

*The Journal of*  
*Nagasaki University of Foreign Studies*  
*No.25 2021*

***Killing Commendatore* by Haruki Murakami:  
Art, Artist, and Personal Transformation**

Mark TIEDEMANN

『騎士団長殺し』村上 春樹：芸術、芸術家、そして個人の変革

ティーダマン マーク

長崎外大論叢

第25号  
(別冊)

長崎外国語大学  
2021年12月

## *Killing Commendatore* by Haruki Murakami: Art, Artist, and Personal Transformation

Mark TIEDEMANN

### 『騎士団長殺し』村上春樹：芸術、芸術家、そして個人の変革

ティエダマン マーク

#### 概要 (Abstract / Short Outline)

Murakami's aesthetic ideas are gathered, organized and discussed. Doing so allows us to recognize that in this novel Murakami was mostly interested in presenting ideas about artistic creation, and the effects of artistic expression on the paintings, the artist and the observer.

村上の美的アイデアが集められ、整理され、議論されています。そうすることでこの小説では村上が芸術的創造についてのアイデアを提示することに主に興味を持っていたこと、そして芸術的表現が絵画、芸術家、観察者に与える影響を認識することができます。

#### Keywords

Murakami, Commendatore, art, artist, aesthetics

The title of Haruki Murakami's 2017 novel *Killing Commendatore* is also the name of the painting that is anchored at the center of the story. Having the title of the book, a work of art, also the title of a painting, a work of art, indicates that ideas of art are at the center of the story. It also suggests that Murakami's ideas about the aesthetics of visual art may also apply to literary aesthetics. *Killing Commendatore* is a story of estrangement and reconciliation, regression and development, futility and hope, darkness and light, and the past and the present. However, it is fundamentally a story of art: its creation and its meaning for the artist and for those who encounter it.

*Killing Commendatore* is at once sprawling, at nearly 700 pages, but also focused in terms of characters, location, and timeframe. Peppered through the pages are dozens of references to art and the artistic process. It is probable that this dispersion of the discussion of art was deliberate on Murakami's part, in order to imbue these ideas into the minds of the readers. This way of presenting his ideas, however, makes it difficult to come away with a clear understanding of Murakami's ideas about aesthetics as the reader encounters them in a piecemeal fashion. This paper intends to do some of the footwork, so-to-speak, of searching through the text to gather most of the references to the artistic process and organize them in a way that can be a guide to help a reader see a clearer continuity to the ideas Murakami is presenting.

The core of the story in *Killing Commendatore* takes place in six of the nine months the unnamed narrator spends in an isolated house in the mountains near Odawara City southwest of Tokyo. He comes to live there because his wife of six years, Yuzu, suddenly and unexpectedly told him she wanted to end their relationship, sending the narrator into an ordeal of loneliness. At first, the narrator wanders aimlessly on a road trip through northern Japan before settling in the house abandoned by his friend Masahiko's father, the famous painter Tomohiko Amada. Because he is a painter himself, the narrator finds the house with its studio and quiet surroundings a suitable environs to stabilize his life and begin to paint anew. However, his quiet life is disturbed by his discovery of one of Tomohiko's paintings hidden in the attic: *Killing Commendatore*. One thing leads to another culminating in a truly frightening physical and psychological ordeal that takes place in a mystical world, an ordeal within an ordeal. In the end the narrator finds himself back with his wife: "things happened and we ended up making a go of marriage one more time" (7).

