with a bird’s-eye-view as Watanabe’s memory flashes back to a meadow scene after hearing a “sweet orchestral version of the Beatles’ ‘Norwegian Wood’” (Murakami 3). Storey labels this flashback a “memory landscape,” claiming that the “sounds are muted, as if echoing from another world” (120). Although there are definite correlations between the psychescape and the landscape, I want to mark a distinction between the two. I appreciate Storey’s analysis, but the psychescape is not the landscape, and vice versa. In fact, the psychescape is often the host of and, at times, the creator of the landscape. I think the latter half of Storey’s analysis, containing the idea of “another world,” is more pertinent. For, indeed, the psychescape is another world, a world of memory, memory that encapsulates landscape and cityscape, and that works within and between them in a form of imaginative invention; and it is the last place for Watanabe to reconcile his worlds, the last site of negotiation.

Negotiation in the psychescape is a difficult task. More than once in this narrative, Watanabe relates to the reader how the memories of Naoko and her death threaten to overwhelm him. When Naoko dies, Watanabe takes a journey across the country by himself. 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” (Murakami 273). While deeply depressed, Watanabe’s ability to negotiate his place is nonexistent. His mind and place are pulled by the whim of the waves. However, his memories cannot completely overpower him because their success would indicate the failure of the narrator to progress. If he fails to

negotiate with his memories, to make them less vivid and painful, the story itself would not exist. Ironically, Watanabe'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" (Murakami 10). Yet, within this deterioration, Watanabe finds clarity. Watanabe's understanding is founded upon past memories and experiences, but also upon the ability for him to bring them under his control. Only by negotiating his own place in these memories and establishing his own dominance within them can he utilize his memory for his own ends. Thus, as they fade, they become clearer. Memory is, therefore, a theme of movement, of movement that results in understanding and acceptance. Through the use of memory, movement from one scene to the next becomes possible. Without the psychescape's memory, Watanabe would be unable to traverse the scapes of his past and thus unable to negotiate his place within them and gain an understanding of them.

As stated in the opening of this chapter, the psychescape is the panorama through which the reader views this story. Every movement is determined by the psychescape. But, since the story occurs almost completely in the past, the movement required here is movement through memory. Memory is the foreground of this mental scape. It is responsible for bringing the psychescape into the series of interactions and events that we have before us in story form. Not only that, but memory is a requirement for existence. For this reason, it is one textual motif that undergoes repetition. Watanabe begins his narrative by discussing memory; Naoko asks more than once for Watanabe to remember her; and Reiko too asks Watanabe not to forget her. At one point, Reiko even admits that she is merely "the lingering memory of what I used to be" (Murakami 273). In essence, Reiko's existence is tied to and dependent upon the psychescape to remember it.

Another facet of the memory is its dreamlike quality. Walter describes the topic of Aboriginal “Dreaming,” in which the dreamer is wide awake and “grasps the nature of place.” In addition, the “Dreaming” is “full of stories delivered in song and ritual for incalculable generations, but the tradition is connected psychically to ordinary nocturnal dream life. The time of the Dreaming is everywhen, but through it every place in the present lives in the sacred past” (136). Watanabe’s memory is similar to this Aboriginal “Dreaming.” Like these dreamers, Watanabe is fully awake when the memories flood his mind, and these memories are strongly linked to song, as we see when a rendition of the Beatle’s “Norwegian Wood” triggers Watanabe’s memories. Additionally, Watanabe’s narrative has a facet similar to the “everywhen.” I appreciate Walter’s use of the word “everywhen,” implying a spanning of both time and physical space. The idea of bridging time and space links directly to Watanabe’s mind’s ability to be eighteen years in the past and tell the story as though it were occurring in the present, directly identifying itself with landscapes and cityscapes throughout the story. Watanabe’s “everywhen” is an inversion of the Aboriginal one because Watanabe’s brings the past to the present, but I do not think that this inversion disqualifies it from being compared to “The Dreaming.”

