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Reflection of Reading #2

Otsuka Eiji is one of the most important writers of anime/manga subcultures in Japan. The intersection of subculture is so marked in Japan because the term subculture in Japan has different valence than the English term subculture as deployed in Anglo-American cultural studies where it carries the sense of an oppositional culture (p.99).

In “World and Variation” by Otsuka, the consumption of narrative is apparently about “Bikkuriman chocolate”, or more specifically about the cards packed with the chocolates. The success of the *Bikkuriman* was that each card had a little information about the character that was illustrated in the front, even though they were not a character of television or anime. The more cards the child collected, he was able to put together a large story and achieve a broader world of *Bikkuriman*’s world. With information of the small narratives, the children were able to create a grand narrative. In this consumption, children who bought the *Bikkuriman* chocolate took out the cards and threw the chocolate away without hesitation (p.104). They were more interested in the cards to learn the larger story, the worldview, and what is the grand narrative by Otsuka’s theory.

Ōtsuka argues that, otaku are characterized by their interest in gathering bits of information together, and creating their own small narratives based on their understanding of the grand narrative. After consumers get their hands on the grand narrative they will then be able to freely produce their own small narratives with their own hands (Captain Tsubasa). Therefore, otaku are otaku because they are invested in narrative consumption and reproduction at the level of the grand narrative.

On the other hand, Azuma Hiroki proposes a different model of narrative consumption. He describes the narrative and cultural consciousness characteristic of otaku through what he calls the database model of narrative consumption.

Akihabara that once was known as “Electronic Town” was affected by the *otaku* stores. *Otaku* usually is defined as devout fans of anime, manga, videogames, figures, videogames, and technology and so on. Akihabara is one of the most popular places for foreign visitors. At once, Akihabara makes explicit tensions in the *otaku* image. In the 1980s, the *otaku* image was negative, because of the article “Otaku Research” about unsocialized misfits, and a few years later, the case of Miyazaki Tsutomu (murder), when the mass media picked up on a buzzword to decry the “otaku generation” (p.216). Later, *otaku* was described as those who could not communicate at home, school, or work, and they were rejected by society. Although, it changed in the 2000s, giving the impact of image change in Akihabara due to the more positive media paradigm (p.210). Whether true or not, images of otaku in the mass media influenced the popular understanding of the meaning of the word. *Otaku* were recognized as ultra-consumers and were incorporated into “Cool Japan”.

Japanese pop culture was associated with *otaku* culture, and *otaku* culture with Akihabara, which became the symbolic stage upon which to reclaim this force in consumption and creativity, and hosted high profile events referencing otaku (p.218).

In essence, Akihabara is an *otaku* room enough for city scale, sexy anime girl, posters, Maid Cafe and I believe that still attracting many tourists.