One of the things that happened was that the narrator was befriended by an older bachelor, Wataru Menshiki, from across the valley. The parallels to *The Great Gatsby* are quite obvious and are usually pointed out by reviewers of the story. (Brooks) (Houle) (Burkeman) Murakami has translated *The Great Gatsby* into Japanese and he has also admitted in interviews that the character of Menshiki is an homage to Gatsby. (Role) Menshiki is rich, handsome, mysterious and living in a huge house overlooking the narrator's house and which is also within sight of the home of the girl he is interested in. In addition, Menshiki, like Gatsby, asks his younger companion to arrange a meeting with the girl of his interest. However, this is where the parallels end. The character of Menshiki is merely an archetypal role character. "Their personalities and characters differ. I only borrowed a setting from *Gatsby*," Murakami admitted. (Role) Rather than a former girlfriend as with Gatsby, the girl Menshiki is obsessed with, Mariye, is someone he suspects is his biological daughter. More importantly, unlike Gatsby, who desires to own Daisy outright, Menshiki is content to never clarify his understanding of his relationship with Mariye. "Even if I knew for sure she was my child, that wouldn't make me happy," Menshiki admits. "The sense of loss would be all the more painful. And if I knew she wasn't my child, that would, in a different sense, also deepen the sense of loss. . . . Either way there's no happy result." Very much in contrast to Gatsby's insistence on establishing with certainty Daisy's absolute affection by having her proclaim that she never loved her husband, Menshiki actually seeks uncertainty. "Instead of a stable truth, I choose unstable possibilities. I choose to surrender myself to that instability." (280) Therefore, in Menshiki Murakami rewrites the tragic flaw of the Gatsby character into a comic situation revolving around relationships.

At its core the novel is concerned with artistic themes. In the story the narrator discovers the hidden painting of Tomohiko Amada *Killing Commendatore* and he himself creates four paintings of his own. However, when he first arrives in Odawara the narrator does not even feel the urge to paint. His career as a portrait painter, along with the rest of his life, had been shattered by the unwilling separation from his wife. To begin with, we learn the methodology the

narrator had developed and used in making portraits. He describes it as a kind of exchange. He first meets with the subjects and talks with them. Next he does some sketches. Then he uses the sketches and his memory and intuition to “grasp what lay at the core of his being” to paint the portraits. (111)

This had been his style of painting, but when he approaches the creation of the portrait of Menshiki things begin to change. First, Menshiki had requested that the narrator “use the client as a live model, and paint when you’re actually together.” (74) and this is not the way the artist was accustomed to working. In addition, Menshiki asks him to “paint me freely, and not worry about the usual conventions involved in doing a portrait. . . . But if you do decide to try a different approach, I’d welcome that.” (87) The narrator had admitted that the type of portraits that he had been making were nothing special, “They were, ultimately, the kind of portraits you could find anywhere. No way could you ever call them ‘works of art.’” (77) The narrator realizes that this is going to be a different portrait. From the second session the narrator begins to understand that his creative process “had switched over to something close to autopilot. It’s important to bypass your conscious mind and get your eye and hand movements in sync. . . . This demanded a very different type of process from me compared with the numerous portraits I’d done up till then.” In the rough, incomplete outline of Menshiki he “was able to capture an image that seemed to breathe a sense of vitality, . . . and capture the sort of internal movement that gave birth to who this person was.” (133)

The turning point comes with the unearthing of the pit in the forest behind his house. After that his painting became more spontaneous. He was able to add colors to the painting and feel a “set flow, and all I could do was go with it.” . . . and “follow ideas that spring up naturally inside me, with no plan or goal.” (178) “Not thinking was the priority. I tried to turn my mind off.” (179) His painting also became more self-centered. “Menshiki was nothing more than a starting point. What I was doing was painting for me, for my sake alone.” (179) This leads to his being able to harness a talent or power that had been hidden in him to that point, yet this confounds him. “I had painted it, that much I knew, but the end product out-stripped the bounds of any logic or understanding I possessed.” (192)

This method of spontaneous creation continues as he creates the three other paintings. He starts the sketch as the basis for the painting of *The Man with the White Subaru Forester* “With no plan, without thinking” and “believing in myself” let “the lines and spaces speak” and “encourage them all” “And more than anything, not get in their way.” (222)

### Deeper Levels

With visual arts Murakami is clearly more concerned with the deeper levels of artistic expression than the simple representation of outward appearances, something a photograph, for example, would capture. First, there is the uniqueness of the face.