Walter goes on to write, “The Dreaming makes the desert, which Europeans experience as a dreary, trackless waste, an environment filled with exciting, meaningful physical features, populated with invisible spirits, and crisscrossed with the meandering tracks of ancestral beings” (137). Similarly, Watanabe’s psychescape “Dreaming” turns the everyday, mundane acts of a singly, unimportant individual into an interesting story, one connected to shifts and evolutions of culture and tradition. Only through this “Dreaming” could Watanabe make eating lunch or drinking coffee anything but “dreary.” Thus, the memory in the form of “Dreaming” becomes

not only an entity of movement and spanning time and space, but also one that increases the story's ability to connect itself with the interests of others, thus become interesting.

Although his memories are instrumental in clarifying certain past events and circumstances, he can not allow them to possess him, to control him. Such an allowance would make him unable to be master of his own thoughts, and mastery is an important issue for the psychescape. Within the cityscape, Watanabe is too disconnected to exert any meaningful presence. Likewise, he has failed to subdue the landscape, failed to bring it under his control. Thus, the final control left to him resides within his own consciousness. Watanabe displays this system of control through his telling of the story.

Although all the major characters have a psychescape, their psychescapes are never entirely open to us, except through the limited form of dialogue and epistle that Watanabe records. This point becomes crucial in setting up the psychescape as place. The access we have even to our narrator's psychescape is tied to the fact that he has put pen to paper. Other than Naoko's letters, which Watanabe himself recounts, we have no other written, visual access to the psychescapes of the other characters. Therefore, the psychescape is only accessed through the willful, deliberate transmissions of its intent through the process of writing, a power that 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 Watanabe 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. For whatever reason, though, he pulls through, and reasserts his power over his own consciousness by writing down this story.

Power of the word becomes the manifestation of control over the psychescape. Where he failed with the other two scapes, he succeeds with his consciousness. Watanabe writes, “. . . I often tried to write about Naoko. But I was never able to produce a line. . . . Now, though, I realize that all I can place in the imperfect vessel of writing are imperfect memories and imperfect thoughts” (Murakami10). Here, Watanabe regains the ability to write about Naoko, and with this admission comes power, however imperfect. His new perceptions and perspective have enabled him to do what he could not do before. In a way, the fading of his memory is responsible for his newfound power. When everything was “too sharp and clear” (Murakami 10), his memories possessed him. He could not separate himself from them adequately enough to write them down. Thus, memory itself is inadequate to guarantee power. Only memory that is deliberately brought back under the control of the consciousness from which it originates will result in power.

Therefore, the catch of the psychescape is whether he will control the scape, or whether the scape will become his captor. This form of mental captivity is exactly what happens to the narrator in one of Murakami’s other novels *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*. In this novel, the narrator allows himself to slip forever into the world of his own psyche, forever giving up hope of interaction with the physical world. However, Watanabe eventually acquires the proper distance to reverse his position from signified to signifier. His memories are his again; he is no longer a prisoner of his own mind; instead, he has reestablished dominance, at least in a limited form, and his dominance has manifested itself in the written word, one of the physical manifestations of the psychescape. Rather than being a slave to his thoughts, he has made his thoughts the property of the public eye giving not only power but scope to the psychescape.

Recalling Naoko, we observe that Naoko's sickness divested her of the power of speech as well as writing. In the few letters she wrote to Watanabe, she said, "Please forgive me for not answering sooner. But try to understand. 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" (Murakami 43). This letter implies that she was never able to transcend the boundaries of her own mind. Writing was painful to her because, by so doing, 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" (Murakami 86). In essence, her command of words depends upon her command of self, on her own mental wellbeing, on her ability to travel the psyche without falling prey to it.

Eventually, however, she kills herself because she can not maintain control over her own psyche. By allowing her inner thoughts to control her outer actions, she begins hallucinating and finally commits suicide. Although it has taken him nearly two decades, Watanabe has found the strength and the ability to write; he has overcome, or avoided, the same sickness that claimed both Naoko and Kizuki.

