



Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage

Haruki Murakami , Philip Gabriel (Translator)

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A New York Times and Washington Post notable book, and one of the Financial Times, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Slate, Mother Jones, The Daily Beast, and BookPage's best books of the year

An instant #1 New York Times Bestseller, *Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage* is the remarkable story of a young man haunted by a great loss; of dreams and nightmares that have unintended consequences for the world around us; and of a journey into the past that is necessary to mend the present. Here Haruki Murakami—one of the most revered voices in literature today—gives us a story of love, friendship, and heartbreak for the ages.

Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage Details

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From Reader Review Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage for online ebook

Xandra says

I wish I could tell you this book is about gregarious men, women who are more than their boobs and their stupid advice, disdain for train stations, vivacious characters, solvable mysteries. Hell, I wish I could tell you it's about unicorns, shoguns and samurai clans, aliens, post-apocalyptic Japan, killer penguins or the Russian tundra. Anything other than the old Murakami tropes again.

Surprising no one, the book deals with lost friendship and the exasperating whining that derives from that. To be more specific, the story follows a typical Murakami-esque dude whose group of friends suddenly gives him the cold shoulder and, sixteen years later, he's finally determined by his girlfriend to visit them one by one and clear things up. A more puerile premise has never been thought of.

I've clearly reached a point where the more Murakami I read, the more it becomes apparent that he's a one trick pony. You might rightly assert that most authors are, but he takes it to another level. It's more than his voice and his writing style; it's, well... everything. He recreates the same main character – the insular, self-deprecating man, who women always find special and jump at the opportunity to dictate the course of his life - each time more or less successfully, with the same relationship dynamics between him and the women in his life and the same themes ranging from the more general theme of alienation to something more specific like a passion for train stations or people watching. It's become so repetitive that the plot development is often not a surprise anymore and you know when certain elements are cue for a flashback, an observation regarding a woman's looks, an erection, not an erection, bad sex or weird shit. Sadly, the repetition isn't limited to the reiteration of themes in different books; it's noticeable within the same work too. This book, for instance, would have made a decent short story if it weren't for about 150 pages of sheer redundancy. Cut down one or two friends, go easier on the relationship drama, stop describing every step of the way, give the guy a pair of balls for fuck's sake and you'd actually have a chance to not bore your audience.

One reviewer describes the book as full of oneiric, poetic and metaphoric elements. Is Tsukuru's story oneiric? If you're referring to his many erotic dreams about threesomes, then hell yeah. Poetic and metaphoric? Sure. Then again, with Murakami's reputation of being cryptic, he could say virtually anything and someone would consider it "poetic and metaphoric". Just ask most literary critics. They see poetry and metaphors in everything.

Then there's the obligatory magical stuff. Not too much of it here, the book is pretty logical and straightforward. Still, he can't help but include a ludicrous story about a man who claims he has one month to live because an "ordinary person" told him so and who could avoid death only by meeting someone who's willing to die in his stead (no signed papers needed, he informs) and, as a compensation for his imminent death, he's invested with the gift of seeing people's colors, which are like halos around their head. Pretty cringe worthy, huh? Which is not to say I'm not tempted to paint those pages on my ceiling so I can start the rest of my days with a big laugh. I bet it never gets old.

And let's not forget the "Oh joy! Here he starts with the parallel realities again!" moment. When crazy shit happens, Tsukuru predictably jumps to the logical conclusion that time bifurcated and created another reality. Not even once does he think: "Well, maybe I'm a bit bonkers. Going on and on (and on and on...) about how my high school group kicked me out of their midst, how we were brought together by some sort of divine intervention, how I've become suicidal and suffered for almost two freaking decades. Guess it's time for some therapy." Funny as it is, how many times can Murakami pull the alternate reality card before it becomes irksome? Give me a break with this magic-for-the-sake-of-it crap already!

In the second half, the redundancy becomes more and more evident and makes way for some very amateurish writing. It's insulting to the readers to have the main character offer to talk to one of his old friends about his girlfriend and have him repeat what we already know thanks to not sleeping when the first hundred pages happened. And don't you think it qualifies as oversharing to mention to a woman you haven't seen in sixteen years and who's the constant object of your erotic dreams that you weren't able to "penetrate" your girlfriend the last time you saw her? Sincerity, you say? Well, I guess. Big-tits Eri, eager to fulfill the trope, is happy to offer ludicrous relationship advice and put up with Tsukuru's whining. *"I have no personality, no defined color. I have nothing to offer to others. This has always been my problem. I feel like an empty vessel."* Well, boo hoo. It's the fiftieth time you lament about this. Also, news flash: you have a personality and it's a very annoying one.

I feel I'm a bit unfair with this book because there was a good part of the first hundred pages that I enjoyed despite the simplistic writing and the formulaic plot. I didn't get much out of it though. For a guy who prides himself in being mysterious, Murakami unforgivably lacks subtlety and his books feel like copies of one another. I could advise you to forget about Tsukuru Tazaki and choose *Hard-Boiled Wonderland...* instead, but, if my history of reading Murakami is any indication, I'm a bad reader of his work and my often incongruous opinion counts for nothing.

Praveen says

My book with all decorations:

There are two divisions in people who read Haruki Murakami's books.

First one being, those who are addicted to his universe; a different sphere of reality, where at a special time and place imagination had been set free. Once you are in, you never want to come to reality like a person who had his first gulp of his drink, feels a gust of wind swooping inside his skull and feels as if his brain is floating with a sparkling smile on the corner of his lips.

And latter one, the fans of Norwegian woods (no harm) at times they won't be able to accept books like 1Q84.

This book is for everyone.

This is an invitation to Murakami's own jazz bar **The Peter Cat**.

Complete Narration of this moves forward with Franz Liszt - Years of pilgrimage "**Le mal du pays**" Played by Lazar Berman (Really recommend to listen this piece of music before you start Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage, if you are unfamiliar with this piece of music, it really creates the mood of this book like in Norwegian Wood (This Bird Has Flown) performed by The Beatles on the album Rubber Soul.)

This is books is really a huge collection of music records.

Beyond music we get everything we look forward in Murakami's books ; death , life , darkness, loneliness etc but you don't see "Parallel world" , "Cats" , "Sardin" , "Unicorn Skull". But you see "Dreams", "Weird Sex" and a little of (view spoiler)

I don't want to discuss much about the plot. It's all about friendship and nostalgic memories and journey to recover the lost friendship in Murakami's universe. Masterstroke in all in Murakami's books is the mysteries which keep the plot moving, Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage is no exception and it's fast moving really an inverse to 1Q84.

