

The Alchemy of Recovery in *Colorless*
Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage

Jonathan Dil
(Keio University)

要旨

『色彩を持たない多崎つくると、彼の巡礼の年』は寓意的な解釈を誘う作品である。当初から、一群の批評家たちは、この作品を 3・11 への応答として読んできたのだが、本作を精査してみると、単にトラウマから回復する被害者の物語として読むだけでは十分でないことが分かる。多崎つくると本人も罪を犯した側の人間であるかもしれず、その読みはまた別の寓意的な読解の可能性へとつながっていく。それと同時に、本作は村上が以前から探究してきた治癒のテーマに焦点を当て、それを深化、発展させていったものとも言える。本論の主眼は、多崎つくるとの治癒の過程がある道筋を通っていることを証明することにある。その道筋とは、何世紀も前の錬金術師たちによって構想されたものであり、前世紀にはカール・ユングによって、その詳細が分析されたものである。

Shikisai o motanai Tazaki Tsukuru to, kare no junrei no toshi (*Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage*, 2013, English translation 2014, hereafter *Colorless*) is one of Murakami Haruki's easier novels to summarize. Basically, it is a story about trauma (through social ostracism) and recovery. Tazaki Tsukuru, the main protagonist, grows up in Nagoya and in high school meets four friends, each of whom has a color in their name: the boys, Akamatsu (Red Pine) Kei and Oumi (Blue Sea) Yoshio; and the girls, Shirane (White Root) Yuzuki, and Kurono (Black Field) Eri. For convenience, they soon begin calling each other by their colors: Aka (Red), Ao (Blue), Shiro (White), and Kuro (Black). Only Tsukuru, whose name means "to make", is without a color in his name, a fact which at times leaves him feeling left out.

In what is described as "a lucky but entirely accidental chemical fusion" the five friends meet at an after-school volunteer group and form a "beautiful community" (*Colorless*, 4, 19). Once high school finishes, of the five friends, only Tsukuru chooses to leave Nagoya, heading to Tokyo to pursue his dream of becoming a designer of train stations. He returns to Nagoya as much as circumstances allow, and for a time it seems that nothing has changed in the group dynamics, until one day he finds that none of his friends will return his phone calls. Eventually, he makes contact with Blue, who tells him not to contact any of them any longer. Rather than explaining why, Blue simply tells him, "Think about it, and you'll figure it out" (*Colorless*, 28).

This rejection comes to Tsukuru in July of his sophomore year and for the next half a year all he can think about is dying. He barely manages to get through this dark period in his life but gradually a process of recovery begins. He meets a friend called Haida (Gray Field) and hears his story about his father's encounter years earlier with Midorikawa (Green River), details I will return to later. Tsukuru goes on to achieve his dream of becoming an engineer (though the job actually requires reforming old stations more than it does designing new ones). He has some relationships with women along the way, though nothing too serious, but now, sixteen years after the end of his "beautiful community" he is seeing someone new, Kimoto Sara, and is hopeful that their relationship can go further. To this point, Sara suggests, Tsukuru has been "alone but not lonely" (*Colorless*, 22).

In a pattern common to Murakami's recent fiction, Tsukuru is hopeful that detachment can now give way to attachment.

Sara is interested in Tsukuru, but her instincts tell her that something is wrong with him and that unless he can sort this something out he will not be able to commit to her completely. Acting in part as his therapist, she tells him that he has "unresolved emotional issues" and encourages him to go back and confront his four colorful friends (*Colorless*, 85). Unless he understands the reasons for what happened, Sara suggests, Tsukuru will remain stuck where he is forever. Sara investigates the present location and situation of each of the four friends and passes this information on to Tsukuru. Based on this information, he first travels to Nagoya where he meets Blue and Red and later to Finland where he meets Black. Unfortunately, it is too late to meet White, who was strangled to death six years earlier in an apartment in Hamamatsu (a city between Nagoya and Tokyo). The rest of the story offers details of the visits Tsukuru makes to the three surviving friends in search of healing and closure.

Colorless is a novel which invites allegorical interpretations. Published in 2013, it was Murakami's first post 3.11 novel, and so the first question many critics posed was how it might be read as a response to the triple disaster: the March 11th, 2011, Tōhoku earthquake, tsunami, and failure at the Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant in Fukushima. *Colorless* does not reference this disaster directly, but its focus on themes of trauma and recovery does resonate with the historical moment in which it was published. An historical event that is referenced in the novel is the 1995 sarin gas attack by Aum, and if we add sixteen years to this event, much like the sixteen years Tsukuru has spent in recovery, we end up in 2011. Rebecca Suter offers a good example of how *Colorless* might be read as a response to the 3.11 disaster.