In addition to being a memory that establishes and negotiates place and an empowered setting that creates a world desired by the narrator, the psychescape is also the final means of escape. When combining the other scapes or negotiating between them proves unfeasible, Watanabe turns to this last scape for escape. Typically, Murakami's characters are 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 lives. Loughman writes,

“Murakami’s characters live exterior lives that are efficient, predictable, and mechanical to create the illusion of purpose and meaning. At the same time, inside they are saying ‘This is no place for me’ and often escape into their interior worlds of fantasy and dream, where imagination runs free” (91). This quotation confirms the psychescape as an escape. Indeed, the psychescape is the core of existence, the last vestige of self remaining to most of Murakami’s characters. Essentially, this place within themselves is the final available ground where they can find a self, where they can negotiate their place with and within the outside world. Loughman observes that Murakami’s people (meaning the Japanese) “have lost their moorings and are adrift” (90). I believe that this estimation holds true for the characters in *Norwegian Wood* as well.

A quick examination of the story will highlight this state of detachment. Watanabe has no real friends and no siblings; and his family is absent throughout the story. Naoko’s family is also absent; her boyfriend has died; and she herself 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 if he made a mistake. 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’s character is perhaps the best example of being “adrift.” 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 dead 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 his love at one instant and leaves for a month to mourn over the loss of a love that was never his in the next instant. All of these characters are adrift, cut off from their sense of place. How then, does Watanabe deal with this estrangement? I believe he does so by escaping to the psychescape,

through an ongoing perusal of and negotiation with his consciousness to try to establish and reestablish himself and his sense of place mentally, if not physically. Through this form of escape, he can buy time, as it were, in a way that neither the natural laws of the landscape, nor the fast-paced consumer-driven market of the cityscape will allow.

Despite the adverse consequences of being trapped in the psychescape, the psychescape opens up the possibility of offering a sort of safe haven or fall-out shelter. When the landscape blooms and then withers, or when the cityscape gets too rough, Watanabe's psyche will afford a semblance of security, of continuation. Storey writes that Naoko asks Watanabe to remember her "as a sort of gesture of self-preservation . . . As a muse, she can be brought back to life only through the narrator's vision of her" (154). Thus, the psychescape functions as an escape for the narrator and other characters. And, in addition to escaping to this place, the psychescape offers Watanabe and the other characters what was also impossible in either the landscape or the cityscape: immortality.

The conflicts within this novel, both internal and external, are a product of evolution, of changes in location, time and environment. Although our narrator does his utmost to resist these changes, within the physical and geographical realms of the landscape and cityscape, he is powerless to prevent them. Although he strives to maintain the status quo and to keep the people and things around him from maturing, his efforts are futile. Just as the scenery changes and times change, Watanabe and his memories move and shift, relocate, and are moved. Neither he nor his memories are not static. Thus, the psychescape is a moving entity, one that develops and evolves, just as everything else in the story does. Despite his efforts to the contrary, neither he nor his mind are able to stay within a static realm, an unchanging world. They are forced to move, despite their best efforts against it.

As stated above, the need to be remembered is a constant desire for the characters in this story. However, being remembered and existing only within memory is insufficient. The real task at hand, and the one that the other characters hope will happen, is immortalization through *memorialization*. They want a monument of sorts erected in their memory so that generations later they will have a place, a static one. Walter writes, “The word ‘monument’ comes from a Latin verb that means ‘to remind.’ Monuments are representations of any form intended to remind people of something or someone. . . . By spraying names in paint, graffiti artists seek to achieve what ever monument makes wants: imperishability” (152-3). Watanabe has figuratively spray-painted the names and lives of himself and the other characters across the page. He has cast them in print, perhaps a medium with more longevity than either paint or marble because of print’s ease of reproduction. Thus, his book and his mind become the monuments, the testaments, the eternal markers for himself and for the other characters. With so much of their country changing culturally and even geographically, due to cultural amalgamation and technological progression, the characters struggle with the idea of finality, with no life after death.

In fact, each of the main characters deals with the subject and possibility of death, and they do so in very contradictory ways. On the one hand, for Naoko, death is the final act, an entity that has taken away her one love and that will eventually take her as well. She sees death as natural, as part of the cycle to which she belongs. On the other hand, Midori sees death as something unnatural, as something to fight against and overcome. Earlier in this thesis, I stated that Midori is a survivor. Indeed, her view on death is that it will have to come and claim her because, until then, she will try her best to enjoy her life. As she states while watching a nearby fire from her rooftop, she is unafraid of death (Murakami 73). As usual, Watanabe is caught

between these two extremes. Like Naoko, he sees death as a part of life, rather than separate from it. However, death also causes him to be angry with himself because it only seems to make life all the more futile.