Parallel world

There is no "Parallel world" in this book but still we can see a small door which is getting opening towards alternate reality (which is very much real), through the story narrated by Jr.Haida about Midorikawa "The Jazz Pianist" about the token of death and mysterious bag which kept on the top of piano.

Murder of one of the four friends and answer for who committed the murder. And Tsukuru Tazaki erotic dreams and dreams slipping outside to his consciousness. All are classic forms of Parallel world.

In most of the Murakami's books there are "n" numbers of question which are left unanswered, here also we find the same thing but as always we all we have to end up with our own hypothesis (this is the most important aspect which i like about Murakami's books) like the conversation between Sr. Haida with Midorikawa.

Even if a murder happens you should not expect answer for who committed it ...

As always there are loose ends.

Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage mainly discuss about life , rejection and hope to move forward. *It's simple. If there's no station, no trains will stop there.*

Life is long, and sometimes cruel. Sometimes victims are needed. Someone has to take on that role.

There are so many things which can be discussed about Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage.

For the time being I am concluding humming **Elvis Presley - Girl Of My Best Friend** , from the time I read about Elvis Presley- Don't be cruel in one of the final chapters I am humming Girl Of My Best Friend (My favourite).

Bookdragon Sean says

This is easily one of the saddest books I have ever read. I found it extremely difficult to read in places. I

know what it is to lose friends, to have people randomly walk out of your life as if you never existed: it's not a nice feeling after years of friendship.

For Tsukuru its four friends and they all exit at once. He gets a phone call from one of them informing him that the group have unanimously decided that he is no longer part of it. The shock is something that he carries with him for his entire life. He loved his four friends and their departure has left him with an undying fear, a fear of ever getting close to anyone ever again.

"It's as if he was sleepwalking through life, as if he had already died but not yet noticed it."

"Before him lay a huge, dark abyss that ran straight through to the earth's core. All he could see was a thick cloud of nothingness swirling around him; all he could hear was a profound silence squeezing his eardrums."

He had no idea why it happened and it has haunted him ever since. It made him question his own identity and his purpose in life, ultimately turning him into a cynic. He never expected to find joy again or any sense of happiness. He trudges through life, colourless and utterly dead inside. On the surface he is successful but inside he is a wreck, existing though not living. After sixteen years he decides to face his past and re-connect with those that abandoned him so mercilessly. He goes back to find the reason that almost destroyed him.

Murakami captures the intensity of emotions to such powerful effect through exploring such a history. Few writers can get such feeling into their writing. We are all waiting for something or longing for something. I wonder how many people are truly happy in life? Not many.

When we find our shot at happiness we fly straight towards it and do everything we can to ensure that it never leaves us. And if it does leave us, well, the aftermath is worse than death. When Tsukuru's friends abandon him, he no longer is the same person. It's as simple as that. He must find himself once more to carry on living.

"The human heart is like a night bird. Silently waiting for something, and when the time comes, it flies straight toward it."

Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage is an absolutely fantastic novel, and, as with *Norwegian Wood*, reading it may hurt. This is a novel to learn from.

More Murakami for me in the future!

Sophie says

(Note: there's a big spoiler in this review, but I'm going to mark it so you should be able to skip it.)

I wanted to like this book.

I ordered it after reading the description in the German preview, and I could hardly wait. The plot sounded intriguing, and this was going to be the first "real" novel I was going to read in Japanese, and it was by an author whose works I mostly enjoyed until then. This was going to be so good!

And it was, in the beginning. Tazaki Tsukuru used to be part of a group of very close friends in high school, and even after that, but then suddenly they all avoid him and tell him to never contact them again. The reason?

"You should know why." After that experience, he's plunged into a deep depression and almost killed himself. Still, he somehow made it through that time and more or less has put it past him, or so he thinks, until 16 years later he starts dating a woman who tells him he should try to find out what exactly happened back then in order to sort himself out.

The beginning starts out really strong, and I have to say I could relate to both the depression and the experience very well. And throughout the novel, whenever women aren't involved, it's a good book - Murakami isn't a bad writer, and he's insightful (although a lot of the conclusions Tsukuru finally comes to could also be found in a Paulo Coelho book and no that is not a compliment) and smart. Which makes his treatment of women all the more infuriating.

I actually don't feel like reiterating all the sickening old-man's fantasies right here, or the constant breast-fixation which ruined an otherwise really good scene for me. (And even when he remembers that scene later, it's always "her breasts, her breasts, her breasts". I am sorry, that is disgusting. And if all men do that, it's disgusting.)

What I take the most issue with is the reason his friends cut off all contact with him. Now follows the spoiler.

SPOILER START

I hate false rape accusations as a plot point. Our culture being as it is, women have a hard enough time being taken seriously when they say they have been raped even without that kind of plot point being perpetuated again and again. No matter how good the book - and I have yet to read one with a false rape accusation that wasn't bad - it's harmful, especially because it suggests it's something that happens a lot more often than it does, considering how often it's used in movies and books and whatnot. And in this case it's even worse because it wouldn't even have been necessary, in my opinion, at least considering how the plot develops and the final conclusion Tsukuru comes to concerning Shiro.

And then there's the giant plot hole of doom: how useless must the Japanese police be if, after Shio's murder, Tsukuru doesn't become their main suspect? I mean, I've read enough mysteries and watched enough procedurals to know you look for someone with a motive. And you look at the suspect's past. "Oh, so she was part of a group of five close friends? What happened to that circle of friends? Why are they not close anymore?" Seriously, that pissed me off so much because it's sloppy. I don't care about not finding out who really raped Shiro, I don't care about finding out who killed her, I don't even care about what happened to Haida [even though the fact that Tsukuru's Kinda Sorta Gay Episode never really gets resolved], but that requires a ridiculous suspension of disbelief that I am apparently not capable of (and I read BL novels for a - well, not for a living, but I read a lot of them and I am good as suspending my disbelief, is what I'm saying).

END SPOILERS.

All in all the bad parts of this book stand out all the more because of the good parts, you could say. I am incapable of giving it just one star, but at the same time I am incapable of giving it more than two. While it is a book I ended up thinking a lot about, I really didn't like it and it's very unlikely I'll ever pick up another book by Murakami because his misogyny is not something I want to engage with again.