Suter starts with the government response to the triple disaster and its focus on the concept of *kizuna* (ties or bonds) that was used to try and unite the country in a time of great difficulty. While not unsympathetic to this public discourse, Suter wonders what it simultaneously ignores, and she sees in *Colorless* a desire to go beyond this official public narrative. Instead, *Colorless* focuses on a character who has been pushed from a collective and is struggling to face his trauma on his own. Arguably, he represents those Japanese who were forced to face 3.11 without ties or bonds, those who had to find their own inner resources to work through their pain and loss. Suter writes,

Without in any way denying the extraordinary generosity and solidarity that was deployed by Japanese citizens in the aftermath of 3.11, it is important to note that what was erased from these stories was any sense of alienation and isolation that may have been experienced by individuals in the face of the sudden and inexplicable loss of their homes, their loved ones, and their means of living. In the effort toward national recovery, there seemed to be no room for feelings of dejection and separation.

Murakami's novel represents precisely those feelings by focusing on Tsukuru's seemingly unrelated, yet deeply similar, individual story of loss and grief (Suter, 305-306).

Tsukuru's name can be read in this same light, as Ōnishi Wakata points out. Tazaki literally means "many capes" and so can be taken as a reference to the distinctive coastline of the Tōhoku region most affected by the tsunami. The name Tsukuru, on the other hand, reflects the post-disaster imperative to rebuild. Ōnishi points out the significance of a slogan offered by a group of artists in the aftermath of the disaster: *tsukuru koto ga ikiru koto* (To make is to live) (Quoted in Wakatsuki,

12). In this way, Tazaki Tsukuru stands as a symbol of the post-disaster imperative to rebuild the damage done to the Sanriku region, a desire to make and to live in the face of devastating loss.

At the same time, there is a darker side to Tsukuru's recovery that undermines this simple reading of *Colorless* as a simple allegory of recovery. Once Tsukuru learns that Shiro has been raped and later murdered, he soon begins to wonder if he might in some way be guilty. Much like the "murders" committed by Gotanda in *Dance Dance Dance* and Kafka in *Kafka on the Shore*, this would seem to be a murder committed in some other metaphysical space, in short a metaphor that Tsukuru must come to accept as a lived reality even if its actual reality remains a mystery. As the third-person narrator of *Colorless* explains,

It might have all been a dream, but he still couldn't escape the feeling that, in some indefinable way, he was responsible. And not just for the rape, but for her murder. On that rainy May night something inside of him, unknown to him, may have slipped away to Hamamatsu and strangled that thin, lovely, fragile neck (*Colorless*, 225).

The reason Tsukuru's friends cut him off so suddenly, he later learns, was Shiro's claim that he had raped her. She had told her friends that Tsukuru had "a public face and a hidden, private face", that there was "something unhinged and detached from the side of him that everyone knew" (*Colorless*, 132). What she was suggesting is that he was a kind of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde character, and Tsukuru believes this may be true, though only in a "purely symbolic way" (*Colorless*, 256). As in much of Murakami's fiction, what this means for how we should interpret the narrative is never definitively answered. Did Tsukuru kill Shiro in a dissociated state, i.e., did the Mr. Hyde side of himself first rape and then later murder the woman he loved while the Dr. Jekyll side of himself remained oblivious to the whole thing? Or did Tsukuru perhaps kill Shiro through somebody else, much like the idea of spirit projection first explored in *Kafka on the Shore*, and if so, who might this other person be? Or perhaps this is all supposed to stop at the psychological level; Tsukuru must accept, like Kafka in *Kafka on the Shore*, that "in dreams begin responsibilities" (*Kafka on the Shore*, 121). What he must confront, in other words, is the unconscious desire he had to rape and murder Shiro, even if he did not actually do it.

Whichever interpretation one prefers, what these possibilities all do is complicate the simple recovery allegory outlined above. Instead, Tsukuru now potentially becomes both victim and victimizer. This in turn offers up new allegorical possibilities for the novel. For example, could Tsukuru's journey now be read as an allegory for Japan's recovery from the Second World War, a recovery made possible by the nation's own dissociations from the past? The rape and murder here might be read as a metaphor for the comfort women issue, say, or perhaps a reference to the "rape of Nanking", to borrow Iris Chang's metaphor. What such a reading of *Colorless* suggests is that while dissociation is sometimes needed in the early stages of recovery, over time dissociated memories must be confronted if full recovery is to occur. As Sara tells Tsukuru, "You can hide memories, but you can't erase the history that produced them" (*Colorless*, 32). This might be taken as Murakami's message to his own country.