Interestingly, although Naoko is the only main character to die, she is also the only main character to make preparations for her afterlife. Thus, she receives life after death without the difficulty of having to maintain a societal code of maturation and negotiation. Storey writes, “Naoko has now been fully internalized into Toru’s psyche” (154), suggesting that the psychescape is the scape where she can exist eternally unencumbered.

If the landscape is fading and the cityscape is constantly progressing and changing how can the psychescape provide immortality? It does so through the objective of the characters within the novel: repeatability. Fuminobu Murakami writes that one way to escape the “paranoid modern capitalist nightmare” is “to stop here and eternally repeat the same” (129). Watanabe and Naoko try their best to “repeat the same,” as they exemplify through their constant reminiscing and through their mechanical movements and routines. However, despite their best efforts, the world often causes them to break these patterns. Each time the characters must step outside their desired patterns or routines, they experience pain and nostalgic longing. Walter writes, “A renewal of connection to the totality of experience may end the drift of an abstraction toward irrelevance” (142-43). However, for Watanabe, the experiential is only surface at best. In his quest to establish a single, utopian place, he overlooks the possibility of combining his total experiences as a means of avoiding “irrelevance.”

However, as they are now, Murakami’s characters have form without function. There is no wartime governmental mandate to produce. The only true stability is in repetition, in the ability to make things stay the same. Through repetition, the characters can gain a form of

immortality, a stable and *safe* form of stasis against the dynamic current of the world evolving around them. Safety is another facet of immortality. Even if the characters' lives in this setting are less than secure, they can, like Naoko, maintain a sense of security through knowing their future is assured.

Textual and critical readings support the claim that the psychescape is a real place. Additionally, the text sustains the premise that the psychescape utilizes memory, escape and immortalization to establish itself as a real place. Thus, we are left with only one question: whether or not the psychescape, using all the tools at its disposal, succeeds in creating a final sense of place. As mentioned above, the novel itself is a testament of the psychescape, of the narrator's ability to bring his own mind and memories under his control. Thus, the reader could conclude that the psychescape is a success. However, *Norwegian Wood* lacks a sense of closure and a happily-ever-after that many people associate with the idea of success. Indeed, the very ending of the novel has been cause for much critical debate.

As Watanabe 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). One of the problems with interpreting this passage lies in the fact that he gives the reader no indication of time. The reader is uncertain whether Watanabe is still eighteen years in the past or back in the present. A simple interpretation of this passage might infer Watanabe's admission to being in the "center of this place that was no place" as indicative of the lack of success he has had in establishing a place, either in his psyche or in any other scape. Indeed, his being in the "center" of such a place implies that he remains amidst and deeply enmeshed within the chaos and confusion of the world he has so relentlessly tried to escape.

The text, like Murakami, like Watanabe, and like the scapes themselves, leaves us with a paradox, or a puzzle of sorts. If the psychescape succeeds, why is there so little closure? If it fails, what was the purpose of the novel? The ways in which Watanabe uses his psychescape suggest that the end result is neither an overwhelming failure, nor a grand success. Like the rest of the scapes in this novel, the psychescape is a place of negotiation, and I believe the novel ends with negotiation, that it is still negotiating. The narrator's psychescape has finally accepted the improbability of an ideal within the landscape and simultaneously rejected the cruel and uncompromising reality of the cityscape. Thus, he has positioned himself once again, between boundaries, in a place "that is no place."