Brendon Schrodinger says

The phone rang as I was slicing potatoes for a massaman curry one afternoon whilst listening to Gershwin's

Rhapsody in Blue. I didn't particularly want to answer the phone as it was likely to be a telemarketer, but it could be someone phoning about possible work.

"So how is it so far?" asked a woman's voice on the other end.

Our phone line is terrible, but I still did not recognize the voice.

"Excuse me? I think you may have the wrong number."

"No, I have the correct number. How are you finding Murakami's new novel?" the woman asked.

I was slightly taken aback. How could this caller know that I started Murakami's new novel that morning, the first morning of my newly found unemployment?

"Are you from Kinokuniya?" I asked. I had purchased the book in the city on Saturday. Maybe they could identify me from my loyalty card and were doing some marketing research.

"In a way, yes." She replied. "My name is Moriko. It means child of the forest. So what are your initial thoughts on the novel?"

"Well I haven't much time to get into the novel yet. But from what I have read it seems to be a very standard Murakami novel with similar themes as his other works. His main character is an everyday man, who is single an unmarried and who has a troubled past that he would like to put behind him. He also designs train stations. That's kinda weird and cool."

"Very good, very good. I shall call tomorrow." And she abruptly hung up.

The next day the phone call came at around the same time. I had just finished up sweeping leaves in the garden and had sat down to prepare for the lesson I was giving that night. I had resigned from my full-time day job, but I was still teaching Chemistry at the local university three nights a week.

"Hello Brendon. Would you like to share more of your thoughts on Murakami's new novel?"

"Hello Moriko," I said enthusiastically. "How are you this afternoon?"

"I am well thank you Brendon. But I would like to hear your thoughts on the new Murakami novel," she said curtly.

I was taken aback for a moment, but thought nothing more of it.

"I have progressed a little. The main character has found a friend that cooks him meals and they listen to music together. And he has talked about how he is estranged from his family and especially his father who recently died. He then goes on to explain how his father named him... But I have just gotten up to one of those flashback chapters that Murakami loves so much... You know, they'll be during a war or something and they'll involve a well. They are just so distracting that I need to psych myself up to get through with that distraction."

I kept getting distracted throughout this time by a scratching noise at the door.

"That will be your cat Galileo wanting to come in," offered Moriko.

"But I don't own a cat."

"Are you sure?"

"I think I'd know if I owned a cat or not. Especially if it was named after one of the greatest scientists who ever lived."

"Oh, I am getting you confused with the other Brendon that I am in conversation with about the book. Many apologies. I will call again tomorrow."

And she promptly hung up.

The next day I was teaching, filing in for a colleague who had gone to a conference, and was not home. But I could not shake the image of my telephone ringing endlessly in my empty house.

"I now understand why he considers himself colourless," I stated over the phone the following day. Moriko had called at the same time as before, 3:00 pm, and I had found myself unconsciously doing small jobs waiting for the call.

"I see," offered Moriko. "And would you identify with Mr. Tazaki?"

“Somewhat, but not hugely. We all pin our identities with those around us. I have loving people in my life at the moment, however apart from my partner I do not find myself defined by them. I guess love for my partner is the only time I have built part of my identity into a relationship. I know that things don’t generally last forever, and the things that do change.”

“Thank you for your time Brendon. We will talk again tomorrow.”

I managed to get a quick “Goodbye” in before the phone hung up.

“How did you find the ending Brendon?” Moriko asked on the Friday afternoon.

“Well, I did like how the novel left off. Incomplete. Hang on, how did you know I was finished?”

“Let’s just call it women’s intuition,” replied Moriko.

“Right,” I said skeptically. “But I enjoyed how Tsukuru found out about his past and some of the mystery was solved. He had presumed the worst all along, but the people that he reconnected with knew the truth and even suspected it. He had once again presumed the worst and had little self-worth. I am glad he had an epiphany about his priorities at the end. Even if it doesn't turn out I believe he would be much happier and would be able to deal with rejection in a much healthier way.”

“Thank you for your thoughts Brendon. I am glad you enjoyed Mr. Murakami’s latest book.”

“Thank you for listening to my thoughts Moriko.”

“You are very welcome Brendon.”

And she hung up.

I stood for a while next to the phone pondering these strange conversations I had over the previous week with Moriko and had a strange feeling that this was not the last I would hear from her.

After all a new Murakami work called 'The Strange Library' was set to come out in a few more months.

Ian "Marvin" Graye says

From Young Adult to Mature

Many of Murakami's novels deal with the transition from adolescence to adulthood. This probably accounts for their amazing popularity, especially with young Japanese readers.

However, you have to wonder whether Murakami can continually plough the fields of this subject matter at his age, without losing his youthful audience.

As at the date of publication of this novel, he is aged 65, which in some countries is the traditional mandatory retirement age.

I suspect that "*Colorless Tsukuru*" is a strategic move that anticipates how he will write and what he will write about in the future. It might even enhance his reputation with older readers.

Adolescence in Retrospect

The eponymous protagonist is 36 at the time most of the novel is set. It is sixteen years since Tsukuru and his four colorful friends turned 20 years of age and in a sense made the transition to adulthood.

Although the novel is still loosely about this transition, it is told from the perspective of somebody much older, if still affected by it.

In a way, Tsukuru's pilgrimage returns him, not to some source of religious belief, but to his adolescence.

The pilgrimage is a necessary journey to the source of an understanding of his current self. However, temporally, he must eventually return to the present, when he is 36.

Inevitably, his pilgrimage will help him understand his immediate past (the last 16 years) and his present, but also his future.

My copy I

On Being Blue

At the age of 20, Tsukuru's tight-knit community comprised of four other school friends (whose names all contain the Japanese words for colors - red, blue, black and white) suddenly dissociated themselves from him without giving him a reason. From his point of view, there was no reason, and therefore every reason.

He started to think of himself as colorless, an absence, a nothing, a zero. His life consisted of nothingness. He genuinely and quite understandably lived in an abyss, on a precipice, inside a void, surrounded by darkness.

Initially, he was tempted to commit suicide. However, even this act requires some positive deliberation, and eventually he can't even collect himself together enough to take the step of jumping off the precipice.

He continues to live, not because he has decided in favour of life or against death, but he simply can't be bothered to make any decision at all.