As you might imagine, painting a portrait requires the ability to accurately grasp the

special features of a person's face. But that's not all. If it were, you'd end up with a caricature. To paint a vibrant portrait you need the skill to discover what lies at the core of the person's face. (79)

The narrator achieves this partly by talking to the subjects and getting to know them, but also by utilizing his instincts.

When I observe the face of a person I've just met for the first time, from habit I sense all sorts of things. In most cases there's no tangible basis for how I feel. It's nothing more than intuition. But that's what helps me as a portrait artist—that *simple intuition*." (83)

However, the narrator as an artist goes deeper than trying to capture the uniqueness of an appearance. "It wasn't enough to just look at the person I happened to be painting. . . . To turn out a true portrait, I had to discover *the story that must be painted*." (343) His artwork attempts to discover and portray the essence of the subject's person. Menshiki says that when he sought out and viewed previous portraits that the narrator had done, he had been impressed on a deeper level. "There's something about your paintings that strikes the viewer's heart from an unexpected angle. At first they seem like ordinary portraits, but if you look carefully you see something hidden inside them. . . . Maybe the real personality?" (84) The narrator tells Mariye "Drawing someone means understanding and interpreting another person. Not with words, but with lines, shapes, and colors." (322) When painting the portrait of Mariye, he admits that "What I was attempting in all my painting . . . was to try to capture those things which lay outside my field of vision and communicate their message in a different form." (481)

### Artist Reflected in Paintings

While attempting to portray these hidden but essential aspects of the subject's being, the artist may inadvertently reveal elements of the artist's own being as well. After Menshiki's observation quoted in the previous paragraph and his postulation "Maybe the real personality?" the narrator asks, "My personality? Or the *subject's*?" Menshiki replies, "Both, probably. They're mixed together, so elaborately intertwined they can't be separated." (84) After his ordeal in the mystical world, the narrator takes time to look at the paintings from his new perspective. Near the end of the story the narrator admits to Mariye that he "saw part of myself reflected in him." (620) This suspicion motivates him to commit to "tackle that subject again in the future." To do that he realizes that he will have to "become a more resolute man, and an artist of greater integrity." (678) At this point in the story the narrator has come to understand the personal element that Tomohiko Amada had imbued in his work when he created *Killing Commendatore*. "It distills the pure essence of his living spirit." (537) If the narrator recreates *The Man with the White Subaru Forester*, he feels that "Perhaps that work would become my own *Killing Commendatore*. If that happened, it would be the greatest legacy I could receive from Tomohiko Amada" (678)

### Paintings Can Communicate Something from the Artist

If something of the artist may be contained in the painting, then it is only a small step to wonder if we may be able to glimpse some part of the motivation for fashioning the artistic piece the way the artist did and even to begin to glean something that the artist might be trying to communicate through the painting. The narrator first realizes this when he hears details of Tomohiko's experiences in Vienna before the war. "So the Commendatore in the painting *Killing Commendatore* might represent that Nazi official. The painting might be a hypothetical depiction of the assassination that never actually happened in Vienna in 1938." He painted it for himself "for his own sake . . . to preserve that awful, bloody memory from his youth." (282) After further contemplation of the painting, the narrator feels that the painting *Killing Commendatore*, and by extension Tomohiko Amada, contained a code that the artist wanted the narrator to break. (306) With the help of the Commendatore the narrator is finally able to understand that Tomohiko created *Killing Commendatore* as "An allegorical painting that expressed all he could not say." "He took that which he had been unable to accomplish in reality," the Commendatore said, "and gave it another form. What we might call "camouflaged expression." Not of what had in fact happened, but of *what should have happened*." (537) In the end the narrator worries that he himself may have done something similar with his creation of the painting *The Man with the White Subaru Forester* because "it could be that I saw part of myself reflected in him." (620) Thus he decides to finish the painting at a later time because he "was determined to reveal who he was. I had to drag him out into full view." (597)

