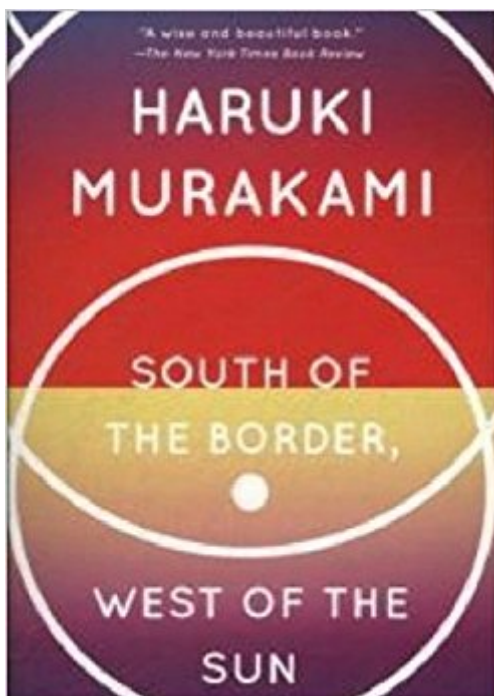


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# South Of The Border, West Of The Sun: A Novel



## Synopsis

Born in 1951 in an affluent Tokyo suburb, Hajime Ōtsu begins in Japanese and has arrived at middle age wanting for almost nothing. The postwar years have brought him a fine marriage, two daughters, and an enviable career as the proprietor of two jazz clubs. Yet a nagging sense of inauthenticity about his success threatens Hajime's happiness. And a boyhood memory of a wise, lonely girl named Shimamoto clouds his heart. In *South of the Border, West of the Sun*, the simple arc of a man's life with its attendant rhythms of success and disappointment becomes the exquisite literary terrain of Haruki Murakami's most haunting work. When Shimamoto shows up one rainy night, now a breathtaking beauty with a secret from which she is unable to escape, the fault lines of doubt in Hajime's quotidian existence begin to give way. And the details of stolen moments past and present—a Nat King Cole melody, a face pressed against a window, a handful of ashes drifting downriver to the sea—threaten to undo him completely. Rich, mysterious, quietly dazzling, *South of the Border, West of the Sun* is Haruki Murakami's wisest and most compelling work.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In *South of the Border, West of the Sun*, the arc of an average man's life from childhood to middle age, with its attendant rhythms of success and disappointment, becomes the kind of exquisite literary conundrum that is Haruki Murakami's trademark. The plot is simple: Hajime meets and falls

in love with a girl in elementary school, but he loses touch with her when his family moves to another town. He drifts through high school, college, and his 20s, before marrying and settling into a career as a successful bar owner. Then his childhood sweetheart returns, weighed down with secrets: When I went back into the bar, a glass and ashtray remained where she had been. A couple of lightly crushed cigarette butts were lined up in the ashtray, a faint trace of lipstick on each. I sat down and closed my eyes. Echoes of music faded away, leaving me alone. In that gentle darkness, the rain continued to fall without a sound. Murakami eschews the fantastic elements that appear in many of his other novels and stories, and readers hoping for a glimpse of the Sheep Man will be disappointed. Yet *South of the Border, West of the Sun* is as rich and mysterious as anything he has written. It is above all a complex, moving, and honest meditation on the nature of love, distilled into a work with the crystal clarity of a short story. A Nat "King" Cole song, a figure on a crowded street, a face pressed against a car window, a handful of ashes drifting down a river to the sea are woven together into a story that refuses to arrive at a simple conclusion. The classic love triangle may seem like a hackneyed theme for a writer as talented as Murakami, but in his quietly dazzling way, he bends us to his own unique geometry. --Simon Leake --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Romance, accusingly bittersweet but still redemptive, is the theme of this novel written by award-winning novelist Murakami, one of Japan's most popular authors. Two only children who were schoolmates and best friends meet again after a 25-year separation. Hajime is now married, the father of two little girls and a successful owner of two jazz clubs. Shimamoto has also changed; she has become a very beautiful woman. She is always immaculately and expensively dressed, but she will not talk about her life or anything that has happened to her. Nevertheless, Hajime believes that he loves her more than life itself; he is convinced that he could leave his family and his business to be with her. After they spend a night together, a night filled with raw passion, she vanishes. Hajime is distraught. After much soul searching, he begins to put his life back together and discovers that he has become a stronger man, one who realizes that looking back is often necessary in order to move forward. ?Janis Williams, Shaker Heights P.L., OH Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Perhaps I am overdosing on Murakami. I know this isn't one of his newer books, so maybe it's not fair to say the style is wearing thin. But, the general theme of an individual lost and confused and travelling between mystical and "normal" worlds is getting a bit one dimensional. Oddly, the story is

