



After Dark

Haruki Murakami , Jay Rubin (Translator)

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A short, sleek novel of encounters set in Tokyo during the witching hours between midnight and dawn, and every bit as gripping as Haruki Murakami's masterworks *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* and *Kafka on the Shore*.

At its center are two sisters—Eri, a fashion model slumbering her way into oblivion, and Mari, a young student soon led from solitary reading at an anonymous Denny's toward people whose lives are radically alien to her own: a jazz trombonist who claims they've met before, a burly female "love hotel" manager and her maid staff, and a Chinese prostitute savagely brutalized by a businessman. These "night people" are haunted by secrets and needs that draw them together more powerfully than the differing circumstances that might keep them apart, and it soon becomes clear that Eri's slumber—mysteriously tied to the businessman plagued by the mark of his crime—will either restore or annihilate her.

After Dark moves from mesmerizing drama to metaphysical speculation, interweaving time and space as well as memory and perspective into a seamless exploration of human agency—the interplay between self-expression and empathy, between the power of observation and the scope of compassion and love. Murakami's trademark humor, psychological insight, and grasp of spirit and morality are here distilled with an extraordinary, harmonious mastery.

After Dark Details

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Author : Haruki Murakami , Jay Rubin (Translator)

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Genre : Fiction, Cultural, Japan, Asian Literature, Japanese Literature, Magical Realism, Contemporary, Novels, Literature, Fantasy, Asia

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From Reader Review After Dark for online ebook

Bradley says

It's a clever little tale about night people, dreams (of all kinds), and subtle humor, mixed with grand and interesting detail in the style of so much horror fiction and a brooding (mostly) off-screen terror that lurks in the night.

Did I mention it's Japanese? Sure, it should be kinda obvious from such a big name like Murakami, but this is, after all, my first foray into his works. What can I say? I thought it was pretty damn great. I didn't have any expectations, so I just let myself flow with all the many characters and let myself enjoy the impressions and the interesting conversations and enjoy the admittedly adroit tension that lurked like a hot thread throughout the night.

I loved the whole idea of Alphaville, but then, I am a sucker for all things SF, even if it's just a discourse about SF, imaginary or not. :) But then it all ties back into dreams, too, and while the majority of the novel is so firmly grounded in reality and hard-hitting details and thoroughly interesting character studies, it has its other moments, too. :)

I'm really looking forward to more of his work!

Samadrita says

Good ol' Murakami.

Every time I read him, I feel my reasons for choosing a book as company over a real person, legitimized again.

What is reading, but, a singular form of one-sided communication? An author sends us an encoded message, crafted with precision and a deep empathy arising out of their understanding of the world and humanity at large. And we, in turn, decode it and instantly feel a pull on the invisible umbilical cord linking us to this person we have never met and, possibly, will never meet. Murakami makes me feel exactly this way. I will never meet him or get to make his acquaintance. But then, don't I know him already?

Few other writers speak to me the way he does. Every time I open a book by him, I feel at home. I let the surrealistic worlds of his creation engulf me in a warm embrace and sweep me away into an unknown abyss of turbulent feelings, darkness and melancholia.

I know I can latch onto his hand and take a walk inside the darkest recesses of my own mind, that I wasn't even aware existed. I know I can let him become my guide, my own personal magician with a wide range of tricks up his sleeve. I know I can nurture an unshakeable faith in the illusions he begets. Because as always, he will unveil the grand truth of the matter in the end and offer enlightenment of a unique kind.

After Dark reinforces this unadulterated, pristine devotion that I feel for this man. Through the bizarre events that a set of individuals go through all in one night, Murakami explores the seedy underbelly of a city and, perhaps, our existence. Love hotel managers, Chinese prostitutes and gangsters, a young college going girl struggling with a vague identity crisis, her beautiful, older sister who lies in a state of perpetual somnolence but doesn't die, an optimistic, young man who plays the trombone in a band, an ordinary office worker who

turns violent under the helpful cover of the night - these are the wonderfully strange people he designates as our guides to his kaleidoscopic landscapes.

Like the master of imagery that he is, he creates one seductively beautiful vignette after another and pastes them together into a mesmerizing collage of the collective human consciousness.