### Paintings Can Speak to People

It seems that having deeper levels allows the paintings to begin to take on lives of their own—they seem to move or speak. They may even themselves be trying to communicate with or affect people. The receptionist at the school feels that the chalk sketch of Mariye on the backboard "looks like she's about to start moving." (300) The narrator sees Tomohiko Amada's painting *Killing Commendatore* as "moving around under its own willpower in three-dimensional form." (240) When viewing his portrait of Menshiki in Menshiki's house the narrator is struck that "It looked like almost a completely different work from when it was in my studio, as if it had acquired, since coming here, its rightful life force . . . and seemed to have severed any contact with me, its creator." (263) His painting of *The Man with the White Subaru Forester*, though far from finished, "a rough prototype of the man's face done with the three colors I'd mixed," begins to communicate: "*Don't touch anything*, the man was saying—or maybe commanding—from the canvas. . . . Trying hard to get me to understand something. But I still had no idea what that was. This man is alive, I felt. Actually alive and moving." (295) His initial pencil sketch of the pit in the forest "looks somehow alive. Even more alive than the real thing." (381) Later, as he begins to add paint to the sketch he "felt as if someone (or something) might come crawling out of that hole any minute." (442) The painting came to its completion seemingly of its own volition. "Paintings are strange

things: as they near the end they acquire their own will, their own viewpoint, even their own speech. They tell the artist when they are done. . . . He or she can hear the painting say, *Hands off, I'm done*. The artist has only to heed that voice.” (475) Even after being finished, the painting of the pit continues to communicate. “As I sat there staring at the finished work, a feeling came over me, that might be called a premonition of impending movement. . . . Something was about to take place within that landscape. The painting was telling me that.” (476)

The narrator feels that the *Killing Commendatore* painting “wanted me to break its ‘code,’” (306) and Mariye exclaims that “It’s calling out to me. Like a caged bird crying to be set free.” (349) Sometimes it is unclear if it is the painting or something else that is attempting to communicate. Concerning *The Pit*, the narrator feels that “Something had demanded that I paint this painting. . . . Or maybe the pit was the agent, pushing me to draw its portrait, leaving me to guess its motive.” (475-6) Murakami even suggests that the paintings can affect each other. As Masahiko examines *A Portrait of Mariye Akikawa* and *The Pit*, he comments, “When you place them side by side like this, you feel a strange kind of movement between them. Their styles are totally different, but you get a sense they’re somehow linked.” (447)

### Magical Realism

We have come to expect elements of magical realism in Murakami’s stories and he does not disappoint in *Killing Commendatore*. Some of the lifelike aspects of the paintings border on magical realism, such as speaking in concrete speech to the narrator and, of course, having the paintings being able to communicate with each other. Other examples of magical realism are the bell ringing seemingly by itself in the night, the visit to the studio by Tomohiko Amada at night, the appearance of the penguin charm in the pit, the disappearance and reappearance of both the bell and the knife, and the appearance of the characters of Long Face and Bella Donna from out of the painting *Killing Commendatore* before and during the ordeal. The central occurrence of mystical realism is, of course, the appearance of the two-foot Commendatore. There is a hint that the Commendatore’s apparent form adds to the ideas of artistic interpretation in that what people see when looking at him is subjective, as is one’s interpretation of a piece of art. As to what Tomohiko sees when looking at the Commendatore, “What he sees and what my friends see are completely different. . . . My form changes depending on the person and the situation. . . . I am the mirror that reflects what is in a person’s heart.” (538-9)

### Interplay between Reality and Unreality

Another common theme in Murakami’s stories is the interplay between reality and unreality and often how there is uncertainty in distinguishing between the two. After the narrator posits to Menshiki that “the visible is not the only reality,” he responds “That sometimes in life we can’t grasp the boundary between reality and unreality. That boundary always seems to be shifting. . . . We need to pay close attention to that movement, otherwise we won’t know which side



we're on." (205-6) At another point the narrator muses on his astonishment of meeting the Commendatore character outside the painting in that

the fictional figure that Tomohiko had painted . . . had taken on a real form and appeared in reality (or something like it) . . . this phenomenon began to seem less and less impossible. That's how vivid and alive Tomohiko Amada's rendering was. The longer I looked at the painting, the less clear was the threshold between reality and unreality, flat and solid, substance and image. (240)