The main problem with this second allegorical reading is that Tsukuru never really confronts the meaning of these potentially dissociated memories, so even if this is the point of the novel, it is never fully developed. The possibility that he is Shiro's rapist and murderer is suggested, but then just as quickly it melts into the background and the main victim narrative, the trauma and

recovery narrative arc, returns. To read the novel in this way then is not entirely satisfying. At best, it might be read as an allegory about the failure of overcoming dissociation in postwar Japan, the way victim narratives continue to dominate in the Japanese collective conscious. This is a reading that fits with public comments Murakami has made on the topic of responsibility and the triple disaster. Speaking in an interview for Mainichi Newspaper, for example, Murakami explained,

I feel one of the problems Japan continues to face is the evasion of personal responsibility. Whether it's the end of the war in 1945 or the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident in 2011, no one really takes responsibility. That's how it feels to me. For example, at the end of the war, the understanding was that, in the end, no one was at fault. That is, the villains were the military cliques, even the Emperor was their pawn; the general population was deceived and suffered. The people are the victims in this narrative. It is little wonder that Chinese and North and South Koreans get so angry. The Japanese people tend only to have a shallow conception of themselves as perpetrators, and the trend only seems to be getting stronger. It's the same for the nuclear problem. We haven't thought seriously about who the perpetrators are. Of course, victims and victimizers can be mixed in together, but if we carry on in this vein, the only big perpetrators in the end are going to be the earthquake and the tsunami and everyone else is going to be let off as victims. Just like the war. It's my biggest worry (Mainichi).

Murakami precedes these comments by saying that, as a novelist, he prefers not to make direct statements on issues, that instead he prefers to let his fiction do the talking. Here though he has made an exception, and this very direct statement about the 3.11 disaster does give us a way to understand the allegorical nature of *Colorless*. Tsukuru's journey is *both* about heroic recovery from trauma *and* about the way this is sometimes accomplished through dissociation, a state which cuts us off from our role as perpetrators. It is one of the rare occasions perhaps where Murakami has given us a clear key to interpreting one of his works.

At the same time, *Colorless* is more than just a response from Murakami to recent historical events. In its theme of living in the aftermath of the collapse of a seemingly perfect community, it picks up on a theme that has continued to emerge in Murakami's fiction. In *Colorless*, the group formed by Tsukuru and his colorful friends is described as an "equilateral pentagon" or at other times as a "perfect circle" (*Colorless*, 12, 177). In *Norwegian Wood*, Naoko describes her relationship with Kizuki in the same way, while noting that "Such perfect little circles are impossible to maintain" (*Norwegian Wood*, 170). Shiro, in this way, is a character connected to Naoko. She is someone who both longs for and fears "perfect little circles". In both novels, the main protagonist suffers his psychological blow, his separation from the girl he loves, in his second year of university. In both novels this pushes him to the brink of death, forcing him to slowly claw his way back to life. Watanabe, the main protagonist of *Norwegian Wood*, struggles to recover from the shock of losing Naoko so that he can commit to Midori, and the novel ends with him reaching out in this direction. Tsukuru is seeking for similar emotional growth so that can commit to Sara. In this way, *Colorless* feels like a return to familiar territory.

Saeki in *Kafka on the Shore* also describes the relationship she had with a boyfriend years earlier as like living in a "perfect circle" (*Kafka on the Shore*, 364). Her boyfriend was killed in the student protests of the late 1960s, a case of mistaken identity, and she would have to live in the

aftermath of his death. Unfortunately, Saeki never truly recovers from this tragedy, thus offering a more negative example of what can happen after the collapse of a perfect circle. Compared to these earlier examples, Tsukuru's recovery goes further and ends more optimistically, thus demonstrating an evolution in Murakami's treatment of this theme. It also offers a much more detailed roadmap to the road of recovery—color-coded even—one that is possible to trace through the framework of alchemy. This at first may seem a strange claim to make, alchemy most commonly understood as the mystical (read misguided) precursor to modern chemistry, the medieval (or at times earlier) quest to turn base metals into gold, to discover the philosopher's stone, or to create or discover the elixir of life. It was Carl Jung who saw in this tradition an historical precedent for his own depth psychology, the journey of individuation that was about letting go of the ego to discover the Self, and who almost singlehandedly resurrected interest in the *opus* or "sacred work" of the alchemists. *Colorless*, I will argue, explicitly references this psychological understanding of the alchemical process, starting with the "special chemistry" of the five friends already mentioned.

