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Japan begins to flirt with a return to militarism, it is one that is still relevant.

### Notes

1. <http://imdb.com/title/tt0405821/>
2. Jonathan Clements and Helen McCarthy, *The Anime Encyclopedia: A Guide to Japanese Animation Since 1917*, revised and expanded edition (Berkeley, Calif.: Stone Bridge Press, 2006), 90.
3. <http://www.animenewsnetwork.com/encyclopedia/anime.php?id=3439>
4. Peter Williams and David Wallace, *Unit 731: Japan's Secret Biological Warfare in World War II* (New York: The Free Press, 1989), 48–49; Sheldon Harris, *Factories of Death: Japanese Biological Warfare, 1932–1945, and the American Cover-Up* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 81–82.
5. Williams and Wallace, *Unit 731*, 241.
6. Igarashi Yoshikuni, *Bodies of Memory: Narratives of War in Postwar Japanese Culture, 1945–1970* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000).

## Psychoanalytic Cyberpunk Midsummer-Night's Dreamtime: Kon Satoshi's *Paprika*

TIMOTHY PERPER AND  
MARTHA CORNOG

Kon Satoshi (director). *Paprika*. 2007.  
Tokyo: Sony Pictures. ASIN B000058V80.  
Translated as *Paprika*. Columbia-Tristar.  
ASIN B000PFU850.

*Paprika* is a delicious animated version of a science fiction novel by Yasutaka Tsutsui about a device that allows psychologists to enter people's dreams.<sup>1</sup> Although much lighter in tone than Kon's previous films, *Paprika* is deeper than it seems. Three of the most illuminating allusions in *Paprika* are to Ryutarō Nakamura's 1998 *Serial Experiments Lain*, Mamoru Oshii's 1984 *Beautiful Dreamer*, and Oshii's 2004 *Innosenzu*. These three create a map for locating

*Paprika*'s psychoanalytic cyberpunk exploration of fantasy and reality.

*Paprika* is not a difficult anime the way *Lain* and *Innosenzu* are. Its images draw from avant-garde anime but Kon's earlier *Millennium Actress* is a more adventurous challenge to filmic continuity and separation of frame, background, and action. *Paprika* reinvents some well-known concepts—that dreams are windows into other realities and have great power, that the boundaries of self are not set by consensus reality, that troubles stew in the worlds revealed by dreams, and that dreams can be accessed like playing a DVD with the bio-psycho-electronic DC-Mini machine in the film. Such ideas go back to Lum in *Beautiful Dreamer* and the 1945 British film *Dead of Night*, and to Freud, *Alice in Wonderland*, and Australian aboriginal ideas about the Dreamtime as that great place of gods, totems, and origins that lives with us forever in eternal synchronicity.<sup>2</sup> So *Paprika* invites a middlebrow audience to see familiar mysteries in vivid, primary-color life.

But *Paprika* can bewilder certain viewers. Something is difficult in *Paprika*—the nature of dreams, of the *kami*, and of art itself.

Take an example of what *Paprika* is not. In the classic *Wizard of Oz* film, Dorothy travels from a black-and-white, Depression-era America to a Technicolor Land of Oz located in a dreamlike Somewhere Else, and, when Dorothy finally returns to Kansas, the film becomes a trip There and Back. But the DC-Mini machine in *Paprika* is not a magical cyclone bringing us to a Slumberland where fantasy comes true. Yes, one can enter dreams through the DC-Mini, but the machine opens a two-way gate. The DC-Mini lets the dream world escape from our minds and materialize in concrete solidity right here in our world. Then its power becomes contagious. Because it lets dreams emerge into reality, dreams coalesce into ever more complex dreams—and then *those* dreams become real. So anyone using the machine can infect other people's dreams. When three DC-Mini machines are stolen at the

start of *Paprika*, a quickly escalating mass of intersecting dreams becomes real for everyone collectively. And in the hands of a psychopath, the machine is deadly.

In *Paprika*, the Dreamtime—a place of origins, totems, and *kami*—is not a private, alternate mental-psychological-cognitive state but becomes the interpenetrating registers of a unified collective reality. The Dreamtime opened by the DC-Mini is therefore close kin to the Wired in *Serial Experiments Lain*. So the DC-Mini machine is not simply a psychological passport for entering a hallucinatory Slumberland. It is a *reification* machine and is familiar from Shakespeare:

The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,  
Doth glance from heaven to earth,  
from earth to heaven,  
And as imagination bodies forth  
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen  
Turns them to shape, and gives to airy nothing  
A local habitation and a name.<sup>3</sup>

The DC-Mini machine is precisely such a pen.