He fishes out the soul of a city so bereft of life and substantial movement after the sun has set. He unleashes all the inglorious impulses and unholy emotions that bob up to the surface of our consciousness when the dazzling light of the day is no longer there to help keep them in check and lets us witness how his characters grapple with them. He analyzes and dissects our darkest nocturnal human tendencies with astounding sensitivity. He goes deeper yet and tries to reveal the paradox of dualism in any individual - the stark differences between our daytime selves and darker, nighttime selves and how effortlessly both can co-exist in harmony but are separated by an unbridgeable rift.

I am very much tempted to give this 5 stars but I have seen Murakami deal with more complex themes and create even more staggeringly raw and visceral images with the aid of his powerful writing. Hence 4 stars it is for now.

Ian "Marvin" Graye says

Original Review: March 8, 2011

A Midwinter Night's Tale

"*After Dark*" is probably the easiest Murakami novel to read. At 201 pages, it's not difficult to finish in one session.

It's also close to what you would call "*high concept*" in the film industry. Its execution is not much more than its conception.

All of the action takes place from 11:56pm to 6:52am on a midwinter night, more or less "*after dark*" when the days are shortest and the nights are longest.

Hidden Meaning

Murakami's writing is stripped back, simple, present tense, in the style of detective fiction, yet there is always a sense of deeper meaning, even if it is or remains hidden.

We see the surface, almost like a camera, but we know there is something behind it, even if he doesn't choose or have to describe it.

Beware of Darkness

"*Darkness*" is an extended metaphor throughout the entire novel.

At the most superficial level, it describes the night. However, it also represents the darkness of the human soul.

This level of meaning is most likely to resonate with its likely audience – youth in their teens or early twenties who are still trying to piece together some sense of the meaning of life and how they fit into it.

The Same People, Just a Different Cave

Before people developed the technology to build houses, they huddled together in caves at night, primarily to escape their predators, but also to share their collective warmth.

Darkness then created a sense of family, if not society as well.

Language as a form of communication probably developed during these hours of darkness, when there was little else to do.

Now that we can build accommodation, we create smaller scale, more individualised caves where we can live alone and lonely.

What was once a source of comfort has become a source of alienation.

The Life of Buildings

This spiritual or anti-spiritual life of buildings in Murakami's fiction has been coming for some time.

The homes, office blocks, cafes, bars and hotels in his novels take on a life of their own.

They are characters with their own mysteries that embrace and surround the human characters. They're almost microcosms with their own cosmic significance.

Inside these buildings, we can be easily lured away from interaction with other humans, even the members of our own family.

Sister Feelings Call Again

Mari and her beautiful sister, Eri, are two sides of the one coin (their names are only one syllable apart) that have lost touch with each other.

Eri is at home sleeping a deep sleep that is "*too perfect, too pure*" and has lasted for two months.

Late in the book, we learn that they once embraced each other for protection in a lift while it remained trapped in darkness in a blackout.

Spiritually, it was the closest they ever came to each other, a return to the comfort of the cave.

Since then, they have drifted apart for no discernible reason.

Metaphorically, they have lost touch, but it's almost as if it is important that they have literally lost "*touch*" as well.

Close to You

Although Eri never fully regains consciousness during the span of the novel, their reconciliation and sense of wholeness begin when Mari learns to open up personally over the course of meetings with strangers during the night and decides to sleep in Eri's bed, holding her close under the sheets, just as the sun starts to rise and the darkness starts to dissipate.

Open Up and Let Me In

In Murakami's concluding words, *"this hint of things to come takes time to expand in the new morning light, and we attempt to watch it unobtrusively, with deep concentration. The night has begun to open up at last."*

Throughout the night, we have watched two flowers start to blossom...or, more likely, two shrubs about to re-blossom.

In a sense, they have emerged from the dark and into the light. They are literally *"after dark"* or post-darkness.

There is a suggestion of a recurring cycle at work here too. Just as day follows night, night follows day.

Darkness Becomes Light, and Light Becomes Darkness

Murakami's very last words are that the hint of things to come will continue to expand in the light, at least "until the next darkness arrives".

This might just mean that we will retreat to our caves at night, pending a new sunrise.

But it could also mean that, all through our lives, we have to deal with darkness and depression, but we have to remember that there will be a new sunrise, especially if we make it happen ourselves.

Is Once a Night Enough?

Someone has suggested that this novel could be the first in a trilogy based around these characters.

There are a myriad of questions that the detective in the reader wants to find answers for.