both mundane and too far out to get interested in it. The saving feature of the book is that, unlike 1Q84, it is brief. It's not that the writing, or even the story, are bad, it's just too much of the same, while at the same time, not revealing anything exceptionally mystical. Perhaps if I haven't read as much Murakami as I have, my standards would have been lower. In any case, this is not the book of his I would recommend. On the other hand, if you want a more accessible, less intriguing Murakami, this could be your choice.

I find it hard to characterize this novel. It's not a typical romance.

It's not typical Murakami. I felt the same heavy atmosphere as when reading Camus or watching the films of Antonioni, yet I found this story unsatisfying. As with all of his works, music plays an important part. Here, the title refers to the song made famous by Nat King Cole, "South of the border, down Mexico way." But he also refers to another Nat King Cole hit, "Pretend you're happy when you're blue" that applies here. Hajime, the main character, seems to spend his life feeling sorry for himself, despite an amazingly successful life made possible by his wife's father. I really had to push myself to get through this short novel. One of the later scenes between Hajime and his first love, Shimamoto, was magical, but the feeling came and went. I kept expecting the unexpected (ala Kafka on the Shore), but ultimately the story ended without resolution and without my having that special feeling I usually get from reading Murakami. My three-star rating is closer to two and a half, but "It's okay" sums it up.

I've finished to read it a few months ago, but I'm still amazed by the beauty and the sensibility of this story. I loved everything in it. Everything, starting with the beautiful, elegant writing style (and, obviously, the beautiful translation) and moving on to the characters, their depths, their feelings, their complexity, the life and choices of the narrator and all his introspective thoughts...it's all so subtle and delicate, but still so full of emotions. So human, and so powerful in its humanity. Murakami is one of my all time favourite authors and this book is simply...pure magic. Undoubtedly, this is one of the best books I've read in years.--I know it can be bit tricky to try and describe Murakami's work, but I've reached the conclusion that to trying to describe it literally "as it is" is a waste of time. His works are to be read, absorbed and enjoyed, simply for what they are...pure, poetic beauty :)

See the world through the eyes of a boy and then a man. One who works to assign meaning to his actions. One who evolves through his middle years and who finds his way to a more altruistic self.

Like "Nowegian Wood," this is a very lush, romantic novel with the hero obsessed with a woman from his past. It is a short book, especially for Murakami, but I really believe the tight structure adds to its impact. The ending is kind of fuzzy and feels almost artificial. However, the love scene that precedes the ending is great and the book leaves the reader with a delicious sense of mystery. Definitely, a worthwhile, really wonderful, read.

Felt a bit mediocre. Well written and nice story. Something just felt off. Maybe that's the Hajime Effect.

It has this classic unexplainable style that many Japanese works throughout books and movies contain. I don't know how to describe it, but it's like a certain perspective of daily life that might deeply touch certain people. Haruki Murakami hits that certain feeling perfectly.

Not one of Murakami's most profound works, but still very insightful and relatable. I think many people might have problems with the narrator, and he definitely is a prick, but some of the themes in the book are still very relatable, despite the unusually unlikable Murakami hero. If you like Murakami, you'll like this book.

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