Keiko Kobe, *With the Light: Raising an Autistic Child*

Yen Press, New York, NY, 2007, 527 pp, ISBN-10: 07595-2356-8, \$14.99 (paper)

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From a western point of view, the notion of a comic book conjures up images of villains and super-heroes. Clearly, this type of media is used for entertainment purposes and is not suitable for review in a professional journal. However, in Japan, comic books are referred to as manga, which is a highly stylized art form. Manga in Japan, are not strictly for entertainment purposes. This media is used to teach and inform the public on a variety of issues. To refer to books such as these as comic books, is a disservice. At 527 pages, this publication should be more aptly referred to as a graphic novel.

With the Light: Raising an Autistic Child, is now available in English for the first time. It chronicles the life of the Azuma family as they discover that their son, Hikura ("To be Bright") has autism. This graphic novel is the first in a series of graphic novels and spans Hikura's birth to his early years in the public education system. It won an Excellence Prize for manga at the 8th annual Japanese Media Arts Festival. This incredibly sensitive portrayal was so well received that it was adapted for television and won several awards in the Japanese equivalent of the Emmy'sTM including Best Drama, Best Actress, Best Supporting Actor, Best Supporting Actress, and Best Newcomer.

English speaking audiences will immediately notice the fact that this graphic novel is bound on the right side of the page. The book appears "backward". Japanese is meant to be read from right to left which is the exact opposite from how Western languages are read. Yen Press intentionally

published the graphic novel in this manner to maintain the "...integrity of the art and story flow of the book..." (p. 3). The publishers provide a Reading Tips Guide in the beginning of the novel and one becomes quickly habituated to the flow. They also provide Translation Notes to Western audiences to explain culturally specific references in the text.

The text provides an important function. It provides psycho-educational information to its readers. This information transcends culture. The readers bear witness to plight of the Azuma family as they wrestle with the diagnosis and its implications. The author labels the feelings that many families with a child on the autism spectrum experience and accurately portrays the social isolation, ostracism, and stigma they face. He interweaves empathetic labeling of feelings with coping strategies, autism facts, and concrete suggestions in a story book fashion. The reader watches the family navigate through the social service, general education, and special education systems. We watch them struggle with bureaucracies, the ignorance of professionals, and the notion of inclusion.

Many higher functioning individuals on the spectrum are already fascinated by the Japanese culture and the world of manga. *With the Light: Raising an Autistic Child* is a useful tool for clinicians who want to provide families with a book on autism that is realistic and sensitively portrayed. It may be particularly helpful to give to the older siblings of a child with autism. However, some readers may object to the use of cigarettes by some characters and a domestic violence subplot with some peripheral characters. It also may be helpful for older children on the spectrum who want to learn more about their disability. Many individuals on the spectrum are visual learners and this media is a captivating approach that capitalizes upon this learning style. Although, I am not a fan of comic books, graphic novels or manga, I am looking forward to reading the other installments in this series.

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