On the other hand, the metaphorical significance of the novel and its title is complete in one volume.

Ioanna says

Ιδια?τερη γραφ?, κλασσικ?ς Murakami!

P.S: Διαβ?στε το κατ? προτ?μηση τις μικρ?ς ?ρες, ?στε να το απολα?σετε περισσ?τερο!

Amira Mahmoud says

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Mohammed-Makram says

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Michael says

A delightful excursion into the mentality and rhythms of night in the city and the perspectives it gives to the meaning of our daytime lives. This 2007 novel contains the essence of Murakami's weird and wonderful ways in a pure and restrained form. We fly around observing a set of characters as with an invisible camera, neutral and unjudging. Time ticks down explicitly through the night though the pacing of life at night has a timeless quality. The characters actions are muted and reflective, their lives pregnant with unfulfilled potential. Murakami conjures up night and day as separate worlds, mirrors as windows between self and other, TV screens as doorways into alternative lives, and memory as a fuel to banish the nightmares of life with its light.

The plot elements are fairly simple and insignificant in themselves. The pleasure of the story lies in the elegance their rendering and their evocative powers over our emotions and imagination. Young Mari can't sleep and passes the time reading at an all-night Denny's. She is worried about her sister, Eri, a model who has disappeared for a long time into sleep. We visit the sister for time to time as she sleeps, oblivious to some ominous activity that we see mysteriously appear on her unplugged TV screen. A former friend of Eri's, Takahashi, arrives at the Denny's and engages Mari in conversation, breaking through her reserve with his innocent and kind nature. He goes off to practice as a trombone player in a jazz band. Mari gets involved in translating for a Chinese prostitute at a "love hotel" who has been beaten and robbed by her client. She befriends the lady manager and a maid at the hotel and has some philosophical discussions with them. Later she catches up with Takahashi at his music practice and over breakfast they consolidate a future for their friendship as a new day dawns and the daytime people replace those of the night.

Mari and Takahashi's goodness and innocence contrasts with the evil brutality of the john and tough life experiences of the staff at the love hotel. The hotel is called Alphaville, which Takahashi recalls was the name of a Godard movie and explains the irony of its name to Mari:

Well, for example, if you cry in Alphaville, they arrest you and execute you in public.

'Cause in Alphaville, you're not allowed to have deep feeling. So there's nothing like love. No contradictions, no irony. They do everything according to numerical formulas.

The other evil our heroes seem to counter is in the way people get disconnected in our modern civilization. The metaphor of Esi's sleep relates to the her estrangement from Mari from the time in their childhood when Esi's beauty put her on a track of popularity and modeling and inability to really listen to people ever after. In the process, Mari became the ugly duckling and took the track to shyness and loneliness and, to the benefit, an empathetic reflective personality. I love how Takahashi explains here how Esi's effective disappearance haunts him:

"...the more time goes by, the stronger it gets, like, I'm not even here: I'm not included in what's going on here. She's sitting right there in front of me, but at the same time she's a million miles away.

Finally, no matter what I say, it doesn't reach her. This layer, like some kind of transparent sponge kind of thing, stands between Eri Asai and me, and the words that come out of my mouth have to pass through it, and when that happens, the sponge sucks up almost all of the nutrients right out of them. She's not listening to anything I say—not really. The longer we talk, the more clearly I can see what's happening. So then the words come out of her mouth stop making it all the way to me. It was a very strange feeling."

It's a paradoxical thrill how Murakami invites the reader in as a shared observer with the narrator, encouraging emotional identification of heroes and villains, while at the same time enforcing the rule of no participation or intervention with his tale. And if you have questions, you can experience him putting up a hand when he says things like:

No one answers our questions. Our question marks are sucked, unresisting, into the final darkness and uncompromising silence of the night.

All delicious fun and inspiration for me. At the boundary of day in this book, I felt like was waking from a dream as illustrated in these favored fragments:

The new day is almost here, but the old one is still dragging its heavy skirts. Just as ocean water and river water struggle against each other at a river mouth, the old time and the new time clash and blend.

...

A cycle has been completed, all disturbances have been resolved, perplexities have been concealed, and things have returned to their original state. Around us, cause and effect join hands, and synthesis and division maintain their equilibrium.

The wonderful feelings I came away with in this book remind me of those I was let with after collusion with the narrator in "Midsummer Night's Dream", with the fly-on-the-wall observer in Maupin's "Tales of the City", and the with the framer behind the saga in the Moody Blues album "Days of Future Past." Quite a sparkling gem for me.