Tsukuru assumes that the relationship with each of his friends would have continued through adulthood, but for his friends' abandonment of him. He assumes that it has continued between his four former friends.

As a result, Tsukuru clings to what he has lost, in the belief that it still exists. In a way, he holds onto something from his adolescence well into adulthood.

Doing so prevents him "growing up" and having "more adult" relationships, getting married and becoming a parent.

Happy Together

As the title indicates, the narrative of the novel consists of a pilgrimage which forces him to confront his situation.

The immediate trigger is 38 year old Sara, who is keen to have a serious relationship with him, but questions whether he is ready.

She senses that Tsukuru is trapped by an emotional and spiritual blockage. The only way to deal with it is to locate his four friends and find out why they abandoned him.

He can't simply pretend it didn't happen and move on. He has to find out and deal with it, no matter how bad their reasons might be.

Sara realises that what happened to Tsukuru was so traumatic that it not only destroyed his vitality, it destroyed his desire, his appetite, his longing.

She sets him off on the pilgrimage, not believing that he will automatically be happy, but confident that when he returns, he will be able to deal with life's challenges more effectively.

She doesn't anticipate some fairy tale ending in which everybody lives happily ever after. She simply believes in the ability of two loving adults to sort out their problems. Together.

Colorless, but Constructive

Tsukuru was always disappointed that his name didn't represent a color, like his friends. However, more importantly, it means "to create, to make, to build".

At work, he is an engineer who build railways stations that are at the hub of the transportation and communications network.

Ultimately, he has to learn to recreate, remake, rebuild himself, just as he would refurbish an existing railway station.

His station is not ready to be demolished, it just needs a little renovation.

Tokyo Metro Subway Map

Different Transitions

Tsukuru learns much from and about his friends during his pilgrimage. I won't spoil it for you. Suffice it to say that they have moved away from each other in their adult lives. The community that Tsukuru assumed had persisted without him doesn't exist. He has missed little as a result of his abandonment.

Instead, each of his friends has encountered their own challenges and problems making the transition to adulthood.

The causes are different for each of his friends. However, Murakami's message seems to be that we aren't so much challenged by external forces, like fate or evil.

What prevents us from succeeding or being happy is our own fear of failure. In love matters, we often don't express our love for another, because of a fear of non-reciprocation.

Don't Let the Bad Elves Get You

Murakami implies that we miss out on a lot of life experience and happiness, just because we lack the courage to try.

Our confidence shines its own light. It shows us the way, but it also attracts others.

In contrast, our lack of confidence is a form of darkness that obscures our vision and frustrates our happiness.

This insight connects with Murakami's increasing interest in the role of the subconscious.

While we have grown used to the magical realism in Murakami's novels, he is increasingly moving in a direction that suggests that the real darkness and unknown is within us, within our sub-conscious.

As with psychoanalysis, part of growing up is about translating the unknown into the known, and the unconscious into the conscious.

One of Tsukuru's friends farewells him with the words, *"Don't let the bad elves get you!"*

It's good advice, but it emerges from a discussion about the inner demons that plagued one of their other friends. In her case, the bad elves resided within.

So, not only do we have to keep a watch out for ourselves, we have to keep an eye on ourselves, our own demons. Perhaps, the real message is that we shouldn't let our bad selves get us.

We Can Be Happy

Ultimately, Tsukuru's pilgrimage takes him to the source of the subconscious forces that drove him towards anomie, depression, anxiety and potential suicide.

There is a sense in which this subject matter might still be intended for young adults. However, I don't think there is any preconceived limit to the audience for Murakami's fiction.

In contemporary Western society, if not Japanese and Eastern society as well, adults are just as much plagued by anxiety as adolescents. In fact, if adults were a lot happier, perhaps their children might be happier.

Happiness isn't necessarily comprised of material wealth. I think that Murakami is trying to help generate a spiritual wealth, whether or not it is theistic.

The Hero's Journey

Joseph Campbell believed that the story arc of most literature and film is a hero's journey, and that the hero has a thousand faces. (view spoiler)

One of Murakami's aims seems to be to persuade us that, in our own lives, one of those faces should be our own.

His fiction has increasingly become an attempt to combat the inauthentic prescriptions of cults and self-help groups.

Murakami's latest novel might be constructed around a hero's journey.

I suspect that the following Wiki description of Joseph Campbell's concept of the "monomyth" might even describe many of his earlier novels:

"A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure

with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man."

"Colorless Tsukuru" differs from this definition and Murakami's earlier works in that Tsukuru returns in order to deal with his problems, believing it's not adequate to escape them in some fantasist world.

It's arguable that there is no neat ending to the novel. However, you could infer that when Tsukuru returns, he will be capable of longing and he will find someone who is prepared to help him build something new. And isn't that what we all want from life, whether we're an adolescent or an adult or both?

My copy II

EXTRAS:

Mister Gray

Gray is a mixture.
Find gradations of darkness,
Not just black and white.

Colorless Gray

All through secondary school, my four best friends had names similar to mine. But not similar enough for my liking. Our surnames were all based on colours: White, Blue, Greene, Browne. And me. My name was Ian Gray then. Notice that my name had no "e" on the end. I desperately wanted that "e", so that I could be like them. I did some research in the library and discovered I couldn't change it by deed poll until I turned 18. By the time we were all 17, we were in our last year of school. I had already decided that I wanted to go to university in Canberra. The other four wanted to remain in Brisbane (notice the omnipresent "e"). Each year, I would return home, and it was just like I hadn't been away. We were the colourful five. While away, in another world, I had forgotten about changing my name by deed poll. Then one holiday when I was just about to return to Canberra to complete my last year, Blue came around to my home. It was just the two of us. Nobody else was home, not even my family. I was shocked by what he told me. He said that the four of them had decided they wanted to discontinue contact with me. I asked whether it was because of the missing "e". He just laughed, as if he had never thought of the possibility. "I can't tell you why," he said. "You'll have to work it out for yourself." He rose from the sofa and left without saying another word. He didn't even shake my hand when I offered it. I returned to Canberra, finished my degree and eventually came home at the end of the academic year. I wrote many letters to my friends that year, but they answered none of them. I cried when I arrived home and my parents greeted me. Even though I had seen them every year, I still remembered them as they had been when I lived at home and went to school. They looked frail and ill. One after the other, they died over the next 18 months. I had no siblings. Nobody objected or cared when I finally changed my name to Ian Graye. I wrote to my friends again on the off chance that they might renew our friendship, but all four of my letters came back, marked "return to sender". I was back home, alone, lonely, friendless. As I remain today. But with an "e".

