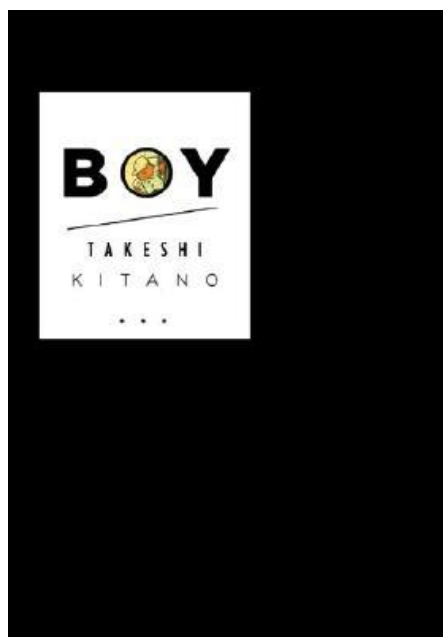




Boy

Takeshi Kitano

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Internationall renowned film auteur Takeshi Kitano has been applauded for his challenging portrayals of manhood and men, most notably rogue figures. Discerning fans of his cinematic oeuvre, however, have also appreciated the lyrical sensibility that infuses even his most violent works. In *Boy*, Kitano's essential vision is filtered through crystalline prose and the prism of childhood; the result is a gem of memory and nostalgia.

While his impressive cinematic output has been compared to, and introduced to the American public by, Quentin Tarantino and the like, Kitano's equally delightful gift for pure word-craft has been a better-kept secret of his native Japan. This first American translation of his literary fiction illustrates the notion of "boyhood" that has underlain all his work--as well as that of many a creator valuing generous and bold invention.

The three stand-alone tales take place at early, middle and late adolescence. In "The Champion in a Padded Kimono" two brothers--one a bookworm and the other a jock--learn a lesson or two about hope and desire on Sports Day. "Nest of Stars" features a different pair of brothers for whom stargazing becomes a poignant way of life. In "Okamesan", a very young history buff goes on his frst solo "field mission" to Kyoto where he runs into a girl from the wrong side of the tracks. Tender and funny, *Boy* is a perfect introduction to Kitano's world and a must-read for fans of the artist.

Boy Details

Date : Published August 14th 2007 by Vertical (first published 1987)

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Author : Takeshi Kitano

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Orfa Alarcón says

Me emocioné mucho al recibir este libro. pues no tenía idea de que uno de mis directores de cine favoritos también escribiera. Las historias son geniales, contrario a su autor, que piensa que tratan del inicio de la infancia, considero que son historias que reflejan ese preciso instante en que la infancia se rompe y comienza la vida adulta (aunque, lo sé, qué puedo opinar yo contra el propio autor). Es lamentable, sin embargo, que lectura tan genial se vea empañada por una edición tan descuidada. Cuando se encuentra un "enrollado" en la página 12, se sabe ya que la edición se puso en manos de alguien sin idea de lo que hacía, o que simplemente la edición no se hizo. Qué lástima.

Rachel says

American fans of Takeshi Kitano know him primarily as a writer/director of and actor in Yakuza films, but in his native Japan, he's a huge presence. He's had a varied career, beginning as a stand-up comedian and moving on to TV and films, and later in life becoming a novelist, poet, and painter. He's most often compared to Quentin Tarantino, who I like well enough, but artistically ... er, no. In his spare time, Kitano writes literary and social criticism; in Tarantino's spare time, he guest-judges on *American Idol*. Not the same.

Boy is the first of Kitano's books to be translated into English, and fans of his gangster movies may be disappointed. The book contains three short stories, each of them something of a coming-of-age story and all quite melancholy. "The Champion in a Padded Kimono" is about two brothers in their 30s, one who had been a good student and the other a good athlete, reminiscing about a particular grade school Sports Day they both competed in. "Nest of Stars," the strongest of the three stories, is also about two young brothers, whose mother has moved them from Tokyo to Osaka after the death of their father. They each have difficulty making the adjustment and fitting in to their new school, and take solace in their father's hobby of astronomy. "Okamesan" concerns a high school boy who travels from Tokyo to Kyoto by himself to tour the temples and study history and who ends up in a brief relationship with an unhappy high school girl who's been badly used by her biker boyfriend.

Kitano's trademark deadpan humor and bleakly hopeful outlook are present here. The children suffer disappointment and difficulty, which makes them wiser, but also sadder. Kitano demonstrates that as fondly as we remember childhood, it can sometimes be grim business.

Hui Lin says

The reason I chose to read this book is because of its cover. But after reading it, I was amazed by how three simple childhood stories can be so touching and meaningful. There are three stories in this book, The Champion in a Padded Kimono, The Nest of Star, and Okame-san. My favorite one out of the three was The Champion in a Padded Kimono. This story starts with two brothers as grown man having a conversation, and then the story goes back to the time when the brothers are still children. One of the brother is better in learning while the other one is better at sport. Although, the two brothers are good at differen things, they didn't look down on each other because of what they are bad at. Instead they give each other support on Field day during the races. Not only did they look out on each other, they even care for the one who is the best at

sport, who is sick on the Field day. I think that this simple caring and supporting is very sweet, and is also why I liked this book.

