



## Excuse Me... Who are You?

by Random Fan

Ahhh, I'm an old man... Tonight we're showing *Perfect Blue*, which we last showed at my first CJAS marathon, Fall '98 – when it was only a year old. It was ok to show fansubs, back in the day. I still remember what a big hit it was. I also still remember the club president, Ayesha Ahmed, having to give a program advisory beforehand about graphic and disturbing content. Make no mistake: *Perfect Blue* is an intense film. The simple description is that it's one of those psycho-thrillers you see late at night on Skinemax, except that A) it's animated, and B) it's good.

For anyone who's seen *Requiem for a Dream*, you'll recognize one of the more memorable scenes which Aronofsky obviously ripped off from *PB*, and even included in a *Requiem* trailer. It bothers me a little, just because I never noticed any attempt to credit *PB* and, like any anime film that is isn't Miyazaki or *Akira*, it could benefit from any bit of publicity it could get.

So I was very glad, not to mention surprised, to see *PB* written up in an article on the front page of the New York Times' Arts section (1/20/02). The article was suggesting that, through the medium of anime, Japan's movie industry was in a second golden age (the first being the era of Kurasawa and Ozu). Most of it was about Miyazaki, of course, but other titles like *PB* and *Ghost in the Shell* were discussed. It also went somewhere I didn't expect: it credited *Perfect Blue* for being one of the few anime films to venture into serious social criticism.

It described the film as being comparable to David Lynch's *Mulholland Drive*, “a study in mutable realities and dissolving identities,” with an actress as the central figure. The catch is that Mima of *PB* isn't yet really an actress, she's a pop idol trying to leave the short-lived careers of the idol business behind and establish herself as a ‘serious actress.’ This is a problem in that the idol ideal of femininity is so “pure” and restrictive that it takes extreme measures to separate herself from the idol image, more extreme than she's ready for.

I dunno. Watching the film over again, yeah I can see it; it does seem to criticize the confining, almost misogynistic “ideal” of female behavior in Japanese society, which deserves criticism.... but you have to look for it. You can bear it in mind while you watch, but I still think this film is just a thriller at heart, which is probably the best way to enjoy it.



*If the newsletter were in color, you'd be able to tell that that isn't ink...*



# Into the Otakingdom: Days and

by Lawrence Eng ( <http://www.cjas.org/~leng> ) (Written for MIT's Anime Club by CJAS alumni Lawrence Eng)

From September 29<sup>th</sup> to October 1<sup>st</sup>, Toshio Okada visited MIT and during that time, he presented two formal lectures to the MIT community. My experience with Mr. Okada began a bit earlier, starting on September 26<sup>th</sup>, where he was a guest of honor at Anime Weekend Atlanta.

I should begin by starting with who I am and introducing Mr. Okada to those of you who haven't heard of him. I am a graduate student studying otaku culture at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. As an undergrad at Cornell University, I was heavily involved with CJAS, the Cornell Japanese Animation Society. I'm honored that Sean Leonard, who I first met at a panel we did together at Anime Expo 2001, invited me to contribute to your newsletter. Being that otaku culture is my passionate object of study, it only makes sense that Mr. Okada's visit to America was something I knew I had to be part of.

Toshio Okada was one of the principal founders of Gainax, the animation studio that produced *Wings of Honneamise* (1987), *Gunbuster* (1988), *Nadia* (1990), *Otaku no Video* (1991), *Evangelion* (1995), and a whole slew of other (more recent) titles. Gainax has also produced a number of computer games and other software titles—the *Princess Maker* series being the most famous. Before Gainax, Okada had been the founder of Daicon Film, which produced the amateur fan classics known as the Daicon III and Daicon IV opening animations which debuted in 1981 and 1983 respectively. Daicon Film also produced a number of live action science fiction parody movies, including *The Return of Ultraman* (1983) which featured *Evangelion* director Hideaki Anno (without a mask) as Ultraman.