Stephen M says

"Eye's mark the shape of the city"

There is something about Murakami that ignites connections in my brain that I don't know what to do with. Such as the scene with the man on a television screen staring into a real room with a girl lying on the bed. He is said to be looking in from the "other side". Murakami uses this same phrase when a main character is looking into a mirror. When she gazes at herself in the mirror she is said to be looking in from the "other side". There are several scenes which beg for some kind of interpretation because they connect in some kind of way. So I tried my best to link two major ideas that struck me at first.

This book seemed to me to occupy itself with the phenomena of observance. His comparisons of the narrative lens to an actual camera lens is obvious. His prose even reflects that of a screenplay. Most chapters start with a sentence fragment of the location (like a screenplay Int. Denny's or what have you). The book is heavy on the dialogue and it's in the present tense. Obviously the idea of a screenplay informing the way we see a movie is being drawn into this story.

Another major idea stemmed from an argument of the effects of such observance upon the subject being observed, *"eye's mark the shape of the city"*. I felt the usage of the first-person plural, (i.e. "we see this... now we move into this place") was an argument for how the book itself smashes a world into a single view. As if there are these multiple people trying to look into this world, but we are restricted to the author's single view of the world. So he uses we to refer to our collected view into this world.

As you can see, these were all very abstract and loose interpretations. I tried my best to develop it. I went to town on the first 50 pages with a pen, but slowly the book slipped away from the analytical side of my brain.

I somewhat accepted that I wasn't going to understand every last supernatural detail or musing in this book. Instead, I let the mood and feelings evoked within guide me through it.

In interviews, Murakami often discusses his writing style. He calls it "dreaming". He will wake up at early hours of the morning to "dream" into the page, then he goes to a strictly regimented routine of running and other daily chores. He sees this repetition and "dreaming" as a way to mine into the inner recesses of the subconscious.

There is something beautiful about this in my opinion. This way in which Murakami delves into this type of writing always stimulates emotion from within me. It is like a dream where you wake up and can't really describe anything that has happened to yourself, yet you are undeniably left with a deep, pensive attitude superseding all of the quotidian aspects of the morning.

I like that Murakami does that to me.

I like that he connects two completely unrelated things that I can never make much sense out of.

I most certainly recommend this book. The only thing keeping me from five stars is the fact that it feels incomplete in its shortness. And not enough of it comes together in a similar fashion as *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*.

Nonetheless, it is powerful stuff. I'm a fan.

Prose style: 4

Plot: 3

Depth of characters: 4

Overall sense of aesthetic: 5

Originality: 5

Entertaining: 3

Emotional Reaction: 5

Intellectual Stimulation: 5

Social Relevance: 3

Writerly Inspiration: 4

Average = 4.1

[Click here](#)

Bookdragon Sean says

This really isn't a novel to be rushed. This is a novel to be savoured and appreciated, and I think this quote here captures a large part of the book:

"She reads with great concentration. Her eyes rarely move from the pages of the book- a thick hardback. A bookstore wrapper hides the title from us. Judging from her intent expression, the book might contain challenging subject matter. Far from skimming, she seems to be biting off and chewing it one line at a time."

The words and the language seem very simple, but there's much meaning here. This girl is more interested in this book than her surroundings; it is more stimulating that the people around her. The title remains hidden; it's a suggestion that just because we can see the outside it doesn't necessarily mean we know what is on the inside. We can observe, and we can see, but we can never truly perceive something in its exact form. This a theme Murakami carries throughout the book.

For example, take the man who abuses the prostitute in the love hotel. He seems like an ordinary man, functional, capable of going to work and able to maintain a relationship. But hidden in the depths of his ordinariness is a secret darkness, a need to hurt people. But what is the need? We never truly know. Surveillance can only tell so much. We know he speaks of a need, but whether or not that is some malevolent desire or a choice he has to make because someone has some leverage over him, we will, again, never actually know.

Night-time Tokyo is captured through a camera lens; it's forever gazing on the symbolic surface level of the character's existences, through which Murakami slowly begins to reveal their inner workings. But he never comes to any conclusions. We can only glimpse and peer in. As the hours approach ever closer to dawn, we see a little bit more.

"Between the time the last train leaves and the first train arrives, the place changes: it's not the same as in daytime."