Alchemy offers numerous terms for the processes metals must go through on their way to becoming gold, but Jeffrey Raff usefully simplifies them into two main ones: "Alchemy proceeded by separation and reunification, *solve et coagula*, a procedure that might be repeated many times" (Raff, xxi). A first step for the alchemist was separation, to take whatever metal they had and to return it to the *prima materia* or "first matter", a process that was known as *motificatio* or *nigredo*. This would occur through adding heat to the metal in a controlled way which would blacken it. In psychological terms, this blackening stage can be read as a metaphor for depression or even death, a state that might symbolically be represented as a moonless night. This is the dark night of the soul or what Tsukuru describes in *Colorless* as like being tossed from a ship into the night-time sea (*Colorless*, 165). In Tsukuru's case, the *nigredo* is the half year he spent thinking constantly about death following the breakdown of his "perfect circle". In alchemy, this is the first step in a gradual progression of colors, from black to white (or silver), (in some models) through yellow, and finally to red (or gold). In symbolic terms this takes us from the darkness of night, to the white (or silver) of the moonlit night, and finally through to the red of daybreak. For Jung, the work the alchemist was involved in by transforming metals through different color stages was an outer representation of an inner transformation.

Alchemy offers some context to Tsukuru's name, which means "to make", not in a high, conceptual way, but in a concrete, practical way: to make something with your hands. Alchemy, James Hillman explains, is a "hand-work", a transferring of "technology into psychology" (Hillman 1995, locs. 113, 153). Tsukuru recognises the power of his name. Before his name he had "been nothing—dark, nameless chaos and nothing more. ... [E]verything began with his name" (*Colorless*, 49). His role is to make something from chaos, to take the *prima materia* revealed from the dissolution of his perfect circle and to turn it into psychological gold. In psychological readings of alchemy, the flame used to heat the metal is desire or libido. This, of course, is the same flame that breaks down Tsukuru's perfect circle. The unspoken rule of the group had been to repress the sexual desire they felt for one other, to put the harmony of the group above their own needs, a tendency Sara later describes as unnatural (*Colorless*, 176). Tsukuru clearly had deep feelings for White (Shiro), and Black (Kuro) later confesses her own strong feelings for Tsukuru at the time. So how were they able to resist the flame of desire for so long?

In alchemy, while heat is necessary, it must be controlled. Heating things either too fast or too slow produces the wrong result. What is needed are vessels or containers, objects which are

empty inside and which can contain and separate substances (and their respective colors) as necessary. This was Tsukuru's role in the group, something which takes him some time to recognize. Tsukuru often describes himself as an empty vessel, a colorless member of the group who had nothing to offer. What he realizes in hindsight is how painful his decision to leave for Tokyo after high school had been for everybody. "Without me in the equation, part of that sense of unity we always had was inevitably going to vanish," he confesses to Sara. "The chemistry, too," she adds (*Colorless*, 20). Part of what Tsukuru comes to realize is the importance of his role as an empty vessel, a message which is relayed to him by Kuro (Eri), who in Finland has now become a producer of empty vessels herself in the form of pottery:

Let's say you are an empty vessel. So what? What's wrong with that?" Eri said. "You're still a wonderful, attractive vessel. And really, does anybody know who they are? So why not be a completely beautiful vessel? The kind people feel good about, the kind people want to entrust with precious belongings (*Colorless*, 260).

While the first stage of the alchemical process, the blackening, does not feel positive, it is necessary, a deconstruction that allows for future construction. What can heal this stage, James Hillman explains, is a decapitation, a severing of the head from the body that opens up a space for analysis: "According to Jung, the black spirit is to be beheaded, an act that separates understanding from its identification with suffering. ...Blackness remains, but the distinction between head and body creates a two, while suffering imprisons in singleness" (Hillman 1995, locs. 1768-1772). In other words, the first stage of blackness does not allow for analysis because there is no separation from the experience. You are the blackness. Decapitation does not end the blackness, but it does open up a gap, a distance from which (psycho)analysis can begin. For Tsukuru, what ends his first suicidal stage is a dream. This is not a dream about decapitation per se, but it is about a woman who can separate her body and her heart. Tsukuru is told by this woman that he can have either her body or her heart, but not both, a condition which drives him crazy and which releases a new emotion in him: jealousy. He wants the entire woman, not just part of her, and he later realizes that this dream ended the period of life when he wanted to die. The separation of body and heart here is symbolic of a move he must make in the short term. The feeling of jealousy, the desire to have the whole woman, reflects a desire for healing or recovery. Tsukuru's road to recovery has begun.