As the final grounds of negotiation, the psychescape has given Watanabe a place in between places, in between success and failure. Susan J. Napier writes that "Murakami Haruki show[s] this search for identity only to underline its ultimate futility in vision of a grotesque and anonymous modern world" (455). I agree with her assessment, but, in addition to "identity," I would add *place*. The "anonymous modern world" has made it as difficult to establish place as it has to establish identity. Thus, the end result is not a final and ultimate answer or guide, but merely one more possibility from multiple possibilities.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Throughout *Norwegian Wood*, Murakami addresses the issue of self-determination as created by establishing a sense of place. As cultural changes destabilize the places to which Watanabe desires to belong, Watanabe strives to create and maintain a place for himself that will withstand these shifts and transformations. As the hypercommodified economy joins a global market, Watanabe becomes obsessed with anchoring himself to a particular place and thereby avoiding the anonymity that threatens to undermine the static sense of permanence he works so hard to attain. Murakami's narrator attempts to merge traditional values and ways of life with postmodern capitalist consumerism. These attempts attest to a previous, different era, one in which the negotiation of identity and place are not as much at stake as they are in this postmodern culture. In order to negotiate his place within the narrative, Watanabe tries to establish himself in three different contexts. Initially, he tries to find a place in the natural landscape.

Turning first to Naoko and the landscape, Watanabe hopes to find peace in the serenity of the natural world, a world as yet untainted by the city. Early on, the landscape presents itself as a physical representation of Watanabe's emotional mood, but it quickly hints at deeper issues. By the middle of the story, we realize that the landscape functions as an ideal, a juxtaposition to his other realities, an attempted reality in which he could create a world in which he feels safe. On the one hand, landscape represents a nostalgic return of Japanese agrarianism, of returning to a simpler, more nature-based land/human relationship. On the other hand, the landscape serves as a marginalizing tool through which Watanabe can fabricate a semblance of the Japan that used to function on a male/female dualism and hierarchy, a more traditional and stable Japan in which he feels comfortable and unthreatened. Essentially, he merges the images of the landscape with the

women in his life, thus demeaning the women and the land as passive figures needing the dominating hand of man. In the end, however, the agrarianism that he longs for is unrealistic, and the disempowering of Naoko fails when she kills herself, thus taking her life and power back into her own hands. Eventually, landscape fails to fulfill him, leaving him only with a sense of wistful idealism and nostalgic memories. With the defeat of this first attempt, Watanabe tries again in the cold, unfeeling realm of the city.

Within the city, Watanabe 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. However, the cityscape does little to entice Watanabe's desires. He finds little to attach himself to the city, and in fact, he leaves it as often as possible, traveling across Japan in another fruitless attempt to find a place for himself. The cityscape also fails to afford him the constancy he seeks. Aside from the endless cycle of consumerism and commodification, permanence does not exist within the city's boundaries. Marketing and its products change too rapidly; student movements come and go; friends commit suicide; Midori's character constantly shifts from horny to hungry. A sense of purpose is difficult to find in this place that remembers neither names nor faces. Idealism is unrealistic and rewarded only with reminders from harsh realities that life will continue with or without him. Despite Midori's admission of love, she warns him that she will move on to someone else if he refuses to accept her now. However, Watanabe's ability to function within the cityscape is even more limited than his ability to function in the landscape. The city never holds an ideal for him. It is a reality, but not one that he likes or that he calls his own, not one in which he finds a firm footing. After this second failed attempt, Watanabe turns to the only place left, his own mind.

Within this last scape, this psychescape, Watanabe makes one final effort to construct a suitable place for himself. Here, in his own mind, he controls the final product. He is the producer rather than the commodity. The psychescape hosts his memories and ideals but at the same time, allows doses of reality to temper his idealism. In this scape, though, he can control the amount of reality, unlike in the other scapes where reality comes and goes at its own pace and its own discretion. This final scape is the last place of negotiation, a cross-roads for the landscape and the cityscape to merge into one where Watanabe can construct a place of indifference and escape, where he can balance his existence between group identity and individual identity, a place where he creates and controls the atmosphere, the levels and the overall comfortableness of this final scape.

