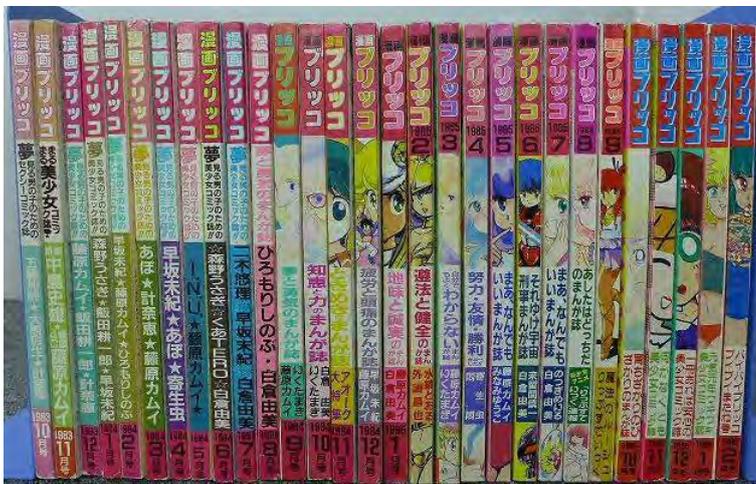


“Real(ity) Problem:” Otaku and the Politics Of Imagination

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Room 301, Building 10, Sophia University



In 1983, the magazine *Manga Burikko* published a series of articles describing the excesses of fan cultures in Japan. It was here that “otaku” was first defined as a label for problematic fans, particularly those who appeared to be taking fictional characters as real sexual objects, if not also to be choosing fiction over reality. For the authors of these articles, “otaku” represented a “real(ity) problem” (*genjitsu mondai*). Teasing out the implications of this

discourse, in dialogue with contemporary theory, this presentation explores the dynamics of media panic and regulation in relation to “otaku” and fictional characters. The “otaku” discourse not only points us toward mutations in risk and surveillance society, but also suggests a politics of imagination.

Patrick W. Galbraith received a Ph.D. in Information Studies from the University of Tokyo, and is currently pursuing a second Ph.D. in Cultural Anthropology at Duke University. He is the author of *The Otaku Encyclopedia: An Insider’s Guide to the Subculture of Cool Japan* (Kodansha International, 2009), *Tokyo Realtime: Akihabara* (White Rabbit Press, 2010), *Otaku Spaces* (Chin Music Press, 2012) and *The Moe Manifesto: An Insider’s Look at the Worlds of Manga, Anime and Gaming* (Tuttle, 2014), and the co-editor of *Idols and Celebrity in Japanese Media Culture* (Palgrave, 2012) and *Debating Otaku in Contemporary Japan: Historical Perspectives and New Horizons* (Bloomsbury, 2015). patrick.galbraith@duke.edu

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