TK421 says

I am being generous with my three stars here; it was probably closer to a 2.5.

The three stories that make up this book are male-dominated tales dealing with brotherhood, fathers and sons relationships, loss, and what its like for a boy to begin his journey toward manhood. As I said, they were okay.

I have not read anything else by this author, nor have I seen any of the many movies he has made. To be honest, with this collection as my standard, I am not going to rush to the videostore or library searching for his work any time soon.

RECOMMENDED (with reservations)

Patrick Sherriff says

Boy is about endurance. It is a collection of three short stories, each told from the point of view of boys coming of age in Japan. Although there are three different lads, they could easily be the same boy as he grows up from primary school to junior high and finally high school student.

The stories are about enduring what must be endured, whether it be a fever in an undokai sports day, the militaristic rituals every Japanese kid must scream and march their way through in elementary school; the difficulties of surviving and moving on from the death of a father; or that first broken heart. The stories are deceptively easy to read and I had to pace myself not to finish them too quickly. You could race through them all in one sitting, but I'm glad I read one a day over three days. It gave the characters a chance to resonate and live a little longer off the page. It would have been a shame to have hurried to the end and missed the depth in the honest depiction of the end of childhood.

Boy left me feeling a little sad, partly sentimental for a time that I can never get back, and partly pitying my own children who must shortly navigate their way to adulthood on their own. But maybe that's just me. It's good stuff.

Download my starter library for free here - <http://eepurl.com/bFkt0X>

Our Abiko says

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Jake Bell says

This is so different from the style of his movies, I'm amazed this is the same person.

Caro says

Each story flows well with the one before it, which causes each story to seem progressively better but actually creates a vivid, more enjoyable whole. Three stories embody a series of vignettes narrated similarly to memories from childhood. The title "Boy" complements and directly speaks to major boyhood themes of adolescence although girls could definitely relate as well. There is a boy protagonist who varies slightly between each story but often has a brother or problems with other family members, especially parents. This boy is slightly socially awkward and vulnerable as most children are. Kitano places these children in social environments where they seem a bit lost and vulnerable to the mysterious and frightening adult world. The way that he displays the interaction between children and these situations is delightful. I especially enjoyed the middle story "Nest of Stars" that deals with adapting to new environments (common thread), childhood trauma and loss, brotherhood and the burgeoning sense of individuality or adult self-centeredness.

Never watched Takeshi Kitano's films before but I'm excited to now. The cover illustration of the hardcover is great, a chaotic never-ending scene of children lost among adults or the reverse.

The stories weren't overwhelmingly good but I can picture them being excellent as film adaptations.

Don Jaucian says

Strange that a book this quiet and tempered is written by the man who made Takeshi's Castle and Zaitoichi. The three stories in Boy are disarmingly quiet; little stories about the male psyche during the precarious years of adolescence. They carry the serene stillness of Japanese narratives that we've known through the stories of Banana Yoshimoto and Haruki Murakami. The stories bear no pretenses, they are just straightforward narratives mapping out fragments of lives; fragments that are substantial parts of what these boys are and what will they become.

It's also amazing how these three stories are intertwined, but not by overt elements. "The Boy in the Padded Kimono" tells the story of two brothers who seem to be vastly different from one another; one is a jock and the other a nerd. A deep link between them unravels one day, with a supposedly miraculous chocolate candy involved.

"Okamesan" is the staple adolescent love of the collection; a stirring in the loins perhaps, as it recalls the strange sensation of discovery in the most unexpected time and the most unusual place.

But it is the middle story "Nest of Stars" that emerges as the strongest tale of the book. Two brothers share a love for constellations and the mysteries of the universe, something that they have inherited from their

already deceased father. Their mother traipses off with men, leaving off her sons to fend for their own. "Nest of Stars" culminates at a devastating end, where the promise of uncertainty is the only thing they have that closely resembles hope.

Stéphanie says

Boy est une série de trois nouvelles explorant la thématique de l'enfance.

La première nouvelle met en scène deux frères qui se remémorent un événement particulier survenu il y a 30 ans. : la Fête du Sport de leur école primaire. La seconde conte l'histoire de deux frères persécutés par leurs camarades de classe et qui se réfugient dans l'observation des étoiles, passe-temps préféré de leur père décédé. Enfin dans la dernière nouvelle, un ado passionné d'Histoire fugue pour aller visiter la ville de Kyôto et se lie d'amitié avec une jeune fille atypique.

Au travers de ces nouvelles Kitano dresse un portrait juste et sensible d'enfants, timides, maltraités ou combattifs. La figure du père est également omniprésente et il est au fil des nouvelles tantôt agressif, aimé et regretté ou autoritaire.