Yuko Shimizu's illustration on the cover of the New York Times Book Review

Yuko Shimizu:

Yuko Shimizu explains the process by which she illustrated the review of Haruki Murakami's novel on the cover of the New York Times Book Review:

<http://nyti.ms/1p8sJ34>

SOUNDTRACK:

The Jam - "Thick as Thieves"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_VQkU...

Turtles - "Happy Together"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ZEUR...>

Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention (featuring Flo & Eddie) (Live at the Fillmore in 1971) - "Happy Together"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fqX1w...>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TBNUA...>

Altered Images - "I Could Be Happy"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dfqPJ...>

The Who - "I'm Free" [from the rock opera "Tommy"]

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uRD_g...

The Who - "I'm Free" [Live]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ux1vB...>

Buffalo Tom - "Taillights Fade"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1n_p9...

Elvis Presley - "Don't Be Cruel"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=noE1u...>

Elvis Presley - "Viva Las Vegas"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ucubL...>

Antonio Carlos Jobim - "Wave"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3d8y4...>

Antonio Carlos Jobim meets Herbie Hancock - "Wave"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hOz1e...>

Piano for three hands in two minds

Thelonious Monk - "'Round Midnight" [Solo Live in 1969]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xC68N...>

Thelonious Monk - "'Round Midnight" [Group Version in 1958]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HZskB...>

Thelonious Monk - "'Round Midnight" [Group Version in 1947]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zre0u...>

John Coltrane - "Blue Train" [Live in 1961]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d9mu3...>

Thanks to BirdBrian for letting me know that the Blue Train was coming into the station.

Robert Schumann - "Träumerei, "Kinderszenen" N° 7 (Scenes from Childhood)" (Played by Vladimir Horowitz)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6z82w...>

Franz Liszt - "Le mal du pays" (Played by Lazar Berman)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FDWUv...>

Franz Liszt - "Years of Pilgrimage" ("Années de pèlerinage")(Played by Lazar Berman)(Complete)

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list...>

Franz Liszt - "Years of Pilgrimage" ("Années de pèlerinage")

Goethe, Liszt, Murakami...

(view spoiler)

Melanie says

Here's a review I'm not looking forward to write... So I will leave the preamble to Robert J. Wiersema's thoughts in The National Post, which sadly echoed my sentiments exactly.

"Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and his Years of Pilgrimage is a stirring novel of loss and conciliation, of unanswerable mysteries, fragile hope. There are passages of considerable beauty and insight, and moments of magic and a sense of the sublime which we have come to expect from Murakami. At its most basic level, it will satisfy most Murakami readers.

Unfortunately, it likely won't do much more than satisfy; it's a problematic novel, on a number of levels.

Crucially, it seems uncertain and tentative. Where Murakami is typically at ease in describing such things as talking cats and sheep-men, here he seems to falter with the very basics of human interaction. The dialogue is stilted and stagy (beyond even what can be explained away through the process of being translated from the Japanese), and the narrative shudders unevenly.

While its important that Tsukuru's character be something of an empty vessel (his nickname comes from the fact that his four high school friends all had names which referred to colours and he did not; his colourlessness was an in-joke that became a character trait), Murakami takes it too far, and Tsukuru vacillates between extreme emotionalism and a complete lack of affect that is disconcerting and unconvincing.

Even the construction of the novel feels uncertain: There is so much recapping and summarizing (including in the final chapter), one might be forgiven for thinking that the novel was originally published in instalments, necessitating that sort of summary.

Make no mistake: Even a flawed Murakami novel is worth reading, and better than most of the other options on the shelf. One wishes, though, that it were better. Coming as it does in the wake of 1Q84, Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and his Years of Pilgrimage was always going to be a smaller Murakami novel. Unfortunately, it turns out it's a minor novel, as well."

The reviewer put his fingers on all the elements that were missing for me in this novel that I was very much looking forward to reading, like the rest of the planet. The main character's *complete lack of affect* was its main undoing for me. I could not bring myself to care enough for his plight, when the entire novel's emotional foundation depends on the reader's empathy.

The explanations behind some of the puzzles at the heart of the story seemed random and forced, without any real basis or meaning. The entire novel felt like a long, erratic walk going nowhere, along which Murakami's usual suspects (a piece of classical music, a recurring dream, an unexplained obsession, etc) did not gather the momentum that they usually do. The lingering taste being one of blandness and aimlessness.

Some scenes towards the end were vivid and memorable but all in all I kept thinking about how much I missed the sanguinity, rawness and audacity of "1Q84".

K.D. Absolutely says

My 13th Murakami book. I am torn between 2 and 3 stars but since there are no talking cats, flying leeches or Colonel Sanders in this book, I am giving this a 3. I liked this book. I mean, I loved "Wind-Up Bird" but it was one of my first Murakami books, I was a lot younger then and I still did not know that Murakami recycles the same ingredients when he cooks.

This book is almost like a rehash of "Norwegian Wood." **Tsukuru Tazaki** in this book is 36 and Toru Watanabe in Norwegian is 37 and they look back to the events that happen in their past particularly during their adolescent period. Both gentlemen had friends during that time and what happened with them affected their mental framework that they now have to sort things out and they probably just need to go to the shrink, lie down on the couch and pour out what's in the minds. It would save them a lot as Tazaki would not need to Finland to hunt **Kuro** who says that she now prefers to be called **Eri** and I hate people doing that. If you are Kuro to me when we were younger, you will always be Kuro even if you are old as the name brings back our memories and they better be happy because if not, then I will probably not talk or even see you anymore.

What I am trying to say is that the characters in this book are self-absorbed. Tsukuru says that he is colorless because his name has not word that denotes color in Japanese (ehem, my surname is Oliveros and I know that olive is a color) and he has nothing to give and he has nowhere to go. Then later in the story, when, after 16 years, his friends tell him that he is the most handsome and in fact probably 3 (2 girls and 1 gay) of the four had hots on him. He is also the son of a wealthy businessman who owns a condo unit in Tokyo and he has nothing to give? Oh come on, in the Philippines, we call this person *maarte* or *emotero*.