While riding home after his evening at Menshiki's house, the narrator feels that "everything that happened that night seemed like part of a dream. It was getting harder to distinguish what was normal from what was not, what was real and what was not." The Commendatore's response is apocryphal. *"What you see is real. . . . What you need to do is open your eyes wide and look at it. You can judge it later on."* (284)

After the narrator comes through his ordeal in the other world, the discrepancy between the real and unreal permeate his perceptions. Without being able to tell Masahiko about his experience, he comments, "it seems to me that reality itself has a screw loose somewhere," and to himself he muses, "it felt like everything around me was becoming unscrewed—that reality was losing its grip." (462) Two of his experiences were so farfetched yet seem to him so real that they further blur the line between what can be believed and what cannot. The first was the dream he had in northern Japan in May in which he visited Yuzu in their apartment in Tokyo and raped her. "It had been no dream, of that I felt sure." The other was the visit to the studio by what seemed to be the ghost of Tomohiko Amada. "I was as sure of that [the rape of Yuzu] as I was that Tomohiko Amada has visited the studio several days before." (463)

### His Transformation

The story is a journey on several levels. It begins with an actual journey through northern Japan and is framed by the narrator's journey away from his wife and back to her again. However, throughout this period on the mountain in the narrator's life there is a running story that he is experiencing another change, an internal change. The talk of a transformation begins with discussions about Tomohiko Amada's transformation from painting Western-style paintings before and during his stay in Vienna to painting in a traditional Japanese style after coming back to Japan. In addition to Tomohiko's more overt change in his painting style and technique, the narrator traces a more profound artistic development. Of his Western-style paintings, "there were things about them that were, simply astounding. . . . Still, there was *something missing*." (52) Referring to Tomohiko, Menshiki comments "there's a point in everybody's life where they need a major transformation. And when that time comes you have to grab it by the tail. Grab it hard, and never let it go. There are some people who are able to, and others who can't. Tomohiko Amada was one who could." (107)

The author's transformation parallels the senior artist's one and begins while he is



contemplating his portrait of Menshiki and beginning the rough sketch. “I had a premonition that this painting was going to be very different from any portrait I’d ever done before.” (130) Unlike his painting method in the past where he would meet and sketch the subject then paint the portrait from memory, he realized that Menshiki was right, he would need the subject to be present. In addition, he feels that he is “not able anymore to paint the sort of conventional portraits I’ve done up till now,” and that he will “need a different method and procedure, but those are still out of reach. I’m fumbling in the dark.” Menshiki recognizes the import and is flattered. “Which means you really are changing. And I’m the catalyst for that change? . . . I’d be happy if, in some way, I’m able to help you change.” (135-6)

It is at this point that the narrator and Menshiki unearth the pit in the forest and from this point, too, that the transition, especially in painting methods, accelerates. On the day after unearthing the pit he begins to add colors to the portrait which makes it “stray far afield from the format of a typical portrait.” He also realizes his own centrality in the creative process. “What I wanted now was to paint what *I* wanted to paint, the way *I* wanted to paint it.” His spontaneity grows: “I was simply following ideas that sprang up naturally inside me, with no plan or goal.” (178) “Not thinking was the priority. I tried to turn off my mind, decisively adding this color to the composition.” (179) “I could clearly sense something within me changing. As if the structure of my body had unraveled, then was being recombined in a different way . . . a sort of internal transformation.” (180)

Almost as if by itself the painting is finished and Menshiki is impressed. “What did you do to discover this painting? . . . You found this image buried within you and drew it out. You *unearthed* it, in a way.” The opening of the pit and the new style of painting, the narrator could “see the affinity between these two similar operations that took place.” (202-3) Menshiki takes this idea further.