One person, Paprika herself, stands outside these processes.<sup>4</sup> Even middlebrow reviewers have noticed that Paprika is not simply psychologist Dr. Atsuko Chiba's alter-ego for entering patient's dreams but is a flirty, standalone goddess of dreams in her own right.<sup>5</sup> In fact, Paprika runs away with the film: its detective-story frame (who stole the DC-Mini?) and its *Beautiful Dreamer/Innosenzu*-style dream imagery are no match for Paprika skipping down a street or popping up on some random otaku's T-shirt or fluttering through a marvelous sequence with little fairy wings while giant tree roots chase her. The cyberpunk frame induces us to see Paprika only as part of Dr. Chiba's personality, someone younger and sexier hidden under the psychologist's austere Professional Female Scientist manner and costume. But that view is too narrow: Dr. Chiba is also *Paprika's* alter ego. Paprika is playing, flying, laughing,

flirting, having a wonderful time in *her* world. Paprika is the main reality of this film.

Proof? Not hard. Dreams are a playground of primal needs, emotions, fears, and desires. Of these, what the Freudians call "oral needs" are basic, and who does Paprika/Dr. Chiba like the most? Dr. Tokita, partly because he is immensely fat but also because he is the closest to the Dreamtime: his are the *appetites* of dreaming. Paprika/Dr. Chiba knows about appetites: in the crucial scene of the film, she/they cheerfully devours the now immense bad guy, Chairman—all of him—in one hugely hungry moment of pure *incorporative* appetite. *Shlurp*.

And Paprika—and Dr. Chiba, when she gets into it—can be very sexy. We see Paprika's flirtatiousness more often and more openly than we see Dr. Chiba's sexuality, but Dr. Chiba *likes* the way Dr. Tokita feels, and Paprika thinks it's just fine that a huge, dream-enhanced Dr. Tokita (he is now a robot) picks up Dr. Chiba and pops her into his mouth. If there is any single image of desire in the film, it is this. One might think that devouring the heroine is a quick ticket to a bad end, but that is not the logic of *Paprika*—or of dreams. Dr. Chiba will soon rematerialize to pull Dr. Tokita out of a wall where his newly dream-enhanced but clumsy giant robot body got stuck when he collided with a building. And with that, we encounter two additional mysteries: the nature of the Dreamtime and the origin of Paprika.

The dreams in *Paprika* are not solely individual inventions come to life. Instead, the Dreamtime also embodies a *collective* unconscious, where myths, legends, and beings of folklore all reside. Viewers can decide if such legends existed first only in imagination and later were brought to physical reality by the DC-Mini or if the legends always inhabited a Dreamtime and merely pop through to visit us whenever the machine is used. Either way, they're real *now*—robots, walking mailboxes and refrigerators, beckoning cats, Buddhas, dolls European and Japanese, tiny airplanes—all on living parade

with great and noisy enthusiasm in the streets of Tokyo. Fortunately for civic order and sanity, Paprika is among them.

One of Paprika's origins is as the tapir (*baku*) who eats nightmares, most notably from Rumiko Takahashi's *Lum Urusei Yatsura* and from Oshii's second film version of *Lum, Beautiful Dreamer*. Apparently, this tapir was originally Chinese folklore,<sup>6</sup> but Takahashi adopted him. Paprika is not a tapir, and she is not exactly eating a dream, but she is eating monsters from a dream world, so she counts as an honorary, if symbolic, tapir: someone who, against Western logic, controls dreams by turning their most basic mechanism (the appetites) against them. Lain would understand perfectly.

The second origin figure is *Mahoutsukai Sally* (Magical girl Sally), from the 1966 manga by Yokoyama Mitsuteru.<sup>7</sup> Paprika, too, is a *mahou tsukai*, someone who can use and control magic. In fact, even if Paprika is older, she looks a good deal like Sally, and both are quite playful. And both can fly.

So, does any of this help us understand the film? Well, yes.

Take two early scenes. The first is a quite straightforward dream sequence. In it, the dreamer-protagonist Detective Konakawa lacks volition, and places and shapes morph fluidly into things they are not. So if *Paprika's* primary colors, movement, and events make no conscious sense, they still reveal a palette for portraying dreams.

Then Konakawa awakens, and we return to neo-futurist sci-fi machines, shadows, and ominous metallic-blue corridors, all from *Bubblegum Crisis* and *Neon Genesis Evangelion*. These cross-references to *Beautiful Dreamer* and *Bubblegum Crisis* elicit a repertorial menu based on our familiarity with anime. When we try comprehend *Paprika* using this repertoire of cinematic cross-talk, we enter into certain viewing relationships to the film. One is the middlebrow vision mentioned above. Then *Paprika* becomes merely a sci-fi detective story about the mysteries of the

mind set into the quasi-realism of one of Kon's favorite animation styles.

But when we meet the bad guy, Chairman, he is a dead ringer for Kim, the hacker in Oshii's *Innosenzu*. He's more than a trendy visitor from another anime; he's a warning that the *mise en scene* we've seen is not the real background of *this* film. And Paprika herself is not from *Innosenzu* at all—for example, she bounces about skipping and (multiplied into four Paprikas) disdainfully sneering at two harmless young men who try to meet her and then taking off on a motorbike that becomes a car. Realism, even the quasi-realism of the opening dream sequence, simply evaporates: we have entered the Dreamtime—not the *dream* of an anxious psychiatric patient, but the *Dreamtime* itself.