In the journey from black to white, alchemy highlights the role of blue. When Tsukuru later makes his journey to see his old friends, a journey that in part is about coming to terms with the death of White, the first character he goes to see is Blue. In psychological terms, experiencing "the blues" is one step on from identifying with the black. The blues can be sung, one can give voice to things, the head and the body can start reconnecting again. Hillman picks up on all these associations with blue, including the traditionally blue virtues of "constancy and fidelity", attributes Ao personifies (at university he is the rugby captain and later he becomes a Toyota Lexus salesman; he is always faithful and committed to the team) (Hillman 1995, loc. 1984). Hillman also notes the sexual fantasies that can arise in blue (noting the association blue has with pornography, such as with blue movies). He explains, "When pornographic, perverse, ghastly or vicious fantasies start up, we can place them alchemically within the blue no-man's land between nigredo [blackening] and albedo [whitening]" (Hillman 1995, locs. 1961-1962).

The main sexual fantasy Tsukuru repeats involves him making love to his two friends, Black and White, but the detail he finds difficult to understand is why in these dreams he always climaxes inside of White. In alchemical terms, this might be taken as representing his desire to move from nigredo to albedo, from black to white, symbolism that is reinforced later with the arrival of Haida (Mr. Gray). Haida is a younger student Tsukuru first meets at the university swimming pool. In the context of Tsukuru's journey of recovery, he is clearly a compensatory figure. While Tsukuru is primarily interested in the concrete, in what he can see and touch with his hands, Haida's interests tend toward the abstract. What he offers Tsukuru is a new way for him to begin engaging with the world.

What Jung called this stage was the *unio mentalis*, what Hillman describes as the "union of reasoned judgment and aesthetic fantasy (logos and psyche)". He further describes Jung's *unio mentalis* as "freeing soul from body, prior to further union with body... The unio mentalis – the first goal of the opus – as union of logos and psyche is nothing other than psychology itself, the psychology that has faith in itself and indicates and activates the albedo [whitening] following the blue" (Hillman 1995, locs. 2214-2219, the many references Hillman makes to Jung's work in this quote have been cut for readability). Haida's position between black and white is made explicit in the text: "Mister Gray. Gray is a mixture of white and black. Change its shade, and it can easily melt into various gradations of darkness" (*Colorless*, 91). Hillman, however, rejects too straightforward an interpretation of the position of the unio mentalis between black and white. He explains, "[T]he unio mentalis is neither a progression from black to white nor a synthesis of black and white. Rather, it is a descent of the mind from that cross, an ever-present possibility of poesis by a mind remaking itself out of whole blue cloth that underlies and can undermine oppositions" (Hillman 1995, loc. 2236). Elsewhere, Hillman has described poesis simply as "making", or more specifically, "making by imagination into words." (Hillman 1994, 3-4). Haida is there to teach Tsukuru about the new kind of "making" he must engage in.

Haida's role representing the *unio mentalis* becomes particularly clear one night when he sleeps over at Tsukuru's apartment. At first Tsukuru wakes up paralyzed in the middle of the night with the feeling that Haida is staring at him, but he soon realizes this is not Haida himself, but some kind of projection of him. It seems as if his soul has been freed from his body. Eventually Tsukuru falls asleep again and starts to dream about sex with Black and White. As he ejaculates into White though he realizes that the girls are now gone and Haida has taken their place, accepting Tsukuru's ejaculate in his mouth. He then hears Haida going to the bathroom to clean up. When he awakes in the morning though there is no sign of anything sexual having occurred during the night and Haida makes no mention of the event. Whatever has happened appears to have occurred in some other metaphysical space.

The night before his strange encounter, Haida had told Tsukuru a story about his father which had happened years earlier. Basically, his father had met a man at a hot spring resort who claimed to be able to see people's colors, something like their halo or backlight, a gift he claims was given to him in exchange for his acceptance of a death token. This man's name was Midorikawa (Green River), and he tells Haida's father that the only way he can avoid his assigned death is to pass on his death token to someone else with the right color, a color Haida's father just happens to have, though this is not something Midorikawa intends to do. Haida's father had been at the hot spring in part to escape the student protests in Tokyo. Whatever he may have thought of

Midorikawa's story, what is clear from Haida's story is that it was instrumental in bringing him out of hibernation and back into the world.