It’s like an earthquake deep under the sea. In an unseen world, a place where light doesn’t reach, in the realm of the unconscious. In other words, a major transformation is taking place. It reaches the surface, where it sets off a series of reactions and eventually takes form where we can see it with our own eyes. . . . The best ideas are thoughts that appear, unbidden, from out of the dark. (203)

The narrator confides in Masahiko as he shows him the painting of *The Man with the White Subaru Forester* that his style has changed and that he now wants to paint for himself. (227) The narrator’s agent confirms his new style when commenting on the portrait of Menshiki: “it looks like an amazing work. Something that goes beyond the boundaries of portrait painting, yet remains a convincing portrait.” (285) Later the narrator confesses to Menshiki that he feels “as if my life is just beginning.” (428)

As we have seen, the narrator at first contributes his transformation to Menshiki and his portrait. Later when talking to Masahiko he wonders if it might not be more attributable to Tomohiko Amada. He tells him that “living on top of a mountain may be affecting me” and

“There’s something about being in that room that makes me want to paint.” (392) Masahiko speculates that his father’s “psychic energy” or “flow of being” might be in that house and that “he invested that room with some special *power*.” (393) Near the end the narrator wonders if his whole experience has not been brought about by Tomohiko. “Was that painting something I had ‘inherited’ from Tomohiko Amada? Had he led me to that attic room to discover it? Was he using it to demand something of me?” (514)

### Boundaries and Portals

Playing with the boundaries between reality and unreality and with portals that lead to other worlds is a common motif in Murakami’s stories. Because the painting of Menshiki had lead the narrator to effecting a different style of portrait painting, he wonders whether there was coincidence at work or whether Menshiki had “exerted a special power” “that proved to be the entranceway to that.” (208)

Certainly in this story the pit is one such portal, but the painting *Killing Commendatore* is unique in that it uses graphic art as a boundary or a portal. As Ken Lawrence points out, “the overall theme here is both the power of art and its ability to act as a bridge between realms. . . . Many cultures throughout the world created art not just because it looked pretty, but because they saw it as a way to bridge the gap between our ordinary reality and other realms. They sometimes even called on divinities to come ‘inhabit’ these works of art.” (Lawrence) In this story the painting *Killing Commendatore* seems to be acting as a means by which Tomohiko is communicating with the narrator and to a lesser extent Mariye. *Killing Commendatore* is also a means through which the figure of the Commendatore emerges. Long Face also appears in Tomohiko’s room in the nursing home, seemingly from out of the painting, as does the hole which serves as a portal for the narrator to enter the underworld where his ordeal takes place. The hole also serves as the channel through which the narrator eventually makes his way back to the pit in the forest behind his house in Odawara. In addition, *Killing Commendatore* is recreating an event from Tomohiko’s past that had laid buried for decades. Murakami himself admitted that “It’s a story about excavating and resurrecting the past. However deep you dig a hole to try to hide something, there’s always a time when that something comes out. We live shouldering history and however hard we try to hide it, it will come out in the open. History, I believe, is a collective memory that we must bear.” (Role)

*The Man with the White Subaru Forester* speaks to the narrator and to Mariye as well but it is unclear who or what is at the other end of the communication. If it is actually the dark side of the narrator’s character, as he begins to suspect, then the painting is acting as a kind of circular portal or a mirror as an indication of his unflattering reflection.

Lastly, Murakami proposes that willpower may play a role in transcendence. “People can accomplish anything, I thought, if they want it badly enough. There are channels through which reality can become unreal. Or unreality can enter the realm of the real. If we desire it that

strongly. Deep in our heart.” (463)

In the end both *Killing Commendatore* and *The Man with the White Subaru Forester* are lost in the fire that consumed the house. The narrator does not regret the loss, he says. However, if *The Man with the White Subaru Forester* really was a reflection of his dark side, it would not have been destroyed with the destruction of the physical painting. He ends by saying that he may create *The Man with the White Subaru Forester* again.