"Time moves in its special way in the middle of the night."

We can look at a city at night, and we can see the intertwining threads of existence, but we will never see existence in its full form. So the book takes on an almost movie like feel, akin to something by Quentin Tarantino. Sure, we don't have the dramatic bursts of action and the spraying blood, but what we do have is conversation. Long drawn out dialogue that reveals much about the characters and how they perceive the world and each other. And it's intense at times, and it really pulls you into to the story. The exchanges are well written and almost natural in nature. They've not been forced on the page.

I did really enjoy this book, but somehow I feel that Murakami can do better. For all the interesting elements here, I know he was purposely holding back for effect. I really do need to read some more of his books, perhaps next time one that has a little more plot.

Katie says

WHY DO I NOT READ MURAKAMI MORE OFTEN?

Video review will be up Wednesday :)

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Jason Pettus says

(My full review of this book is larger than GoodReads' word-count limitations. Find it at the Chicago Center for Literature and Photography [cclapcenter.com].)

"You know what I think?" she says. "That people's memories are maybe the fuel they burn to stay alive. Whether those memories have any actual importance or not, it doesn't matter as far as the maintenance of life is concerned. They're all just fuel. Advertising fillers in the newspaper, philosophy books, dirty pictures in a magazine, a bundle of ten-thousand-yen bills: when you feed 'em to the fire, they're all just paper."

There are lots of people out there, myself included, who believe Japanese author Haruki Murakami to be the creator these days of some of the most beautiful dialogue currently being produced on the planet; and after coming across an example like the one above, how really can you not agree? For years a well-known secret among the Western world's literary hipsters, it was not until Murakami's embrace by indie heavy-hitter McSweeney's at the turn of the millennium that he acquired a mainstream following within English-speaking countries; now that his work is getting more and more known, however, there are more and more people now aware of what a magical and sometimes almost perfect thing a Murakami novel is. I'll admit right off the bat, for example, that I'm a big and longtime fan of Murakami myself; that before today's review I had already read four of his thirteen books now available in English, and in fact love his work so much that I've named one of my past Macintoshes after him. (See, anytime I acquire another Mac, I rename the hard drive after a writer I really admire, so that I can tell them apart when linking them together as an in-home network...and, um...er, never mind.)

Murakami's latest English novel, then, the slim but still deeply strange *After Dark*, becomes this week my fifth full-length novel of his, and in fact...

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16.01.2018

Bob Lopez says

I didn't like the book very much. It read like something he tossed off, like it was a book between books, like a book to satisfy a contractual obligation: the literary equivalent of a B-sides collection, or maybe a greatest hits collection, only not very good.

There wasn't anything very compelling about the characters. They were wooden, and not very fleshed out,

like vaguely romanticized caricatures.

The narrative suffered--I'm guessing--because of the translation; there were details here and there that sort of pulled me out of the story to wonder how true they were: the main girl, a book-reading, chain-smoking, Godard-loving 19 year old, hangs out at Denny's--in Japan, although plausible, is it likely? It doesn't matter because every time it came up, I'd wonder the same thing; also, the girl wears a baseball cap (which I buy b/c baseball is huge in Japan), but it's a Red Sox cap (which I don't buy, b/c, even though baseball is huge in Japan, they have **THEIR OWN TEAMS**). How hard would that have been...to give her a cap w/ a Japanese team's logo? It's bad translating, unless Murakami wrote it in the original, too, which would speak more about his cultural and financial opportunism (how will this sell in the States, perhaps?) than the affected "disaffected teenager" he was creating.

The translation may also have something to do with the fact that the novel reads like a poorly written, adolescent's graphic novel, particular the psuedo-romance that sort-of blossoms between two late-teens characters. The dialog is bad enough in some instances that it pulled me from the story to consider its plausibility...

Here's some sample thought-dialog, by the book-reader's intellectually opposite and inferior older sister:

For some reason, a different kind of reality has taken the place of my normal reality. Wherever it might have been brought from, whoever might have carried me here, I have been left shut up entirely alone in this strange, dusty, viewless room with no exit. Could I have lost my mind and, as a result, been sent to some kind of institution? After all, who gets to bring her own bed along when she enters the hospital? And besides this simply doesn't look like a hospital room. Neither does it look like a prison cell. It's just a big, empty room.