In *Otaku no Video*, the semi-fictionalized “mockumentary” of the history of Gainax, the main character Kubo proclaims himself to be the otaku of otaku, the Otaking! Since then, fans have called Okada the Otaking, although his likeness is represented by Tanaka, Kubo's comrade. Even though Okada's history is heavily linked to Gainax, he left the company in 1992 to pursue other goals. He has become an expert on Otakuology, lecturing on the subject at the University of Tokyo, Japan's most prestigious school. He has also written a number of books on otaku culture.

Anime Weekend Atlanta 9 was my first time at AWA. When my friend Eric Bresler, director of the brand new fan documentary *Otaku Unite!*, informed me that Okada would be a guest at that con I immediately knew I had to attend even though it was well out of my way, and I even convinced my friend Lillian (a freelance translator for Viz) to tag along as my interpreter. I hadn't seen Okada in person, but I had read a lot about him, and Eric offered to help me get an interview with him at the con.

AWA was a modestly-sized convention in terms of attendance, reminiscent of FanimeCon a few years back or Otakon back in 1997. I hit the dealers' room, of course, which was made easier by the fact that I was registered as a dealer with *Otaku Unite!*, watched some anime, and participated on the “Anime in Academia” panel, but my main goal at the convention was to see Okada.

Over 5 days, from Saturday at AWA through Wednesday at MIT, I saw Okada speak a total of five times. On Saturday, he and Hiroyuki Kitakubo (*Blood: The Last Vampire*, *Golden Boy*), gave a one hour panel discussing their work, the anime industry in general, and anime fandom. At this panel, Okada radiated cheerfulness, confidence, and an infectious sense of humor. He seemed comfortable as an elder statesman of both the anime industry and anime fandom, and he also spoke English (quite well) at times. Kitakubo, in contrast, was apparently falling asleep onstage, having stayed up late the night before working on his contribution to the AWA art auction. He was insightful and funny in his own way, despite Okada's playful taunting. They only had time to discuss a handful of topics, such as whether or not increased computer usage within the animation process was good or bad for the anime industry, why cels are no longer used in anime, and the difference between American and Japanese fans. On the subject of American versus Japanese fans, Kitakubo mentioned that American fans are mentally (or emotionally?) closer to the anime creators than Japanese fans are. Okada then said that American anime fans are cuter! Just a little while earlier, he was showing off the new t-shirt he bought in the dealers' room that said something (in Japanese) like ‘I want a Japanese schoolgirl to be my girlfriend’. He explained that the shirt would make a big splash at parties held by his friend Takashi Murakami (who is currently one of Japan's hottest pop artists, who is also getting quite famous in the United States.) But when talking about American women fans, he said that they tended to be more attractive than Japanese women, and that we as Americans have only been exposed to the

# Nights with Toshio Okada

uncommonly attractive Japanese women seen in magazines, TV shows, and movies. Whether he's right or not, Okada's response certainly amused the audience. Another item of interest from the panel discussion is that Okada is currently working on and promoting a line of toys depicting space exploration. He showed these off at his autograph session (where I got my *Otaku no Video* and *Wings of Honneamise* posters signed).

Later that day, I had the chance to interview Okada one-on-one for about half an hour. I asked him a number of questions, many of which had to do with his views on otaku, but I asked him some anime related questions as well. From the discussion panel, it was clear that Okada has been keeping tabs on the anime industry (and anime fandom) even though he left Gainax over 10 years ago. This trip to the United States, I surmise, was part of his ongoing research on fandom, and he seems to be focusing more and more of his attention on American fans. When I asked him why he was attending AWA after all these years (Okada's last American con appearance was at Anime America 1996, if my memory serves me right), he simply said that now seemed like a good time to visit the US again (to get a sense of fandom 7 years later) and because he had never been to Atlanta before. And here I was hypothesizing that his visit was inspired by the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Daicon IV or something equally grandiose. ^\_^

When I asked Okada whether or not he kept in contact with his former Gainax colleagues, he replied that he hadn't spoken to any of them in three years. When I asked him his opinion of the recent Gainax releases, he said they were boring, and that (Hideaki) Anno should direct anime again (as opposed to Hiroyuki Yamaga, I presume). I am currently in the process of transcribing my interview with Okada, and will make it available online when it's ready.