I know I would tackle that subject again in the future. By then, though, I would have become a more resolute man, and an artist of greater integrity. When it came time to create my own art again, I should be able to paint *The Man with the White Subaru Forester* from a whole new angle. If that happened, it would be the greatest legacy I could receive from Tomohiko Amada. (678)

The story has a circular ending. In the end the narrator goes back to painting his old type of portraits, and goes back to his wife and their marriage that, he finds out, had not actually been legally dissolved. He is content to live with this daughter Muro even though, like Menshiki, he is not interested in proving whether she is his biological daughter or not, even though he had admonished Menshiki for not wanting to know the truth. “If I were in your position, I’d want to know the truth.” (280) Now, when the narrator finds himself in a similar situation, he does not want to find out for sure what his relationship to the girl is. For him, the truth has shifted in essence. “The truth may be revealed. But what meaning would that ‘truth’ carry? Muro is my child in the legal sense, and I love her deeply. . . . I couldn’t care less who her biological father is or isn’t. The question is inconsequential. It can change nothing.” (680) He has realized that what is important is being able to place all that happened to him and all that is now around him in the category of “the real,” or as he says, to be “endowed with the capacity *to believe*.” (681) “The ending marks a shift from loss to renewal.” Murakami said.

Overall, the book is about artistic and personal re-birth (hinted at when reincarnation is mentioned a couple of times). Hence the double metaphors. The protagonist is reborn as an artist over a period of nine months, and at the same time his relationship with his wife is reborn. And, as a physical manifestation of this, a daughter is born. (Bergstrom)

It is a surprisingly concrete ending for a Murakami novel.

“My novels are open-ended, or have mostly ended with the stories still wide open,” Murakami explained. “This time, I realized that I’d begun to need a ‘sense of closure.’ For me, the fact that the protagonist decides at the end to live with the child is to suggest a new kind of conclusion.” (*Killing Commendatore*’ a shift)

One image will stand out to readers of Haruki Murakami that illustrates this change in atmosphere in the ending of this novel: the appearance of rain. “Contemplating them [the characters in *Killing Commendatore*] affords me perfect tranquility, as though I were watching raindrops fall on the surface of a broad reservoir. That soundless rain will fall forever in my heart.” Here the rain representing fulfillment is in stark contrast to the rain representing frustration and

disappointment in the ending of *Norwegian Wood*. “Midori responded with a long, long silence—the silence of all the misty rain in the world falling on all the new-mown lawns of the world.” Toru Watanabe did not know where he was. ‘Where was I now? I had no idea.’ (293) The narrator of *Killing Commendatore* knows exactly where he is. “I will probably live the rest of my life in their company. My little daughter Muro is their gift to me. A form of grace.” (681) He has arrived.

## References

- Bergstrom, Erik Andreas. ‘*Killing Commendatore*: An Attempt to Explain the Metaphors.’ Reddit. Retrieved July 7 2021
- Brooks, Xan (2018-10-17). “*Killing Commendatore* by Haruki Murakami review – a rambling voyage of discovery.” The Guardian. ISSN 0261-3077. Retrieved July 9 2021
- Burkeman, Oliver, Haruki Murakami: ‘You have to go through the darkness before you get to the light.’ *The Guardian*. Oct 11 2018. Retrieved Aug 6 2021
- Houle, Zachary, A Review of Haruki Murakami’s “*Killing Commendatore*”: Art for Art’s Sake. Nov 9, 2019. Retrieved July 7 2021
- Lawrence, Ken. *Killing Commendatore*: Thoughts and Review. Book Reviews. The Murakami Pilgrimage. Retrieved Aug 25 2021
- Murakami, Haruki. *Killing Commendatore*. Trans. Philip Gabriel and Ted Goossen. Harvill Secker: London, 2018.
- . ‘*Killing Commendatore*’ a shift from loss to renewal: interview. April 2, 2017 *The Mainichi*. Retrieved Aug 6 2021
- . *Norwegian Wood*. Trans. Jay Rubin. Vintage Books: New York, 2000.
- . Role of Storytelling is to help readers feel sensations of reality: interview. June 5, 2019 *Kyodo News*. Retrieved Aug 2 2021

