

PG: Generally, yes, you're aiming at a text that sounds as if it had been written in English. If it reads smoothly in the original, then that's how you want it to read in translation. And most Japanese novels I've worked on would fit into that group. If there is some deliberate "otherness" in the original text, then that needs to be taken into account in the translation and not necessarily smoothed over. So in theory the answer to your second question could be "yes," but again, the copy editors and editor may opt for something that reads more smoothly. The final published translation is the work of many hands, not only the translator's.

EM: In Murakami's recent novel, *Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage*, published by Knopf in 2014, one can see your mark from the beginning. Here are the first two sentences of the novel:

From July of his sophomore year in college until the following January, all Tsukuru Tazaki could think about was dying. He turned twenty during this time, but this special watershed—becoming an adult—meant nothing.

You used the word "watershed" rather than the literal translation for: 刻み目, "kizamime," meaning "notch mark." You discarded "notch mark," bypassed other possibilities such as "milestone" or "turning point." "Watershed" brings very specific associations with it.

PG: The literal translation or standard dictionary definition just doesn't work here. I can't recall if I came up with "watershed," or perhaps it was the editor. I may have started with "turning point" or something like that. I have a vague memory that I did. The point comes across easily in Japanese, since age twenty is when one officially becomes an adult, but I felt something clear and unambiguous needed to be put here since U.S. readers wouldn't necessarily associate age twenty with anything in particular. And you're right, many words we choose—for instance, "watershed"—will have associations that the original Japanese term may not. By the way, that opening paragraph also alludes to the Japanese school year and how it's different from that in the U.S.: sophomore year for Tsukuru would start in the spring and continue on past summer break. There are

many things taken for granted by readers of the original that may be potentially puzzling for readers in English.

EM: What was your experience working on *Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage*?

PG: After the lengthy *IQ84* (which I only did one third of—hats off to Jay Rubin!) it was nice to work on a novel of more manageable length. I have thoroughly enjoyed translating all the novels and stories of Murakami's that I have done, and *Tsukuru* was no exception. It's a more somber story, but still with flashes of Murakami's characteristic quirky wit and viewpoint, and reading him (as I've been doing regularly since 1986) always feels to me like coming home.

EM: Any new translations in the works?

PG: I just finished translating four short stories by Murakami and am working on a novel by the author Kōtarō Isaka. Also some short essays on jazz musicians by Murakami.

Philip Gabriel is Professor of Japanese literature in the Department of East Asian Studies, the University of Arizona. He is the author of *Mad Wives and Island Dreams: Shimao Toshio and the Margins of Japanese Literature* and *Spirit Matters: The Transcendent In Modern Japanese Literature* and has translated many novels and short stories by the writer Haruki Murakami, including *Kafka on the Shore*, *IQ84* (co-translation), and most recently *Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage*, which debuted at #1 on *The New York Times* bestseller list. Other recent translations include *Parade*, by Shuichi Yoshida, and *Genocide of One* by Kazuaki Takano. Gabriel is recipient of the Japan-U.S. Friendship Commission Prize for the Translation of Japanese Literature (2001) for his translation of Senji Kuroi's *Life in the Cul-de-Sac*, and the 2006 PEN/Book-of-the-Month Club Translation Prize for his translation of *Kafka on the Shore*.

Elizabeth McKenzie is the editor of *My Postwar Life: New Writings from Japan and Okinawa*, and was the recipient of the Japan-US Friendship Commission Creative Artist Fellowship. Her novel *The Portable Veblen* is forthcoming from Penguin Press in 2016, and her short fiction has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic*, and *Best American Nonrequired Reading*, among others.

ALLISON ATWILL

True Ch'ien, 2009
Charcoal on paper with acrylic and silver leaf,
24 x 31 in



COURTESY: THE ARTIST