During the interview, I discovered that Okada would be at MIT on Monday, and when I got back to Troy, NY, my wife and I decided that it would be worth it to drive to MIT to see his lecture. I am glad to report that it was quite excellent. Okada, partly due to fatigue perhaps, was a bit more subdued than he was at the convention just a few days earlier, and he was definitely in academic lecturing mode. On Monday night, he discussed the history of anime and the history of Gainax. This lecture also included an impromptu screening of the Daicon III and IV videos, which Okada then talked about. On Tuesday night, he gave a less formal talk in Ian Condry's "Topics in Culture and Globalization" course on many of the same themes, but he focused more on otaku and the conditions in Japan that led people to become otaku. This talk was preceded by a short clip from *Otaku no Video* to introduce the class to the concept of *otaku*. I will also put my notes from this talk online.

Finally, on Wednesday, he gave a luncheon lecture at Ashdown House entitled "Anime and Fandom: What 'Otakuology' tells us about Japan and the Culture of 'Otaku'". While certain elements were repeated from the earlier talks I had heard him give, I was pleasantly surprised to hear new material and different angles on the topics he had previously expounded upon. I won't go into detail regarding the content of the talk, since I will be putting notes online, and Eri Izawa has already put up fairly extensive notes of her own from Monday and Wednesday's talks. See <http://www.mit.edu:8001/people/rei/manga-okada.html> and <http://www.mit.edu:8001/people/rei/manga-okadaluncheon.html>

After hearing Okada speak so many times over a five day period, I was a bit Okada-ed out by the end of it, but it was really enjoyable overall. I'd like to thank Sean Leonard and the MIT Anime Club for hosting Mr. Okada and putting on such a successful and unique series of events. Although it was not part of the official program, the most memorable experience with Okada at MIT was when I tagged along with him and his hosts to visit the MIT Science Fiction Society Library. It was absolutely great to see him giddy and overjoyed at finding the old and rare (especially in Japan) science fiction pulp magazines he loved so much. It was a wonderful reminder that even the most veteran otaku can experience the childlike joy of discovering that which has been long sought after.



*Okada during the Monday night lecture.*

# ROD TV, or Never mess with an English Major

by Nomad

Hail and well met again dear readers; I trust that you are well and that the horrors of the war against the Ho Plaza bikers have not unduly dampened your spirits. As for myself, I have been slaving away for a thankless group of ingrates, who still have not reimbursed me for the damage to my laboratory. Furthermore, I have been engaged in the repair of my difference engine, which was cruelly traumatized by a roving pack of mimes. It is therefore, well neigh miraculous that you are able to be graced with my urbane demeanor and astounding wit. With these announcements out of the way, I will request that you turn your attention to the subject at hand, namely the television series by the name of *Read or Dream*, henceforth referred to as ROD.

This series is, unsurprisingly, the “sequel” to the OAV/manga series *Read or Die*. However, the cast of characters, and, in fact, many elements of the show, are different than its predecessor. To begin with, the protagonist of this series is a writer by the name of Nenene. She, for the unenlightened, was a character in the manga, but was not featured in the anime, other than the notes, signed by her, that decorate Yomiko’s apartment. She is a dear friend of the (now vanished) Yomiko Readman. In fact, from what plot has been currently introduced, one of the major foci of the anime is Nenene-sensei’s quest to find Yomiko. However, as I speak very poor Japanese, I will have to wait to see the rest of the series, as I only possess fan su... copie... English versions of the first three episodes.



*Now that's a lot of paper.*

However, I get ahead of myself. First off, it is important to note that Nenene-sensei is not the only major character, as she is aided/ forced to deal with a trio of female detectives, who go by the pseudonym “The Paper Sisters.” These three heroines, who are actually sisters, all possess the ability to manipulate paper, much as Yomiko did in the original ROD series. Of the three, Anita, the youngest, is most like Yomiko in ability (paper knives, airplanes, ect) but the least like Yomiko in temperament, for she is not only rude and uncouth, but she also \*gasp\* dislikes books. Of the other two sisters, Michelle, the oldest, and Maggie, the middle child, share Yomiko’s bibliomania, but Michelle has a much more manipulative personality than Yomiko ever did, whereas Maggie is much less forceful than “The Paper.” Furthermore, Maggie tends to use her power to create paper tigers, among a menagerie of other animals. In contrast, Michelle uses her power infrequently, but has shown a preference for defensive abilities, and the creation of objects from paper.