Like his life, Murakami's text frustrates the boundaries of "pure" literature. Thus, Watanabe finds himself in a gray area, a space between spaces, trying desperately to grab hold of anything stable. Through these attempts, Watanabe traverses the land, the beaches, the city, and even his own mind in order to find a place in which he can find stability. And this stability is a product of an attempt on the part of the narrator and, I believe, on the part of Murakami himself to find a point of intersection between the urban and the rural, between the past and the present, between tradition and postmodernity. Murakami's use of *three* scapes indicates the multiple possibilities of negotiation, the various ways to deal with the issue at hand. However, Murakami's text does not provide an overall solution. All three attempts fall short of the goal. Yet, even in their failures, each scape partially succeeds in one or more ways that the other scapes do not. Essentially, through Watanabe, Murakami displays a common problem in postmodern Japan, but he leaves no clear-cut answer on how to fix that problem. Even in offering multiple solutions, Murakami points out the problematic issues with each one.

Murakami's narrator is not really a hero. His actions do not place him on a heroic scale in terms of selfless acts of bravery and magnificence. Yet, his actions are, in a sense, heroic because they attempt to embrace two opposing ideas simultaneously. As I stated in the introduction, Watanabe is, perhaps, the representation of twenty-something Japanese males in post-war, postmodern Japan. As such, he is championing a cause in which much of Japan's population is inadvertently implicated. Although he will receive 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 himself in the traditional, while simultaneously resisting an overall conformity to a socio-economic mindset that leaves little room for the place of an individual.

*Norwegian Wood* contains a multitude of issues and themes worthy of critical attention. For the purposes of this thesis, however, I have restricted my critical attention to the issue of place and the negotiation that occurs as the characters try to establish their places within the narrative. These scapes are important issues in the text, with important stakes attached to them, stakes of longevity and permanence, stakes of remembrance and marginalization. These scapes are not ancillary settings, and I do not believe we can place one's importance above the importance of another. My reading suggests that they work together, that they each perform an important function in this act of negotiation, that they are desiderata in the midst of a story the themes of which vary greatly.

To attempt to combine these scapes into a category of setting or to ignore them altogether would be irresponsible. I think that a complete understanding of the text is contingent upon an understanding of the ways that the scapes operate within this story. If we fail to understand these scapes, we invalidate the uses of multiple types of criticism. For instance, a purely feminist

reading would not be adequate to highlight the issues of oppression and domination within this narrative. However, an *ecofeminist* lens would further our understanding of the women within the text and their interactions with the scapes in which they find themselves. I do not suggest that an ecofeminist reading would wholly encompass feminist concerns, but I propose that it would complement a more traditional feminist reading. Nancy R. Howell writes, “The ecology movement has special significant to women because of the oppression that women share with nature” (47).

Likewise, failure to accept the psyche as a viable place will limit our critical method to psychoanalytic critiques. While I do not propose that such critiques are, in any way, invalid, I think that the use of ecopsychology lends itself to interpretations that are unavailable to psychoanalysts. These interpretations give support to the idea of negotiation. If the psychescape is a real place, then it must have properties and functions similar to the other places within the narrative. If this idea holds true, then we have another site in which and from which to observe the task of negotiation. In addition, ecopsychology allows us to watch the narrator’s mind interact with and deal with the way that he places himself within the world around him. Ecopsychology’s goal is to identify and interpret the function of the mind in shaping and controlling the ways that one acts within a physically located context.

As I began writing the body of this thesis, I noticed that I was often distracted by tangent thematic issues. Indeed, narrowing my focus to dealing only with these issues and critical tools was difficult. I want to remind my reader that my intention is neither to ignore nor to gloss over other critical means of accessing this text. Issues of narrator reliability accompanied by a deconstructive reading would probably serve to highlight additional aspects of the text that my interpretation neglects. Indeed, several times throughout my thesis, I made mention of the text’s

reception as “postmodern,” and I briefly mentioned the issue of narrator reliability. However, such neglect was not without purpose and, I hope, merit. While I recognize the existence of these other textual nuances and critical options, I must acknowledge the space to which I am limited within this thesis. Within this limited context, I could not possibly hope to give adequate attention to all of the ideas and issues vying for attention. Therefore, I have limited myself to what I considered to be a reasonable amount of material for this thesis. In doing so, I hope that I have given at least an adequate critical and close reading of *Norwegian Wood* and the way that scapes become the subject and the site of negotiation as the characters search for solid ground during the onset of the postmodern period.

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