And now the film is home. It is about the Dreamtime and isn't a detective story at all. It's about those portions of the cosmos where dreams and totems live, and where—it turns out—so do bubbly *mahou tsukai* like Paprika. Kon's film is a delightful fantasy/allegory about consensus reality versus freedom and creativity. In the end art and freedom win, and the film feels like springtime.

It isn't clear how come Dr. Chiba knows Paprika. The two are good friends, and Paprika pops up whenever Dr. Chiba needs her. But one conclusion is clear. Dr. Chiba and Paprika do not merge with each other so much as enhance each other. They are dwellers not on the threshold but, like Lain, are inhabitants of multiple worlds. The result is that both Paprika and Dr. Chiba are perfectly happy that Konakawa rescues Dr. Chiba, now become a semi-naked Jane to his Tarzan in a Tarzan movie (plus a talking chimpanzee in a movie poster) that Konakawa has dreamed up for himself and Dr. Chiba. In the Dreamtime, appetite-laden narratives stand as archetypes for the lesser realities of everyday life.

Throughout the film, as the participants' dreams fuse and interact, the viewer is invited to disentangle different dream fabrics. Paprika herself does not have her own dream

figurations, as befits her role as *kami* of the Dreamtime, but everyone else's dreams, sometimes malign, sometimes benign, are vivid and complex. From Dr. Shima comes a vibrantly loud totemic procession; a repeated nightmare plus Tarzan from Detective Konokawa; decayed dolls, corpses, and graffiti from Himuro; paranoid butterflies and rape from Osanai; power-maddened tree roots from the Chairman; a cheerful, if large, robot from Dr. Tokita; and, from Dr. Chiba, a charming, low-key romance. Against them are the dull tones of waking reality and cityscape ferroconcrete, which cannot compete with dancing umbrellas, frog bands, or even the abandoned theme parks of the Dreamtime, more accurately, the immensely rich graphic imagination of Japanese art itself. There is no question where Kon stands on *that* issue. In *Paprika*, art wins.

So, unlike *Innosenzu*, where entry into the decadent parallel universes of cyberspace implies profound danger and loss, *Paprika* ends happily. The evil Chairman has been devoured, Konokawa is free of his anxieties, and Dr. Chiba has happily latched onto Dr. Tokita, who does not seem to mind at all. By implication, the DC-Mini machine—with some new access controls!—will be approved by the government, and people will be happier with their dreams. And behind the dreams, the Dreamtime itself beckons.

## Notes

1. Yasutaka Tsutsui, *Paprika* (Tokyo: Shinchosha, 1993). The novel was first serialized in 1991. The Sony DVD is in Japanese only, but the Columbia-Tristar DVD is French-made and has French, English, and Arabic subtitles. Both are region 2 DVDs.

2. And goes back to British science fiction writer Peter Philips's 1948–49 *Dreams Are Sacred*, in which psychiatrists invent a machine allowing the therapist to enter a patient's dreams. Like the DC-Mini, their contraption also causes untold problems. Philips's story was translated into

Japanese in 1980 as *Yume ha shinsei*, in *Worldwide humor SF masterpiece selection 1*, ed. Asakura Hisashi, (Tokyo: Kodansha).

3. Shakespeare, *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, Act 5, sc. 1.

4. She is actually not the only one. In another allusion to *Serial Experiments Lain*, in Paprika's "www.radioclub.jp" bar—where she's a regular and even runs a tab!—the two bartenders are also external to the dream machine. But their voice actors are Satoshi Kon and Yasutaka Tsutsui, the director and the author, so they're allowed to stand outside the dream frame. If you ask where this bar is, the answer is the Dreamtime.

5. Justin Sevakis, "Beyond My Mind: Paprika," *Protoculture Addicts* 92 (May–June 2007): 20–25.

6. For traditional Japanese dreameaters (*baku*), see Hori Tadao, "Cultural Note on Dreaming and Dream Study in the Future: Release from Nightmare and Development of Dream Control Technique," *Sleep and Biological Rhythms*, 3 (2005): 49–55; Adam L. Kern, *Manga from the Floating World: Comicbook Culture and the Kibyoshi of Edo Japan* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asian Center, 2007), 236, figure 4.26. For a modern example of the tapir as dreameater, see Takahashi Rumiko, "Waking to a Nightmare," in *The Return of Lum: Urusei Yatsura*, 141–56 (San Francisco: Viz, 1995).

7. Yokoyama Mitsuteru, *Mahoutsuki Sarii* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2007).

## トレンド

### Torendo

#### Interview with Murase Shūkō and Satō Dai

DEBORAH SCALLY, ANGELA DRUMMOND-MATHEWS, AND MARC HAIRSTON

Murase Shūkō and Satō Dai have worked together on some of the most notable anime of the past decade. Murase was an anima-