On suit ces histoires, presque banales, de jeunes garçons avec intérêt tant l'écriture est fluide et la langue agréable.

Malgré l'impression de douce nostalgie qui se dégage des nouvelles, Kitano présente l'enfance comme une période de la vie violente et cruelle.

Mikael Kuoppala says

Takeshi Kitano has made a reputation for himself as a comedian, an actor and later an award winning film director of international acclaim. He also has a literary career, and finally one of his books has gotten translated into English.

"Boy" is a collection of three independent stories that together form a thematic arc about the development of a boy. Each story focuses on a different point in that development ranging from childhood to adolescence.

The book is nothing exactly phenomenal, but Kitano shows a mastery of the written form with involved characterization and a descriptive hold of the narrative. Plotwise, the stories don't shine and they aren't packed with fresh ideas, but they do convey a feeling of authenticity; the characters feel very much alive.

I would definitely be interested in reading more prose from Mr. Kitano as it seems that the guy has a fountain of creativity within himself that can find many different forms of release.

Tosh says

Beat Takeshi's book I am afraid is not that interesting. He's known in the U.S. for his sometimes really good films - but in Japan he's a major TV star. He has a talk show or two and in many ways he is sort of like the Japanese version of David Letterman. He's quite a force in Japanese showbiz and everything else.

Nevertheless this collection of three short stories are basically so-what. All of them deal with youth told through the eyes of a young person - and so what? Strange choice for his first book in English.

John says

I got this book as an ARC a couple of years ago at BookExpo. In the ordinary way, even though it says in big letters on the front of ARCs that they're not to be regarded as final versions, the assumption is that this is as near as dammit the identical text to the one that'll be published. Not so in this instance: the version of the text I was reading is a sort of rough first draft of the translation, complete with obvious errors and clearly sans even the most basic copyediting. Presumably everyone was in a rush to get the ARC out in time for BookExpo.

It all sounds like a recipe for a grim read, and if I'd been told in advance the text was in this state I probably wouldn't have begun this collection of three novelettes about youth -- even though I'm a great admirer of its author, the movie director and writer often referred to as "Beat" Takeshi. Surprisingly, though, the stories survive pretty well; I suspect the polished version of the translation is pretty fine.

For my money, easily the best of the stories is "The Nest of Stars", which focuses on the relationship between the narrator and his elder brother, both of whom are having difficulty adapting to the family's move from Tokyo to Osaka after Dad's death. The boys are bonded by their love of amateur astronomy, inherited from their father; but will that be enough to pull them through? What's poignant about the story is the younger boy's slow, then sudden, realization that his big brother's claim to have settled in just fine is just a facade, assumed out of duty.

(The story is slightly marred by the fact that Takeshi knows less about Sirius than his narrator would. Even though there's an old Arab nickname for the star to the effect that it has a thousand colours, this is a misnomer; quite likely, later interpreters applied the nickname to the wrong star, because Sirius doesn't look like that at all . . . yet our narrator describes it as doing so when seen through his small telescope.)

"The Champion in a Padded Kimono" is again about brotherhood. Now adult, the narrator reminisces about a school sports day, and about his elder brother who, by contrast with himself, was lousy at sports. The story's a great read that leaves one frustrated because two of its plot strands (the school athlete of the title, the supposedly magic chocolate the kids get hold of) peter out into nothing, as if the author forgot them. "Okame-san" is about a much older boy who goes from Tokyo to spend a couple of nights in Kyoto doing historical research, about how he gets ripped off by bikers, and about the gal who makes it all worthwhile. It's a nice coming-of-age story.

All in all, I'm very glad I picked up the ARC. I must keep an eye out for a copy of the final version for my shelves.

Klim says

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Leonardo says

La infancia es uno de los momentos clave de la vida de una persona y los tres cuentos incluidos en este libro nos presentan tres momentos de revelación en la vida de tres niños japoneses, tres instantáneas tan intensas, como nostálgicas. Dos de los relatos son historias de hermanos y dos de las historias tienen como protagonistas a niños que se ven arrancados de un mundo ideal (al menos a sus ojos), para verse enfrentados a una realidad áspera (aunque no menos intensa) y a la transición a otra etapa de su vida. Ya sea el recuerdo de una competencia deportiva escolar, una excursión fatídica para observar el firmamento nocturno, como refugio ante la ausencia del padre y las tribulaciones en una nueva escuela y una nueva ciudad, o el encuentro casi fortuito del primer amor, "Niño" nos introduce en el ambiente social y escolar del Japón contemporáneo. Somo testigos de los cambios inevitables de la vida y los breves instantes que encapsulan toda una infancia y se vuelven imborrables para el resto de la vida y descubrimos, en una cultura aparentemente ajena, experiencias que nos resultan a la vez similares y extrañas.
