



## Slow Boat

*Hideo Furukawa , David Boyd (Translator)*

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**A startling novella from the heir to Haruki Murakami and Gabriel Garcia Marquez.**

Trapped in Tokyo, left behind by a series of girlfriends, the narrator of *Slow Boat* sizes up his situation. His missteps, his violent rebellions, his tiny victories. But he is not a passive loser, content to accept all that fate hands him. He attempts one last escape to the edges of the city, holding the only safety net he has known – his dreams.

Filled with lyrical longing and humour, *Slow Boat* captures perfectly the urge to get away and the necessity of finding yourself in a world which might never even be looking for you.

## Slow Boat Details

Date : Published March 30th 2017 by Pushkin Press (first published July 2003)

ISBN : 9781782273288

Author : Hideo Furukawa , David Boyd (Translator)

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## From Reader Review Slow Boat for online ebook

### Taryn says

**2.5 Stars.** Very quick read! I'll be reading the story being "remixed" before I review.

Homage to/Remix of Haruki Murakami's short story "Slow Boat to China" - Available at JSTOR (free registration required). Also included in the short story collection *The Elephant Vanishes*.

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### Katie says

2.5 maybe?

This was okay-ish. I wasn't bored and the writing was beautiful in places. However, the formatting of this Netgalley copy really got on my nerves and really marred by experience. I also found it hard to follow and wasn't particularly attached to the plot in any way.

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### Marie-Therese says

Not quite 3.5 stars (3.25?)

While I strongly suspect this book is better in its original Japanese (the particular Japanese of the narrator plays a big part in the book's opening chapters) and I doubt any but those thoroughly familiar with the work of Haruki Murakami (the author Furukawa is "remixing" and paying homage to) will catch all this book's nuances and sly jokes, I still enjoyed this quite a bit.

Furukawa's narrator is more of whiner and distinctly less likeable than those found in most of Murakami's stories (certainly more than in 'Slow Boat to China'\*, the story Furukawa is explicitly remixing) but, as annoying as he can be, he and the story gain depth and heart as the novella unfolds and by the end I was moved by his tale. The introduction of another narrative voice via magazine articles a little more than halfway through helps expand the emotional palette of the book, too.

I'd definitely recommend this to Murakami fans and readers interested in the ways contemporary Japanese writers are engaging with the literature of their immediate past.

\*For those who are interested in the refreshing their memory of the Murakami story before reading Furukawa's novella, 'Slow Boat to China' can be found in English translation in the collection *The Elephant Vanishes*

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### Fran says

The circle of life, for many individuals, is completed within a small radius of their place of origin. Boku was born in Tokyo, feared he would die in Tokyo and made several botched attempts to leave. His dreams of life in Tokyo were colorless and murky. Boku had three girlfriends. One was taken from him, one left him as a

result of mistakes and the third one, he sent away.

As a fifth grader, Boku became obsessed with death as "The Big Limit". He stopped attending school, slept all day and kept a dream diary resulting in his being shipped off to an alternative school for dropouts. Enter girlfriend number one. By attending summer school, she was out of her mother's hair for the summer. Summer ends abruptly, halting the budding friendship and romance.

Boku's university years provided a second chance. What started as physical stirrings and incredible chemistry led to love. Girlfriend two was determined to leave Tokyo for Okinawa, so much so, that she called from the airport holding two tickets to Okinawa. Boku can leave Tokyo with her if he arrives at the airport. It is a race against time.

Fast forward to our narrator's new decision. If he can't leave Tokyo, he can keep Tokyo out of his business venture. His cafe called The Power of Kate is an establishment with aromas and flavors foreign to Tokyo. Girlfriend three, Knife Girl, the chef, will leave Tokyo soon to fulfill her dreams.

One cannot deny the fact that circumstance is a factor in his inability to leave Tokyo. Time marches on and it is incumbent upon Boku to navigate his own destiny. If the odds are against him, he has allowed them to be so. All he needs is a dose of hope and to exercise free will.

"Slow Boat" by Hideo Furukawa is a story of Boku's inability to change his focus from inaction to self betterment, hopefulness and happiness. Yes, he is often misguided and would profit from better communication skills, but hope is still within reach. "Slow Boat", a novella, highlights a life tormented by feeling there is no way out and no escape. An excellent read.

Thank you Steerforth Press, Pushkin Press and Net Galley for the opportunity to read and review "Slow Boat".

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### **Amanda at Nerdification Reviews says**

This tale written in a stream of consciousness was atmospheric and interesting for a while, but I feel like I got lost along the way.

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### **Mobyskine says**

A series of girlfriends adventure-- recalling a heart-throbbing moment while on his last escape attempt to the edge of the city (which he failed three times before). Exciting and humorous plot. Love that it was narrated in a freestyle vibe, so relax yet exaggeratedly funny. His urge to get away out from Tokyo was a finale, feeling trapped in the heartless city losing so much what he longed for along the way, I was being entertained with his style of story telling-- lyrical, hopeless, bizarre, energetic, all with a bag full of dreams. In between of his attempt, I got a story of his past girlfriends (I love the knife girl out of all)-- on how he met them all, the quirky relationships, dramatic and melancholy, very amusing, very much wacky, and sensual a bit. The idea was fantastic, the development of each chapters were nicely written-- not trying too hard, it was just nice and pleasantly.

I actually wish this guy had more ex girlfriends. More stories to tell. More funny dramatic melancholy stuff. More memories of so called 'limit'. More dreams and chronicles. Beautiful read. I enjoyed it very much.

