

ABSTRACT

“The Reception of Murakami Haruki (村上春樹 Cun-shang Chun-shu) in Taiwan”

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Murakami Haruki (村上春樹, "Cun-shang Chun-shu" in Chinese pronunciation) was born in 1949. He left his hometown Ashiya in Kobe (芦屋、神戸) area and attended Waseda University, studying in the Drama Department during the Sixties. After graduation, he opened a jazz café while pursuing a writing career. In 1979, Murakami marked his literary debut with *Hear The Wind Sing* (『風の歌を聴け』《聽風的歌》), followed by *A Wild Sheep Chase* (1982 『羊をめぐる冒険』《尋羊冒險記》), *Norwegian Wood* (1987 『ノルウェイの森』《挪威的森林》), *Windup Bird Chronicle* (1994-95 『ねじまき鳥クロニクル』《發條鳥年代記》), and *Kafka by the Sea* (2003 『海辺のカフカ』《海邊的卡夫卡》). Today he has become a prolific writer and a master of contemporary Japanese literature.

Murakami's debut in the Chinese language was through a translation done by Lai Ming-zhu (賴明珠, 1947-) in a journal in Taipei in 1985. Lai's translation was perhaps the first translation of Murakami's work into any foreign language in the world. In 1989, only two years after *Norwegian Wood* became a bestseller in Japan, Taiwan published a version translated into Chinese, which in turn stirred up a Murakami boom.

The Taiwanese version of *Norwegian Wood* was also popular in Hong Kong since Hong Kong also uses traditional Chinese characters. In 1991, another translation done by the Malaysian Chinese translator Ye Hui (葉蕙, 1953-) was published in Hong Kong. As of 2004, it has gone through 23 prints and sold about 47,000 copies. In a city of six million, the book certainly qualifies as a best-seller with remarkable longevity.

In China, the translation by Lin Shao-hua (林少華, 1952-) of *Norwegian Wood* came out in July, 1989, four months after the Taiwanese translation. Even though students were frustrated by the failed democratization movement and the tragic incident of the “Bloody Sunday” that occurred on June 4th, 1989, right before the publication of the book, they

empathized with the story deeply, though there was no “Murakami phenomenon” comparable to that seen in Taiwan or Hong Kong. However, a decade later, in 1998, *Norwegian Wood* suddenly became a break-out best seller in Shanghai, and the Shanghai “Murakami phenomenon” quickly caught fire in Beijing and eventually sold more than one million copies.

In the Chinese language world, the “Murakami phenomenon” has circulated in a clockwise trajectory through regions that are experiencing high economic growth or are facing periods of post-democratization and as a consequence, his writing gains popularity as a manual for those who relish urban culture. On the other hand, compared to China and Hong Kong, the manifestation of the “Murakami phenomenon” in Taiwan is unique; this may be related to the “shadow of China” found in Murakami’s literature itself.

This article will study the distinctive patterns of Murakami’s reception in Taiwan.