The saving grace of this book though, it is ability to make you look back at your past especially those that influence your personality: those events that made you who you are now. Last month, my first girlfriend died of heart attack. She was still single at 51. I was told that she did not have a boyfriend other than me and in fact we did not have a formal breakup. We were in that island (my hometown) in the Pacific and we were in third year high school (15/16 years old) when we fell in love with each other and our relationship stayed up to the following year. However, her family had no money to send her to college. So, when I left to go to the city, I did not say goodbye thinking that we would still be communicating. But things just got to busy for me in college: no time to write letters because I had to help running the boarding house of my grandmother when I was not in school or sleeping or studying my lessons. No money even for stamps as my parents had tuition and food money but not for anything else including sometimes, decent clothes. So, our relationship just fizzled like that and no time or effort to have a closure. We just did not chase each other. I was busy and fell in love with a couple of other girls before marrying my wife ten years after the last time I left the island.

What I am trying to say here is that I felt pain when I heard the news that morning. The pain of losing a part of me. I loved her when I was 15 till 16 years old but still she was part of who I am now. As the book says something like: "You can forget about the past but you cannot erase the history of it." (I tried looking for the exact words as I forgot to dogear the page haha).

Not the best Murakami. I'd still go for "Kafka on the Shore" or "After Dark" or "Wind Up Bird." Those all got 4 stars from me. But this brought back Murakami for me. I liked the book that I could not put it down while reading but in the final analysis the three other books are a lot better.

Maria says

“You can hide memories, but you can't erase the history that produced them.”

This is barely my second Murakami reading. Having "*Kafka on the Shore*" in my mind, read just a couple of months ago, I thought I would also find that bizarre, transcendental and almost phantasmagorical similar experience. "*Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage*" is written under a complete different ambiance, yet it possesses certain Murakami essentials I begin to recognize in his style and probably every other Murakami fan is already completely familiar with: The jazz, the symbolic dreams, the sexual fantasies, those metaphysical experiences, a voyage to the subconscious mind of the character.

Tsukuru Tazaki (whose name means "To build") belongs to a symbiotic group of five friends. Each one of their names represent a color as well as each one possess a certain quality or talent except Tsukuru, at least that's how he constantly feels. After a sudden and unexpected event, Tsukuru is simply cut down from this quintessential group. Deeply affected by this and without receiving or asking for an explanation he decides to leave to Tokyo, where he becomes an engineer and works for a company that builds train stations. Tsukuru does not only leaves Nagoya to try to overcome this dark episode of his life, he also becomes unavailable to make new friends out of fear of experiencing rejection again in his life.

"Because I have no sense of self. I have no personality, no brilliant color. I have nothing to offer. That's always been my problem. I feel like an empty vessel. I have a shape, I guess, as a container, but there's nothing inside...."

Have you ever had that feeling, of not belonging? No matter how hard you try, you're just not made to fit like the rest of your group. Are YOU just as colorless as the main character of this story? If you have ever had those feelings then you'll probably understand Tsukuru emotional struggle. This story appears as a simple one but is not at all, the brilliance of this books relies not in a complex plot or an elaborated use of language, but more in giving the reader the ability to experience the solitude, the loneliness of the character. For me, "*Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage*" more than a reading was like enjoying a soft melody, not over-thinking or analyzing it, just relaxing and letting myself experience Tsukuru's mixture of feelings and thoughts. The book is exactly like the piano musical piece that Murakami offers us in this occasion: "Years of Pilgrimage", the narrative follows a very relaxing and smooth flow of lyricism that simply captivates you.

"*Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage*" is not only about loneliness, a depressive story behind this young man, is also about friendship. In the middle of such emptiness, Tsukuru finds Sara, that unique friend we are fortunate to find in our lives that help us confront our fears, our pains and become a wonderful guide, someone who holds our hand through a long journey to rediscover ourselves and give us a second chance to perhaps love once again.

"It was a wonderful thing to be able to truly want someone like this-- the feeling was so real, so overpowering. He hadn't felt this way in ages. Maybe he never had before. Not that everything about it was wonderful: his chest ached, he found it hard to breathe, and a fear, a dark oscillation, had hold of him. But now even that kind of ache had become an important part of the affection he felt. He didn't want to let that feeling slip from his grasp. Once lost, he might never happen across that warmth again. If he had to lose it, he would rather lose himself."

Do you have someone in your life, from your past, you need to confront, to forgive and maybe let go a heavy burden you've been carrying all along during your entire life?

I do.

Maybe I don't know what color would I represent in this world of Murakami, but what I do know, is that life

consists of a continuous search of dreams, experiences, and those daily details that make our ephemeral life full of brilliant colors.

"Don't let the bad elves get you!"

To listen "Le mal du pays" by Lazar Berman --> <http://youtu.be/FDWUvc5wv7U>

s.penkevich says

'Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards.'

-Søren Kierkegaard

It is a shame that we cannot relive the past, only merely recreate it. We bear the scars of events we can only comprehend in retrospect, but must rely on flawed memory and biased examinations of what truly came to pass. Internationally acclaimed novelist Haruki Murakami's 2014 novel, *Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage*—a title that screams of pure Murakami whimsy and flair¹, is a novel about looking back down the tracks of life from the speeding train of time hurling us towards unknown horizons. This quiet, introspective novel follows Tsukuru Tazaki as he sleuths through his past, reexamining his mysterious expulsion from a high school group of peers that *'were a perfect combination, the five of us. Like five fingers.'* While it is a sleek novel both engaging and easy to read, it opens up a deep cavern of thought where the reader must themselves bridge the opposite sides of the narratorial chasms, drawing their own conclusions much like Tsukuru must from the retrospective ruminations of his former friends. Murakami succeeds with this ponderous novel about the uncertainties of identity, identity formed and forged internally but highly persuaded by the external elements and how we see ourselves in the mirrors of our peers interactions with us.

With *Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki*, Murakami achieves a wonderfully delicate balance of his authorial duality—both his coming-of-age realist narratives and the more fantastical and playful style full of parallel universes and magic—crafting a melancholy, introspective investigation of self with an eerie sense of mythicity looming in the peripherals of the page. As with most Murakami there are parallel narratives (of time instead of parallel universes in this novel) that are deftly weaved together to keep the plot compelling and extract the most from each plotline at precisely the correctly controlled moment. Much of the novel goes unanswered, with Tsukuru and the reader only able to speculate the truth and fear that the realm of dreams may impose upon the world of waking reality. This is much of the novel's charm and acts authentically as true reality where we have no concrete finality and must compose an identity based on incomplete experimentations and inferences. The questions that truly matter in life are not simple or able to be explained through clear, concise language but through fluid explanations that are always seemingly just at the tip of reason; it is only through abstraction and faith in our own logic that we can come to terms with the mystery of the world around us. The novel itself is much like Haida's description of the Liszt piece.

