



Exploring Kobayashi Midoriko's Image in *The Forest of Norway*

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Abstract: Kobayashi Midoriko in *The Forest of Norway* is a character created by Haruki Murakami with personality of courage, liveliness, straightforwardness, casualness, loneliness, emptiness and loss. Exploring the character image helps to further understand the theme and artistic achievements of the work.

Keywords: *The Forest of Norway*, Kobayashi Midoriko

1. Introduction

The Forest of Norway by Haruki Murakami has triggered Haruki Murakami phenomenon since its publication. Because of its solid textual foundation and astonishing sales, it has aroused heated discussions both in academia and society. At present, the research on *The Forest of Norway* in Chinese academic circles has achieved results. Some researchers have analyzed the characters in *The Forest of Norway* based on the analysis of characters, such as the character, image, loneliness, etc., but there is little research on the character image and artistic value of Kobayashi Midoriko.

Kobayashi Midoriko, a character in *The Forest of Norway* by Haruki Murakami, has very different personality from several other women. Although Kobayashi Midoriko has a lonely mood, she is lively, lovable, enthusiastic, brave, straightforward, casual, lonely, empty, lost, etc. Exploring the character image helps to further understand the theme and artistic achievements of the work.

2. Image characteristic of Kobayashi Midoriko

2.1 Strong, brave, lively and optimistic

Kobayashi Midoriko in *The Forest of Norway* is like her name, full of life and energy. She ignited Watanabe's dark inside and helped him gradually get out of his self-enclosed dark room. Kobayashi Midoriko worked hard to save Watanabe while performing self-redemption. Watanabe's dying soul was also nourished by Kobayashi Midoriko's warmth and care.

Kobayashi Midoriko has an important position and role in *The Forest of Norway*. Her vitality, youthful wildness and passion, she was so unruly and uninhibited, which was the ideal personality from the worldly people. What Kobayashi Midoriko redeemed was not only Watanabe, but also readers. Like sunshine, her passion shined into the concealed and dark souls for people, bringing vitality to the decadent people, opening a venting window for the depressed people, and bringing them hope for life.

In the face of suffering and torture in life, Kobayashi Midoriko chose to be optimistic and strong. She was the only person in this novel who faced the hardships positively and optimistically. She was sunny and full of energy, but her life was not so easy. Her mother died prematurely, her sister fell in love again, and her father was hospitalized for a long time. While attending school, Kobayashi Midoriko had to look after a small bookstore, did housework, and took care of her father. She couldn't find her soul mate, which caused her loneliness, and couldn't find a lover who she could talk to. She met Watanabe, expressed her loneliness many times, complained that he and she did not have same mind, etc. It can be seen that this seemingly tenacious girl is actually full of pain who cannot vent. She does not avoid reality, but faces life bravely and actively seeks a way, unlike Watanabe. She struggled to find ways to live in harmony with life. Kobayashi Midoriko's positive attitude slowly helped her find meaning in her life. She was the perfect representative of modern women. She was independent and brave, which was manifested in her earnestly facing the hardships in real life and resisting the society at that time, which reflects her bravery and perseverance.

2.2 Lonely and lost

The Forest of Norway is Haruki Murakami's best representative with loneliness theme. The word loneliness runs through the text and is deeply rooted in every character, even the lively Kobayashi Midoriko. Kobayashi Midoriko can take the initiative to face hardships, adapt to the real world, and even face death bravely, but she is in adolescence of complex physiological and psychological changes. During this period, young people are most likely to lose themselves and fall into loneliness, and it is difficult to get rid of loneliness.

Kobayashi Midoriko lacked the love from her parents from an early age, there was not even someone to take care of her. She grew up alone. When Kobayashi Midoriko grew up, she had a boyfriend, but he did not tolerate her. Kobayashi Midoriko still could not get her ideal romance from her boyfriend. There was no doubt that such a relationship could not make Kobayashi Midoriko out of loneliness. It was not until he met me, the narrator in the text, that Kobayashi Midoriko slowly found hope. Kobayashi Midoriko wanted to find back the affection and love she lost in her family for many years. She longed to be 100% loved by me, so as to relieved the emptiness and loneliness in her heart for a long time. There is no doubt that from Kobayashi Midoriko's character and image, she is also a representative figure on loneliness and lost.

In *The Forest of Norway*, Kobayashi Midoriko has a unique character, her image represents an attitude of being optimistic when in loneliness. Although she was often lonely, she could save herself, solved depression, and achieved a balance. Her vitality finally overcame her loneliness and sentimentality, became positive and optimistic, and found the meaning and value of life. This positive attitude eventually helped Watanabe to eliminate the loneliness in her heart.

3. Artistic value of Kobayashi Midoriko

Compared to other characters, Kobayashi Midoriko is a bright sunshine in the somber-themed book. The main line of life and death runs through the book from beginning to end, which reveals the social environment of the young generation, as well as the objective facts and dilemmas they face, that is, the conflict between subject and object, between ideal and reality, and between life and death. Kobayashi Midoriko's self-rescue and he-rescue show people's self-salvation in the confused youth, which is a metaphor for their choice and contradiction between life and death in the real world, thus triggering readers to think and reflect on life and death.

In addition, Kobayashi Midoriko's self-salvation in loneliness and her relationship with loneliness are symbols for her pursuit in an ideal life. In *The Forest of Norway*, Haruki Murakami brings lively Kobayashi Midoriko's image and creates a vivid image for her. Because of this, *The Forest of Norway* has won the appreciation of readers through characters represented by Kobayashi Midoriko in the real world, arousing strong spiritual shock and emotional resonance from readers. This unique charm deeply attracts readers. It is not difficult to find that Haruki Murakami's analysis and interpretation to human nature also shows readers the unique cultural charm of the work.

In conclusion, in this novel exploring the life and death and romance among the youth, the author uses Kobayashi Midoriko to save lost Watanabe. This unique young female image, created by the author, coincides with the theme of the work, and also reflects Murakami's strong humane feelings for his nation and country. Kobayashi Midoriko's vivid image is also the charm of *The Forest of Norway*, and it is also one of the important reasons to attract readers for academic discussion and research.

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