The animation and soundtrack are almost identical to the original, which is no shame, as I rather fancied the style of the OAV’s. Perhaps (un)fortunately, the new ROD has a more sedate pace than its ancestor, which allows for more character development and humor. However, the action is still very prevalent and well handled; although sometimes things occur very quickly indeed, so a review of the action is warranted in order to see precisely what happened.

Furthermore, despite the prevalence of female characters, the series is decidedly shonen (aimed at a male audience) due to the prevalence of action sequences, some of the humor and the \*ahem\* idealized depiction of the female anatomy (though no-where near as... off color as many other series). As of episode two, no major theme or antagonist has been unveiled, but there has been development of a sort of “Proto-theme” that relates to Nenene’s case of writer’s block, Yomiko’s disappearance, the British Library defense force (Yomiko’s organization), and the Paper Sisters, but nothing definite as of yet.

# More Read Or Die TV

(In case you didn't know what the acronym stood for)

(TV stands for Television)  
(In case you've been living under a rock)

Overall, I would recommend this series to almost any CJASer, especially those who possess an interest in the literary world. However, the lack of legal US availability is a problem for some, and for others, the... features aimed at a male target audience, might be a little off putting. Thus, with the analysis done, I bid you farewell, and good luck.

-Nomad

-Rated number 1 in Us Availability of Psychopathically Violent Livestock.

*[English majors are wussies - Layout]*



*The page is mightier than the...  
tape dispenser?*

---

漫  
画

**Even if you can't read this, you can read it, and if that didn't make any sense to you, you'll just have to come to the Big Red Barn at 8:00 PM on Wednesdays to figure out what I'm talking about.**

*(Psst... it says Manga)*



**Visit Sam Goody in Collegetown and flash your CJAS membership card for a cool 10% off all anime-related merchandise.**

-  [The Brady Bunch - Fan Fiction](#)
-  [Cheers/Erasler - Fan Fiction](#)
-  [The Cosby Show - Fan Fiction](#)
-  [Designing Women - Fan Fiction](#)
-  [Different Strokes - Fan Fiction](#)
-  [The Division - Fan Fiction](#)
-  [The Facts of Life - Fan Fiction](#)
-  [Family Ties - Fan Fiction](#)
-  [Friends - Fan Fiction](#)
-  [Gilligan's Island - Fan Fiction](#)
-  [Gimme A Break - Fan Fiction](#)
-  [Happy Days/Laverne & Shirley - Fan Fiction](#)
-  [Leave It to Beaver - Fan Fiction](#)
-  [Three's Company - Fan Fiction](#)



Taiyaki: A sweet Japanese snack made from two fish-shaped waffle-like pastries with red bean paste in the middle. Served hot. Your fearless layout editor and his cohorts travelled to Mitsuwa supermarket in New Jersey to see if they're as good as they look. They are.

*Wow. I suddenly feel so cool.*

## Announcements

Like to see your name in print? Have something to say about anime? Want to impose your will upon the masses? Try writing for the CJAS Newsletter. E-mail Tommy (tlm28@cornell.edu).

Congratulations to Spencer Wu on the winning T-Shirt design!

Prof. Schwartz (dis@cs.cornell.edu) is looking for artists to help create art for video games as part of his "Game Project" course. E-mail him if you're interested in helping to create a video game.

Four Seasons Korean restaurant in Collegetown offers a free vegetable pancake if six or more CJAS members dine as a group.

**,b,i,`,r,î•V••,î<L•ò**

**•à•M**

Tommy Mastrangelo

**"E•ò**

Andrew Gould

**<L•ò**

Nomad, Random Fan

**,à,α`²<Æ,μ,½•l**

Lawrence Eng