The piece seems simple technically, but it's hard to get the expression right. Play it just as it's written on the score and it winds up pretty boring. But go the opposite route and interpret it too intensely, and it sounds cheap.

The intricacies of the novel would fall flat if inked by lesser authors, yet Murakami applies the lightest touch and allows each moment to sing with grace.

'One heart is not connected to another through harmony alone. They are, instead, linked deeply through their wounds. Pain linked to pain, fragility to fragility. There is no silence without a cry of grief, no forgiveness without bloodshed, no acceptance without a passage through acute loss. This is what lies at the

root of true harmony'

The problem that serves as the sparse plot's impetus is Tsukuru's feeling of colorlessness in life, spurred by an unfortunate disassociation from his close-knit group of high school friends—all with names denoting a color except for Tsukuru's—for reasons undisclosed to him. After being banned from association, Tsukuru falls into a period of intense, suicidal grief and after getting back on his feet has formed a self-identity that assumes himself as colorless and empty. He continues this way until his girlfriend during his thirties sends him on a quest to reconnect and unearth the truth of his past. Among the mysteries that he encounters, Tsukuru learns that he has a flawed sense of self amalgamated by the expulsion and lack of peer interaction, learning that among the group he was in fact thought of as the most self-assured, most attractive and most successful². The constant bemoaning and low-self esteem of Tsukuru may grate on some readers, however, Murakami does well to create an authentic psychological profile to account for why an intensely attractive male with a line of women eager to sleep with him would believe himself to be so inconsequential. '*You can hide memories, but you can't erase the history that produced them,*' Tsukuru thinks, and regardless of how hard he tries to continue on with his life, the past has issued profound wounds on his ego that refuse to fade with time.

Color, or the lack thereof, figures prominently in the novel. The characters with colorful names seem to have pre-made, nearly stereotypical identities, which would seem enviable to someone without a sense of self, especially someone who is thrown from their pedestal into the pit of everyday life without a life-line of friendly support. However, Tsukuru's name means 'to build', and that is exactly what he must do. Like the train stations he builds and restores, he must build a sense of self then gut it and restore it to improve upon the flaws that fail to accommodate the reality he resides in. The character Haida, who temporarily assuages Tsukuru's loneliness and peerlessness before a mysterious disappearance, has a name associated with the color grey. The two female figures of his childhood peers bore the names of White and Black, and Haida seems to be a balance of the two in Tsukuru's life, complete with a sexual awakening and awkwardness born only in dream but feared to have a residual effect in his waking life. The essence of colors extends beyond that of characters names, such as the way colors found in the natural world also fall into a matrix of meaning. Green, it would seem, is a color that provides solace to Tsukuru, such as the Green Line trains that he watches come and go from a train station to relax and calm his mind, or the green eyes of his girlfriend's Finnish counterpart that immediately wrap him in a feeling of trust and comfort.

The interactions, with particular regard to dialogue and the sexual encounters described between Tsukuru and the women in his life, have a tendency to feel stilted and quite clinical (to borrow a term used in the insights of a dear friend when discussing the novel). There is nearly no passion in the sex scenes, merely anatomical commingling as if from a textbook, and the dialogue is often overly flat and direct, with characters speaking with a mannerism removed from emotion and natural cadence. While this is not in keeping with the natural poetry of Murakami's narration, or with the style of his other novels, it leads the reader to infer that these clinical interactions are as 'colorless' as Tsukuru believes himself to be, yet it is not him that is colorless but the world and the lesser people around him. It is the friendships, the love, the striving for success and betterment that provides color in this world. Murakami profits by keeping the tone and description within the boundaries implied by character, keeping true to what best fits the novel at a given moment and not what best suits a display of authorial his ego, and he should be applauded for it. However, the novel does feel simile heavy with poetic observations seemingly tacked on at the end of sentences where the use of a metaphor instead would have reduced the staccato bursts of the poetic and aided in crafting a fluidly flowing river of prose (as opposed to creating prose like a fluid, flowing river).

One minor detail that could be also accounted for as an expression of character though leaves a bitter taste in the mouth is a vague sense of sexism prevailing throughout the novel. The female characters tend to exist primarily as an extension of Tsukuru's ego—either as a boost or deterrent of—and have little to offer outside the realm of sexuality. Take for example his girlfriend who provides little information about herself, sidestepping any character exposition by stating that 'it isn't very interesting' whenever conversation steers

towards a position where generally one would reveal a bit about themselves and instead keeps the topic of conversation constantly orbiting Tsukuru's emotional state. It would seem that Tsukuru's world is also populated by shallow, unfaithful women who exist primarily as sexual objects and want to do nothing besides talk about Tsukuru. Also disquieting is when discussing the (view spoiler). Tsukuru even generalizes women in a particular passage as

Their hair is always nicely curled. They major in French literature at expensive private women's colleges, and after graduation find jobs as receptionists or secretaries. They work for a few years, visit Paris for shopping once a year with their girlfriends. They finally catch the eye of a promising young man in the company, or else are formally introduced to one, and quit work to get married. They then devote themselves to getting their children into famous private schools.

Passages such as this are sure to raise a few eyebrows.

Despite a few cumbersome moments, *Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki* is a delicate and breathless achievement of beauty that plays all the right notes on themes of identity and alienation. The novel breezes along at a fast pace through the introspective reflections and discussions, with wonderful story-within-a-story asides such as the tale of Haida's father that highlight the expertise of Murakami as a storyteller regardless of the thematic canvases of his tales. Murakami accrues a wide collection of universal problems to ponder that are sure to dazzle any reader, just don't expect a cut and dry solution. 'This was a problem that had nothing to do with language,' Tsukuru reflects, and the answers are best discovered in the creativity of the readers own mind and not sitting static upon a page.

3.5/5

'Our lives are like a complex musical score, filled with all sorts of cryptic writing, sixteenth and thirty-second notes and other strange signs. It's next to impossible to correctly interpret these, and even if you could, and then could transpose them into the correct sounds, there's no guarantee that people would correctly understand, or appreciate, the meaning therein.'

