

SOFT SKULL PRESS

**NEW TITLES AND
SELECTED BACKLIST**



FALL 2020

NEW TITLES

S O F T S K U L L

Who We're Reading When We're Reading Murakami

David Karashima

SEPTEMBER • Literary Criticism/Cultural History
Trade Paperback Original • 9781593765897 • \$16.95
320 pages • 5.5" x 8.25" • Ebook Available • World
English Rights: Soft Skull Press • All Other Rights: Japan
Uni Agency

Praise for *Who We're Reading When We're Reading Murakami*

"Karashima, a Japanese novelist and translator, has conducted a profound riff on the art of translation . . . A must read for translators and fans of Murakami alike."

—John Freeman, *One of the Most Anticipated Books of the Year*, *Literary Hub*

"A fascinatingly detailed account that enables the reader to gradually grasp how winding and tricky the trail bends from one culture to another, and how dependent individual literary success is on the creative and logistical whims of a selected team of enablers."

—*nihongobookreview*

WHO WE'RE READING WHEN WE'RE READING MURAKAMI

DAVID KARASHIMA

A rare look inside the making of the "Murakami Industry"—and a thought-provoking exploration of the role of translators and editors in the creation of global literary culture

Thirty years ago, when Haruki Murakami's works were first being translated, they were part of a series of pocket-size English-learning guides released only in Japan. Today his books are in fifty languages and have won prizes and sold millions of copies globally. How did a loner destined for a niche domestic audience become one of the most famous writers alive? This book tells one key part of the story. Its cast includes an expat trained in art history who never intended to become a translator; a Chinese American ex-academic who never planned to work as an editor; and other publishing professionals in New York, London, and Tokyo who together introduced a pop-inflected, unexpected Japanese voice to the wider literary world.

David Karashima synthesizes research, correspondence, and interviews with dozens of individuals—including Murakami himself—to examine how countless behind-the-scenes choices over the course of many years worked to build an internationally celebrated author's persona and oeuvre. He looks beyond the "Murakami Industry" toward larger questions: How active a role should translators and editors play in framing their writers' texts? What does it mean to translate and edit "for a market"? How does Japanese culture get packaged and exported for the West?



DAVID KARASHIMA has translated a range of contemporary Japanese authors into English, including Hitomi Kanehara, Hisaki Matsuura, and Shinji Ishii. He co-edited the anthology *March Was Made of Yarn: Writers Respond to the Japanese Earthquake, Tsunami, and Nuclear Meltdown* and is co-editor of Pushkin Press's Contemporary Japanese Novellas series and Stranger Press's Keshiki series. He is an associate professor of creative writing at Waseda University in Tokyo.



WHERE THE WILD LADIES ARE

NOVEMBER • Fiction • Trade Paperback Original
9781593766900 • \$15.95 • 144 pages • 5.5" x 8.25"
Ebook Available • North American Rights: Soft Skull
All Other Rights: Tilted Axis

AOKO MATSUDA

TRANSLATED FROM THE JAPANESE
BY POLLY BARTON

Praise for *Where the Wild Ladies Are*

“Taking a collection of traditional Japanese ghost stories and crafting them into often humorous yet painfully relevant tales is a move of pure genius by Aoko Matsuda. Taking place in a contemporary setting, with a decidedly feminist bend, *Where the Wild Ladies Are* takes classic Japanese ghost stories—which make up some of the best in the world—and rewrite them to make them relevant to the current gender climate of modern-day Japan. Witty, biting, and poignant, Matsuda’s collection is a pleasantly haunting surprise.”
—**Jessica Esa, *Metropolis***

“This was an amazing read. A troupe of women are sent in from another world in order to help relieve the angst of the people in this world.”
—**Hiroko Kitamura, *Hon no zasshi sha***

“Turning one’s back on despair and instead channeling all one’s energy into living as one’s true self is what gives one the strength to take on spectral form. This is a call to power to live with sufficient conviction to become ghosts.”
—**Akiko Ohtake, *Asahi shimbun***

“An enjoyable and satisfying read, coming out of a sense of discomfort and unease around gender inequality. This is a short story collection where classic works from rakugo and kabuki are developed in the author’s unique style.”
—**Asayo Takii, *Nami***

In this witty and exuberant collection of feminist retellings of traditional Japanese folktales, humans live side by side with spirits who provide a variety of useful services— from truth-telling to babysitting, from protecting castles to fighting crime

A busybody aunt who disapproves of hair removal; a pair of door-to-door saleswomen hawking portable lanterns; a cheerful lover who visits every night to take a luxurious bath; a silent house-caller who babysits and cleans while a single mother is out working. *Where the Wild Ladies Are* is populated by these and many other spirited women—who also happen to be ghosts. This is a realm in which jealousy, stubbornness, and other excessive “feminine” passions are not to be feared or suppressed, but rather cultivated, and, chances are, a man named Mr. Tei will notice your talents and recruit you, dead or alive (preferably dead), to join his mysterious company.

In this witty and exuberant collection of linked stories, Aoko Matsuda takes the rich, millennia-old tradition of Japanese folktales—shapeshifting wives and foxes, magical trees and wells—and wholly reinvents it, presenting a world in which humans are consoled, guided, challenged, and transformed by the only sometimes visible forces that surround them.