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### **Shawn Mooney says**

Loved Furukawa's memoir 'Horses, Horses,' and when I heard this wee novel was an homage to Murakami's 'Slow Boat to China,' I read that story first, and loved it: the only Murakami short story ever to wow me. The love ended there. While I was intrigued by the rebellious main character in this Furukawa novel, the staggeringly cliché-ridden prose—the fault of a crappy translation?—stopped me from getting but a few pages past chapter one. Just appalling.

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### **Ajla says**

Surprisingly good and intriguing! I'd love to read more from this author.

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### **Bram Swennen says**

Mooie cover maar dat is dan ook het enige positieve dat er over dit boek valt te zeggen.

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### **Hannah says**

I did not get this, in fact I am kind of embarrassed how totally I did not get this. I read the words but didn't understand their deeper meaning. It felt a bit like I am lacking the framework needed to understand this book. I feel the need to point out that this is totally my fault - I know nearly nothing about Japan, so I wasn't even sure if the places visited by the protagonist are real or not.

How baffling this whole book was for me is best exemplified thusly: my copy has letters missing (the "th"s at the start of sentences were missing as well as the letters "ft" if they followed each other) and I am not even sure if that wasn't in fact on purpose. I have no idea how to adequately write a review of a book that I so fundamentally did not get.

The narrator is the complete focus of this work, the book is in fact highly introspective in nature and as such his story is told in a circular and repeating manner. He has tried and failed to leave Tokyo at least on three separate occasions and is sure he will never be able to leave and start anew somewhere else (it is never explained why he wants to leave or why he feels like his attempts are doomed). He reminisces on his three girlfriends and how those relationships end. Then there are interludes written by one of his friends who works as a free-lance journalist and I don't quite know what they were about.

As I said, I just did not get it - the whole subtext went past me and the whole experience was baffling to me - and not in a particularly fun way.

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I received an arc of this book courtesy of NetGalley and Pushkin Press in exchange for an honest review.

Thanks for that!

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### **Alice Lippart says**

Super weird, but actually quite intriguing.

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### **Wendy says**

One man's bizarre journey trying to leave Tokyo, his strange dreams, and the loss of his three girlfriends. This novella didn't quite cut it for me. I was kind of bored to tell you the truth. I had such high hopes for this novella and now my hopes have been dashed. I'm kind of sitting here like what was that?

Although, two things that struck me from the book were: one, is that the kids were taking a class to learn how to make goggles out of bamboo segments so they could explore the riverbed. And the second was a favorite quote: "I wasn't so weak when I was young. But I got old. Now I always think about consequences." He wants to stand up and fight back for what he feels is right but feels he can't because he is not young and strong anymore.

Maybe for me in another time or another place, but not today.

I received a copy of this book from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Jackie says**

I did not see the point of this book. So many reviews praised the writing and how relevant the story was but I really didn't understand it. I was asking myself where the story was going throughout the whole book and by the end I still have no answer.

The writing was messy and all over the place, letters were missing, the became e, this became is, left became le, it was so annoying to read. This has 120 pages and I basically just forced myself through it because I had hope that at the end we'd get an explanation or ANYTHING.

The only reason I gave this 2 stars is because this is a diverse read as it is set in Tokyo and the characters are mostly all Japanese.

Overall this was just a mess. UGH. Maybe it's just me and I just didn't understand what this book was trying to convey the way other people did but sadly I did not like this at all.

\*I received a free ARC from the publisher via Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.\*

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### **Patrick Sherriff says**

I must admit I didn't quite get this, certainly not the ending, but that didn't detract from my enjoyment of the book. I haven't read the Haruki Murakami short story Slow Boat to China that this novella is a homage to (the author says as much at the end of the book) but I could sure see the similarities with Murakami -- strange, sexy women, a disaffected young-ish narrator, a melancholy mood, references to pop songs, an

obsession with boobs, and a plot that was more one man's search for meaning than anything actually happening. But in amongst all that was a coming of age story (actually three) focussed on young love that was touching.

Download my starter library for free here - <http://eepurl.com/bFkt0X> - and receive my monthly newsletter with book recommendations galore for the Japanophile, crime-fiction-lover in all of us.

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## Subashini says

Bizarre, funny, dreamy novella that will probably be more rewarding for fans of Murakami and close readers of Murakami's work. Furukawa acknowledges his debt to Murakami, and presents this as an homage to him by way of a "remix" of a Murakami short story that I've not read (but will probably get around to after this). I liked Murakami for a short while while in university, and after that I seemed to not care very much for his style. Furukawa's novella bristles with the restless energy of an outsider; and for anyone who has wanted to escape a place only to find that most exit routes lead back to the same place, or are simply false points of escape, this book will ring true. It's very self-aware and funny. Fed up with being unable to leave Tokyo, the narrator hits upon the idea of bringing "the out" in; "the Trojan Horse of Tokyo" with which he can one-up Tokyo by leaving *without* leaving, but even that doesn't work out as planned. (It never does.) Furukawa's structural play with dreamscapes and the notes on the unreliability of language also strike a deeper and more poignant note than usual Murakami fare. This is a strange novella and strangely rewarding. I found David Boyd's "Americanised" English translation grating, at first, and somewhat excessive, but it started to grow on me, steeped as the book is in American pop culture references.

(With thanks to Pushkin Press for a review copy on NetGalley.)

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