Jeffrey Raff explains, "The *nigredo* was associated with the color black. After a number of procedures, the material would slowly start coming back to life. As it moved from death to new growth, the alchemist often noted a green color" (Raff, xxii-xxiii). Green, Hillman writes, comes out of the blue shadows: "Because of blue, the green world yields metaphors, analogies, intelligible instruction, providing reservoirs of beauty and insight" (Hillman 1995, locs. 2177-2178). Is Haida's story about Midorikawa an example of such a yield? Maybe. The story does feel like some kind of metaphor, but it is not exactly intelligible. Like much in Murakami's fiction, it is open to interpretation. What can be said about this story involving green is that it somehow motivated Haida's father to return to life and that it is doing the same thing for Tsukuru now. For six months he had been living in black but now new colors are emerging: blue, gray, and now green. His life is full of new unexpected possibilities, or as the narrator describes, it was "as if he'd been living for a long time in a house only to discover a secret room he'd never known about" (*Colorless*, 95). This is not dissimilar to the way Jung described his own discovery of alchemy. Before this discovery, Jung had a series of dreams in which he realized the house he was living in had an unknown wing or annex. Eventually, he began exploring this wing and discovered a library with many books dating from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Writing years later Jung would explain,

The unknown wing of the house was a part of my personality, an aspect of myself; it represented something that belonged to me but of which I was not yet conscious. It, and especially the library, referred to alchemy, of which I was ignorant, but which I was soon to study. Some fifteen years later I had assembled a library very like the one in the dream (Jung, 228).

In alchemy blue and green eventually take us to the white (or silver). This is the first resting place (or for some alchemists even the end point). The black has been transformed into something beautiful and redeeming. Hillman argues that we need to differentiate pre-black and post-black white. Pre-black white is the image of white as something innocent, pure, and unspoiled. This is the image of Shiro that is seen most strongly during the days of their perfect circle. In fact, it can be argued that the entire purpose of their group was to protect this unspoiled version of White. The five friends had met doing volunteer work at an after-school program and the way they had worked together can be understood as an attempt to protect the purity of Shiro. While she would teach a child the piano, Tsukuru and Ao would play soccer with the other children, while Kuro and Aka would do their best to stop any remaining children from disturbing Shiro's lessons. This time in a sense was their Garden of Eden, but as with the Biblical story, there eventually had to be a fall. There is always a temptation to try and return to this world of purity, to experience psychological regression. Hillman writes, "There had to be killing at once on leaving Eden to make dead sure that all of them – Cain, Abel, Seth, Adam, Eve, and maybe the Biblical God too – wouldn't be tempted back" (Hillman 1995, locs. 3434-3436). Were White's rape and murder similarly motivated?

Post-black white is associated more with depression or melancholia (Hillman, loc. 2867). This theme is explored most prominently in *Colorless* through Tsukuru's memories of Shiro playing Frank Liszt's *Le mal du pays* from his *Years of Pilgrimage* suite, a title which means "homesickness" or "melancholy" (*Colorless*, 51). As he reunites with each of his old friends, Tsukuru asks them if

they remember Shiro playing this song, but only Kuro does, suggesting her sensitivity to this side of Shiro. Post-black white is also associated with the moon and with the possibility for lunacy or mental illness. No longer are we in the black of night, but in the moonlit silver, but this brings its own potential problems. Hillman explains,

Silver blackens in air and cannot always gleam as gold. Silver requires polishing, attention, a bit of rubbing and fussing; it calls for worry. Since exposure makes it lose its shine, it is best hidden, protected. It is covered with blackness, by silence and dullness, and by hiding itself invisibly in lead (Hillman 1995, locs. 2880-2882).

In a similar way, Shiro is a highly demanding character who is “covered” by Kuro (Black). After the group breaks up and Shiro enters her melancholic stage, it is Kuro who does her best to protect her and to keep her going. It is only when this role becomes too exhausting for Kuro that she finally cuts her ties, which accelerates Shiro’s tarnishing and final downfall. Red was the last of the friends to see Shiro half a year before her death and he was startled by her physical change. As he confesses to Tsukuru, “she wasn’t attractive like she used to be,” she “no longer had that burning something she used to have” and had “lost the glow” (*Colorless*, 161-162).

Hillman also notes that whitening is a stage in which truth is often expressed in less than literal ways:

Although silvered perception of truth may be polished to hard and cool sophistication, it is nonetheless glancing, oblique, a poetic truth that includes poetic license – even truth as fantasy and truth of fantasy – so that it may not seem truth at all in the rational eyes of reason alone (Hillman 1995, locs. 3260-3262).

This is a good description of the story Shiro shares with the group to cut Tsukuru off, telling them all that he raped her. This appears to be a poetic truth, something which is both true and untrue at the same time. This is why Tsukuru first rejects the idea but later comes to see its deeper truth in his own psyche.

Hillman also writes about the connection silver has with voice, such as when we call someone silver tongued, suggesting that we are now at a stage where we can speak more fully. Now, Hillman says, “[w]e are at the throat of metaphor” an interesting phrase when we consider that Shiro was strangled to death (Hillman 1995, loc. 3110). Someone, we might suggest, had not wanted to hear her words and had literally squeezed them off at the throat. The question is who and why? This is where the alchemy of recovery in *Colorless* seems to go off track, but this is also very much to be expected. Alchemy more often goes wrong than right. The gold never eventuates, which leads the alchemist to start all over again from the beginning. Alchemy is the quest of a lifetime and maybe one where the goal is never to be attained. So what has gone specifically wrong in the case of *Colorless*?