¹ The title also is a playful homage to the musical piece *Le Mal du Pays* by Franz Liszt which figures as a motif in the novel. The Liszt piece was commonly played on piano by Tsukuru former friend and is presented here performed by Lazar Berman —the preferred version of the character Haida. Murakami often inserts a subdued soundtrack of classical music into his novels, such as the Thieving Magpie in *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, using musical motifs to harmonize with the interior themes. There are several allusions to Jean Sibelius when Tsukuru visits Sibelius' birthtown of Hämeenlinna to meet with his former friend Eri (or, Kuru). Among Sibelius' most notable works is *The Swan of Tuonela* which tells the story of a sacred swan and a hunter who is killed, and later reborn, while attempting to hunt the swan. This tale seems a mythical metaphor to Tsukuru own story.

² 'Did the others really need him,' Tsukuru wonders after his friends reject him. However, balance plays a key role, and without Tsukuru the group of friends could no longer function as a single unit. It is as if he were a thumb, a key element of the 'hands' function. There is a lengthy discussion about a medical condition causing people to be born with six fingers, which apparently causes an imbalance in the hand that must be corrected, primarily though for aesthetic purposes. Perhaps the trimming of Tsukuru, for what is revealed to be a shallow, 'saving-face' aesthetic-like purpose considering the actual disbelief of his friends, is much like this operation. However, Tsukuru was not an extraneous digit of the friendship but highly integral to its success. Also revealed in the medical discussion is that many famous artists and creators were afflicted with the condition, and the creator nature of Tsukuru may also be abstractly associated with this trimming of the sixth finger.

Helene Jeppesen says

As a fan of Haruki Murakami's, this book thrilled me! That's because this novel combines an intriguing and puzzling plot with a beautiful and simple way of looking at life. I was fascinated with the protagonist's way of thinking and dealing reasonably with life, and furthermore it was a pleasure to once again read a story set in Japan because it inevitably intertwines with Japanese culture.

Regrettably, this book didn't come with a lot of magical realism which is, however, a common trait of Murakami's. I didn't miss any, though, because the story worked so well on its own, and I think that if you kind of like Murakami but don't agree with magical realism, this would be just the book for you.

A story about loss, a story about identity and a story about finding the answers to your questions and fill out the holes inside of you. This was magnificent, and needless to say I flew through it in less than a day.

Koen Van den Eeckhout says

To me, Murakami's books are like ice cream. Many people will claim that it's just more of the same, and in a way they are right. But I am not complaining, because it's just more of the same delicious, luscious thing. Also, while a too large bowl of ice cream can cause stomach troubles (maybe like *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicles*), this time Murakami limits himself to a nice amount of 360 pages.

I will not go into much detail on the plot. At the age of 20, Tsukuru Tazaki is kicked out of his brotherhood of five friends, three boys and two girls. Each of them has a colorful name: Red, Blue, White and Black, except for Tsukuru. It's representative for the way he thinks about himself: colorless, with nothing valuable to offer the rest of the group - or even the world. Little does he know that that's not the way the others think about him. So, which point of view is the right one?

The major part of the book is a quest to find out why he was so harshly removed from his circle of friends. A quest set to the tones of 'Le mal du pays', a melancholic melody from Liszt's 'Années de pèlerinage' (a hint towards the title of the book). All of this gives the book an atmosphere very similar to *Norwegian Wood*.

I had a hard time deciding whether to give this book four or five stars. On the positive side: I love the melancholic atmosphere, the story is not too intangible, it has the perfect length, the characters are believable, I - almost - couldn't put it down. On the negative side: some readers (maybe those not very familiar with Murakami) will remain dissatisfied. There are several loose ends and some unexplained situations. In other words, it's more of the same old thing.

I love it.

Hadrian says

Source of the original image here.

No bingo this time.

I've had an awfully hard time trying to write a review for this one. When I try to write an honest review, non-professional that I am, I try to write something that's 1) more substantive than what the back blurb would say, and 2) something which would help myself or any other reader distinguish this from anything else the author has written. I don't always meet both of these qualifications, but here I'm just at a total loss.

The basic tropes of Murakami are the same as before - but then again, many fiction writers have favorite or recurring images in their works - to take an almost random sample, Borges has his labyrinths, Twain has steamboats, Tolstoy has French, Vollmann has his whores and WW2 references. To continue this extended example, Murakami has his trains, weird sex, and urban ennui.

But now we're at the point where I'm having a hard time telling this book apart from the rest of his work. Murakami even stays with the same emotional motifs - the difficulty of growing up, the hard truths about how people change as time passes. There's a touch of magical realism here, but not as much as 1Q84 or the Wind-Up Bird Chronicle.

There's also a possibility of whether all these books about ennui have their own 'meta-narrative' - as if writing on ennui necessarily leads to repetition because it's a stunting process in our own emotional growth. It's almost as if boredom and fear of the unknown are easily translated concepts, and thus a more understood part of Murakami's own appeal.

Colorless Tsukuru is not a bad book, but one which fades into the rest of Murakami's work. If these toils and troubles ache out for you still strongly, then this book is another worthy place for them. If not, then go elsewhere.

Fabian says

Depressing Haruki Murakami facsimile of the most amateurish kind. It's evocative, transcendent, but solely in a topically-curt, almost embarrassingly-superficial way. The easy prose by now has entered a very comical dimension.

This is farce. It is all simplicity, nuance; it's all pretty... empty.

Is this (the beginning of) the downfall of our very beloved Japanese contemporary literary master?

Darwin8u says

"You can hide memories, but you can't erase the history that produced them."
? Haruki Murakami, Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki

A slow soak in a bath of music, color, friends, loneliness, philosophy, creation and death. Murakami is a genius at writing with emotions swirling beneath the text. He gets the importance of the notes AND the silence of prose; of the unsaid, dreamy place that is both recognized and strange.

This isn't his most exciting work, but it is clearly not a throw-away either. It brings all the usual suspects to the Murakami table. Murakami writes best when he makes the reader feel like they are just near the surface

of wakefulness. He bends the reader into a zone where it feels like a strange contractive tendency of the surface between sleep and wakefulness between musical, lucid dreams and surreal, philosophical nightmares.

It feels like you are balancing blind on the edge of a train platform; you feel the sound of the train and feel the compression of his words, but don't know if the Murakami train is going to hit you from the left or the right.