AOKO MATSUDA is a writer and translator. In 2013, her debut book, *Stackable*, was nominated for the Yukio Mishima Prize and the Noma Literary New Face Prize. Her novella, *The Girl Who Is Getting Married*, was published in 2016. In 2019, her short story “The Woman Dies” was short-listed for a Shirley Jackson Award. She has translated work by Karen Russell, Amelia Gray, and Carmen Maria Machado into Japanese.

POLLY BARTON is a translator of Japanese literature and nonfiction, currently based in Bristol, U.K. Her book-length translations include *Friendship for Grown-Ups* by Nao-Cola Yamazaki, *Mikumari* by Misumi Kubo, and *Spring Garden* by Tomoka Shibasaki. She has translated short stories for *Words Without Borders*, *The White Review*, and *Granta*. After being awarded the 2019 Fitzcarraldo Editions Essay Prize, she is currently working on a nonfiction book titled *Fifty Sounds*.

Author photo © Taihei Ohara

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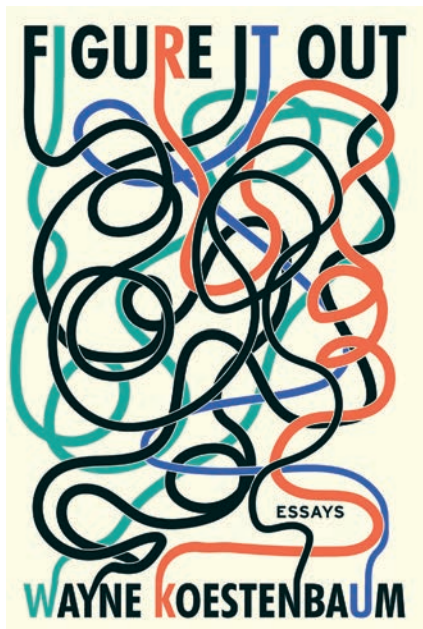
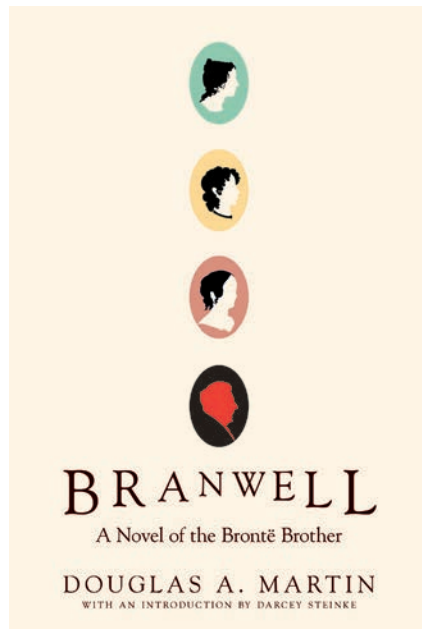


FIGURE IT OUT: ESSAYS
Wayne Koestenbaum

Essays • Trade Paperback Original • 9781593765958 • \$16.95
288 pages • Ebook Available • U.S./Canadian Rights: Soft
Skull Press • All Other Rights: Janklow & Nesbit Associates

“Does contemporary American literature offer any greater
pleasure than the polymorphous brilliance of Wayne
Koestenbaum? These essays are extraordinary.”

—Garth Greenwell, author of *Cleanmess*



**BRANWELL: A NOVEL OF
THE BRONTË BROTHER**
Douglas A. Martin
With an Introduction by Darcey Steinke

Fiction • Paperback Reissue • 9781593765972 • \$15.99
256 pages • Ebook Available • World Rights: Soft Skull Press

“A moving and evocative portrait of a boy doomed to enter
history as a sad footnote to his sisters’ lives . . . The prose here
is so finely wrought that the novel has an otherworldly feel.”

—*The Brooklyn Rail*

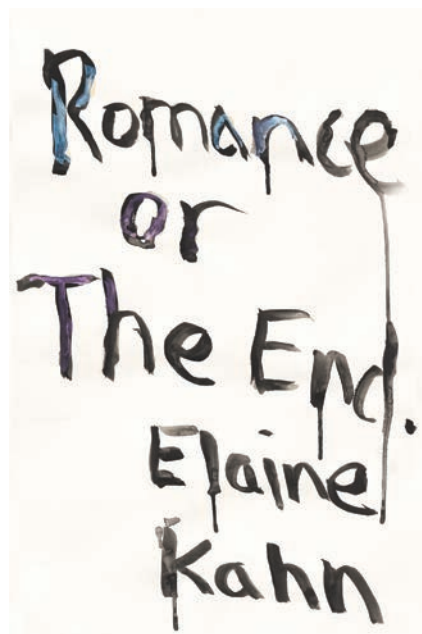


THE ICE CREAM MAN AND OTHER STORIES
Sam Pink

Fiction • Trade Paperback Original • 9781593765934 • \$16.95
288 pages • Ebook Available • World Rights: Soft Skull Press

“The feeling one leaves a Pink novel with is less world-
weariness or disgust than the recognition of a tremulous,
wavering kind of belief in tenderness, beauty, and hope . . .
A voice like none other writing today—Pink is riveting.”

—*Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)



ROMANCE OR THE END: POEMS
Elaine Kahn

Poetry • Trade Paperback Original • 9781593765842 • \$16.00
144 pages • Ebook Available • World Rights: Soft Skull Press

“This book is crazy and wonderful like a basket full of snakes.”

—Eileen Myles, author of *Evolution* and *Cool For You*

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