In alchemy, the realization of white is supposed to be followed by the emergence of red, the silvery moonlit night is followed by the red of daybreak. This is a delicate process, and so it is important that the red does not come on too quickly. In alchemical texts, the successful emergence of red is often symbolized by the marriage or sexual union of the White Queen and Red King, the combination of the cold and the hot, the female and the male, the union of opposites, or what in

Jungian individuation would be described as the emergence of the Self. Their baby when it is born symbolizes all that has been achieved during the process, the incorporation of the black (the shadow), the white (the anima or animus), and the red (the Self). So what happens in *Colorless*?

Shiro, it would seem, was raped by someone. Kuro believes Shiro in part because she actually was pregnant and was determined to have the baby (though in the end she lost it). But who, if not Tsukuru, could have done this to her? The text never tells us, but one strong possibility in the alchemical reading is Aka (Red). This is at first a strange suggestion. Red, he later confesses to Tsukuru, is gay, and Shiro, we learn, had no sexual desire whatsoever, neither for men nor women. It would thus seem highly unlikely that Red and White would have had sex, forced or otherwise. And yet there is something about Red's psychology in the story that is a little off, something noted by the other characters. He comes across as a kind of warped Nietzschean superman, someone who has risen above the herd and who now sees it as his right to use others for his own purposes. In Red's case, this plays out through his development of a training business designed to indoctrinate workers to follow orders, his inspiration for the system a mix of the benign and the evil. He explains to Tsukuru,

The experience I had myself, the training I received as a newly hired bank clerk, was extremely valuable. I added methods taken from religious cults and personal development seminars, to spice things up. I researched companies in the U.S. that had been successful in the same sort of business. I read a lot of books on psychology as well. I included elements from manuals for new recruits in the Nazi SS and the Marines (*Colorless*, 151).

This is not the kind of training Red would like to receive himself, and he knows it is not something Tsukuru would take to either. As in earlier Murakami novels, here we have two males who through their own inner work stand above the herd but who have different ideas about what this entitles them to.

Hillman recounts the alchemical tale of John Trinick which offers a personification of the *albedo* or whitening as a young English woman called the white lady. This white lady is waiting to join with her lover from far away, the white puer. At the same time though there is a red thief who also longs to be with her. The question, Hillman writes, is "Who will break through the door and open the space, white puer or red thief? In Trinick's account it is the white lady herself, in a moment of negligence, who unbolts the door" (Hillman 1995, locs. 3558-3590). But this, Hillman explains, was the wrong thing to do. It was not time for the white lady to join with the red thief, at least not in this way. Trinick's scenario has an uncanny resemblance to the murder scene in *Colorless* where there is no sign of forced entry. So how did Shiro's murderer get in? Did she unbolt the door herself in a moment of negligence? And who did she find on the other side? The red thief?

In *Colorless*, Red is a good candidate for the red thief that came into White's room and murdered her. A successful alchemy would have required Tsukuru, as the vessel, to recognise this and to protect her from this untimely intrusion, which is why he is partly responsible for what happened. Instead, the sulphur burned too brightly and Shiro lost her baby. Here then we see a final potential but ultimately unrealized step in the therapeutic journey portrayed in *Colorless*: the *rubedo* or reddening. Lucy Huskinson notes the way this reddening might be read in both Jungian and Nietzschean terms:

The first 'mood' or stage of the alchemical process is black, which corresponds to the lack of unconscious incorporation (the shadow of the individuation process or the alchemical nigredo). The final stage is red, which corresponds to the fullest expression or illumination. We can think of the red stage of enlightenment as the Nietzschean 'Daybreak', when authentic values, which were once hidden, are at last expressed, or in terms of the 'blood' that gives life to the whole individual, the Self (Huskinson, locs. 1294-1297).

If we were going to color-code Murakami's fiction, we might say that most of it belongs to post-black white or silver; its concern is with turning the black of mourning into the white of melancholy, of speaking of the dead with a silvery tongue, in the most beautiful language possible. Alchemy suggests there is a stage beyond this. Jung explains,

[In the] state of 'whiteness' one does not *live* in the true sense of the word. It is a sort of abstract, ideal state. In order to make it come alive it must have 'blood', it must have what the alchemists called the *rubedo*, the 'redness' of life. Only the total experience of being can transform this ideal state into a fully human mode of existence (Quoted in Schwartz-Salant, 37).