Who in the world talks like this? Who in the world *thinks* like this? The book expects us to buy it, however. But in complete sentences? In complete paragraphs? And, let's not forget that the thinker of these thoughts is young, at most in her early twenties. As the narrative clearly establishes, she is poorly-schooled, and actually so pretty she's a model which caused her to further neglect her studies. And yet, you want me to believe she can think like this after just waking up in what is apparently a place she does not recognize? I know it's set in Japan, and I know the stereotypes about disciplined schooling in Japan, but c'mon...it reads entirely disingenuous.

It's cold, and it sounds like a paper: *Could I have lost my mind and, as a result, been sent to some kind of institution?* Yeah, the grammar asylum.

There was an interesting device employed by the narrative: first-person camera narration, with tracking, zooms, close-ups, and phrases like "We turn the camera..." and "We pull in to see..." Maybe that's second person camera...I don't know...

Matthias says

I wake up.

My room bathes in the light of the streetlamp. I'm too tired to look around. I close my eyes again but soon feel in my heart that the darkness I so desire has fled. It hides under my bed, in the corners of the city and of my mind. It refuses to manifest itself in its most majestic and generous form, that of the great blanket that

covers the waking world, that of the wide gate that allows passage to the land of dreams. The splashes of darkness only serve to irritate me in their small portions. I open my eyes, flip the switch and welcome the light in its hostile splendour.

I'm not thirsty. I'm not hungry. I'm tired but unwilling to try to sleep, unwilling to fight a battle that I've already lost.

Milk.

Milk never quenches my thirst, it never stills my hunger, but I always have some in my fridge. It soothes me on a level that is neither nutritional or hydrating. Milk is said to strengthen the bones, but I sense that it softens me. Milk will manage to soften the hard edges of this sleepless night.

My feet are cold as I make my way to the fridge. The floor hasn't been cleaned in a little while and I feel small grains of cluttered dust, sand and crumbles cling to the soles of my feet. I rub them off and feel a slight disgust with both myself and the floor. I tip-toe the rest of the way and I feel better.

The fridge is empty. No milk. No water. No produce. The light, my nemesis of the night, luxuriates in this deserted white scenery as a victorious conqueror. I close the door in displeasure but in the speed of the movement I see a flash of darkness. I open the door again and notice a black book sitting on the middle shelf. Wondering how it got there and how I missed it before, I pick it up.

"After Dark", by Haruki Murakami.

Even though my feet still feel dirty, I slip back into bed and start reading. The mood is palpable from the first sentence onwards and I'm taken away into a scenery where sympathetic darkness prevails, allowing glimpses into its secrets. Mirrors, shadows, cats and dead television sets become gateways to another world. It's a world of mysterious questions to which tuna sandwiches, a set of sharpened pencils, a trombone and a baseball cap are its incomprehensible but valid answers.

Conversations glean additional significance from the darkness that surrounds them. Everyday objects become laden with meaning. I am close to understanding the night, as I feel it both within the pages and within me.

I wake up.

Fabian says

Clearly his efforts are becoming more and more of a nuisance--because you must read his entire body of work, you need to trudge through latter stuff, like this one, Verrrry Minor Murakami*.

The best thing? The open-endedness in some of the various hallucinations/tableaux. The most irritating? His 1 page-per American reference, and the halo to the Japanese master of All (Crap!) Things USA.

*newly discovered literature genre (c.a. 2016)

Jr Bacdayan says

“It’s true, though: time moves in its own special way in the middle of the night.”

I read Murakami’s After Dark exclusively at night time. Capricious as it might sound, I do believe that most of it I read after midnight. Darkness encroaching all around, only a dim desk lamp to illuminate my surroundings. Silence engulfing the atmosphere, sometimes unbearable, often intoxicating. A cup of coffee beside me, a platter of peanuts in front, I relished every moment of this novel. Why? I am captivated by nighttime, more specifically, by the deepest hours of the night. I love the mysteriousness, the loneliness, the profound silence. I bask at darkness filling every recess of space, creating a world void of insanity. For in darkness all show their true form. The vision available to each is limited to the proximity of one’s immediate surroundings, no horizon in front, no skyline behind. All are isolated by this black cloak that contain things unknown. How can one sleep at a time so elegant and enigmatic?