This might remind us of the story from *Sputnik Sweetheart* where the blood of dogs had to be added to the white bleached bones of soldiers mixed into Chinese gates to revive their ghosts and to solicit their protection. It is only when bones and blood, white and red are mixed together that the true power comes.

While *Colorless* does not take us to this reddening, it does introduce the yellowing, a color some alchemists (but not all) placed between the white and the red. This stage is known as *citrinitas*, which suggests the significance of White's real name, Yuzu, a yellow (sometimes green) citrus fruit popular in Japan. When Tsukuru makes his final journey to Finland and talks to Kuro, who very significantly has her own kiln and is now a creator of empty vessels (i.e., she has retreated from the traumas of the past to engage in her own alchemical journey of recovery), she insists that he not use their color nicknames but refers to her as Eri and Shiro as Yuzu, suggesting that this final meeting in Tsukuru's pilgrimage might be thought of as part of his yellowing. Hillman again explains the meaning of this stage: "[D]uring nigredo [blackening] there is pain and ignorance; we suffer without the help of knowledge. During albedo [whitening] the pain lifts, having been blessed by reflection and understanding. The yellow brings the pain of knowledge itself. The soul suffers its understanding" (Hillman, loc. 4683). This kind of "pain of knowledge" is expressed in *Colorless* in this way:

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. That is what lies at the root of true harmony (*Colorless*, 248).

This does not mean Tsukuru is healed. In fact, at the end of the novel he appears as fragile as ever. He has decided that if Sara will choose him, he will propose to her straight away, an

expression of his desire for commitment. On the other hand, should she reject him, he fears it will be the end: “If Sara doesn’t choose me tomorrow, he thought, I may really die. Die in reality, or die figuratively—there isn’t much difference between the two. But this time I definitely will take my last breath” (Colorless, 297).

Reading this passage, Tim Parks wonders if Tsukuru has learned anything at all:

Hearing this drastic declaration, one is obliged to wonder how much progress the pilgrim Tsukuru has really made. He is thirty-six. He has seen the girl only four or five times, and anyway, she always had another man. He has just usefully reconnected with a group of old friends. Some counselling is in order (Parks, 258).

Perhaps some counselling is in order but it is unlikely that Tsukuru will get it, at least not in a traditional form. Instead, what is likely is that his alchemical journey will continue in some way. Perhaps he will find the gold he is looking for and perhaps not. At some future point he may even return to death, the nigredo or blackening from which his journey began. But even in this worst-case scenario, like a good alchemist, there is always hope that he will find the strength to begin his color-coded journey of recovery again. He has moved from black to white and finally to yellow. But this is not the completion of the alchemical process, which requires the introduction of red, suggesting perhaps, from an alchemical perspective, where Murakami’s fiction might still have to go. As those who have read Murakami’s next novel, *Killing Commendatore*, will know, it focuses on a protagonist who has recently separated from his wife, Yuzu. For now it would seem that Murakami’s interest in the alchemy of recovery continues.

Works Cited

- Hillman, James. (1994). *Healing Fiction*. Woodstock: Spring Publications.
- Hillman, James. (1995). *Alchemical Psychology* (Uniform Edition of the Writings of James Hillman, Volume Five). Thompson, Conn: Spring Publications.
- Huskinson, Lucy. (2004). *Nietzsche and Jung: The Whole Self in the Union of Opposites*. Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge.
- Jung, Carl. (1983). *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. London: Flamingo.
- Mainichi Shimbun (Nov 3, 2014), “Tandoku intabyū.”
- Murakami, Haruki (trans. Gabriel, Philip). (2005). *Kafka on the Shore*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Murakami, Haruki (trans. Gabriel, Philip). (2014). *Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and his Years of Pilgrimage*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Parks, Tim. (2016). *Life and Work: Writers, Readers, and the Conversations between Them*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Raff, Jeffrey. (2000). *Jung and the Alchemical Imagination*. Berwick, ME: Nichiolas-Hays, Inc.
- Schwartz-Salant, Nathan (1995). *Jung on Alchemy*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Suter, Rebecca. (2016). “Beyond Kizuna: Murakami Haruki on Disaster and Social Crisis.” In Mullins, Mark R., and Nakano, Koichi (eds.). *Disaster and Social Crisis in Contemporary Japan: Political, Religious, and Sociocultural Responses*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Wakatsuki, Tamoki. (2016). "The Haruki Phenomenon and Everyday Cosmopolitanism." In Strecher M.C., Thomas P.L. (eds). *Haruki Murakami. Critical Literacy Teaching Series: Challenging Authors and Genres*. Rotterdam: SensePublishers.