This light novel about strange things that happen during the night is an entree in the gourmet realm of Murakami’s works; a tasty little sample to savor standing amidst the master’s more formidable courses. It is a short interconnected tale about different people who, like me, are most alive when the earth is devoured by its own shadow. It may seem fleeting at times or possibly even rushed, but I think what really scintillates in this novel is the perfect atmosphere that is embodied by its shrill depiction of the night time. Forget all your reservations; forget what seems like an underdeveloped story. I feel that this particular work is Murakami’s artistic ode to the ephemeral night. I want to believe that Murakami purposely kept it short and lingering, for like the story, sometimes we want the night to last, to continue its darkness. But the night moves on its own time and way, we are bound by its deliciousness and we savor it. Nevertheless, as all the things good, it passes by as if it was but a moment. Darkness fades away, and all things are renewed.

We then wait for the next sunset, another night, the darkness.

Whether asleep or awake, no matter how you spend the night, one can never deny that things go interesting after dark.

Steven Godin says

Another night has passed by and the day is upon us, telling from the light it is still early morning and from our viewpoint we are looking down on a city, we start to float towards a neighbourhood and pick out a house at random. We are now in the back garden of the property where two cats roam and can hear the sound of birds singing in the trees, we move in the direction of a second story window where the curtains are still closed, we enter. The first thing we notice is a man sat up in bed who appears to be reading but from our angle are unable to see the title, on a bedside table there is a lamp which is switched on, a cup of coffee and a digital alarm clock that reads 7:40am in bright blue neon. We head closer towards the man and can make out that the book is called ‘After Dark’ and he is close to finishing. Some time later we travel into another room where the same man is sat at a desk and is typing on a computer keyboard and on closer inspection of the screen we see it is a site called ‘goodreads’ and he appears to be writing a review of a book, we presume it’s for the book he recently completed and it reads as the following,

I have always had a fascination with the thought of major city's during the hours of night and one of those would be Tokyo, but not necessarily for what you can see like huge neon signs, the hustle and bustle of

clubs, bars, food joints and people making there why home. No it's what you can't see that intrigues me as somewhere out there in the dead of night there is a whole other world going on that gives me the creeps, one of hidden menace, strange occurrences and bad vibrations, and this is exactly the feelings that Murakami conjures up in this intriguing, surreal and hypnotic tale. Set over the course of a single night with central themes of alienation and longing in a vast metropolis involving two young sisters, a musician, the employee of a love hotel and an office night worker who has committed a vicious assault. As ever nothing is straightforward and unexplained events are never answered with everything left hanging in the air, literally!, but that's what is great here as Murakami has cast a spell over us and it's up to the reader to draw their own conclusions. My only slight nag is it reads like a film script rather than a novel, and yes as others have mentioned David Lynch comes to mind, although I think turning any Murakami novel into a movie is mission impossible no matter who would be behind the camera.

A short, bewildering shot in the arm that has the power to baffle the mind, chill your bones and warm your heart all at the same time. There is simply no one else like him.

Daniel says

Murakami is not a great author for passive readers. If your main interest in fiction is plot and story, and especially if you tend to be the sort of reader who plows straight through a book and then thinks about it only after you're done, "After Dark" is going to be unsatisfying.

To me, Murakami is a great author for teaching you how to read (forgive me) proactively. He works a lot with impressions and mood, so that it's most rewarding when the reader stops after every few sentences and chews on what's happening.

On the surface, not a lot happens in "After Dark". There's a girl, Mari, who's staying up all night in a Denny's in an unnamed city, just trying to be by herself and not trying to accomplish much else. Her sister Eri is what I'd call dramatically asleep - unconscious for an indeterminate amount of time, but not comatose or otherwise unhealthy. So right away, this is not the basis for a summer blockbuster film. There are other characters and interesting Things that Happen, of course, it's just a slow start to a leisurely sort of book.

Overall, I'd say this book is about how large groups of people are an organism in and of themselves, and about how that faceless, inexorable organism can possibly be built out of gangsters and also of people who like to sit in a Denny's and read books.

If impressionistic novels are your cup of tea, then you'll enjoy this book and you'll loooooooooooooove some of his longer stuff, like "The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle" or "Wild Sheep Chase". The first time I read a Murakami novel I ended with the impression that I missed something important, and I only started to "get" his work after I stopped to smell the creeping dread. This book is a good Murakami litmus test - don't bother with his longer work if you don't like it. I liked it.

Sherif Metwaly says

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