

vol.50 #06

Horror

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Unnamed
Original Characters by Grace Li

art by Grace Li

MONONOKE AND MUSHISHI: AN UNSETTLING TYPE OF HORROR



RACHEL MIN

1ST YEAR, INTENDED COMPUTER SCIENCE

Mushishi's MC is voiced by my favorite VA

STAFF WRITER

Phantasmagorical--*Mushishi* and *Mononoke* build their world in a way that can only be described as such. Their fantastical, dreamlike world evokes a sense of wonder, and yet since the viewers are rooted in reality, these anime simultaneously give off an unsettling tone.

Both *Mononoke* and *Mushishi* follow a mysterious medicine seller who exterminates monsters who plague humans. These anime don't blatantly push the horrific nature of these monsters onto their audience through their visuals. Don't get me wrong, many monsters in *Mononoke* and *Mushishi* are unsettling to look at, and it is a completely valid way to characterize these monsters. At the same time, some monsters aren't even given a tangible form, acting more as a disease. The anime utilize more than pure visuals. A little body horror here, some disturbing theme there, and soon you realize you've been sucked into an unsettling horror show.

The powers of these monsters come in all different forms. They can cause deafness, blindness, overturn boats, bring poisonous rain, create labyrinths, and create grand illusions that make characters question if they're even alive.

In *Mononoke*, these monsters, referred to as ayakashi, are unnatural beings who latch themselves onto negative feelings. By determining the form and reasoning behind these ayakashi, the medicine seller exorcizes these monsters.



The hauntings of these ayakashi are brought about by their victim. Perhaps they've contributed to the death of another human, or perhaps the victim somehow garnered severely negative sentiments. For most of the episodes, the characters are filled with uncertainty. They are subject to horrific sights and illogical reality, and the only piece of information they have is that somehow they are being haunted by an ayakashi.



Mushishi takes this uncertainty a step further by introducing the factor of chance. Unlike *Mononoke*'s ayakashi, *Mushishi*'s monsters are Mushi or bugs. Just like real bugs, they exist in the world naturally, unrelated to the existence of humans. Thus, in *Mushishi*, people can be haunted for a reason as trivial as going outside. Ginko, the main character, spends most of his time trying to determine what kind of mushi is plaguing the victims instead of the reason behind the mushi's existence. If it is the victim's fault, the reason why the Mushi is haunting them is brought out through the exorcism, however, sometimes the victim is simply a victim of chance, powerless to their fate.



In both anime, the continued exposure of these monsters usually spells suffering or death, which is where the main character steps in to save the day. Or not.

At the end of the day, most of the stories end on a muted note. The main characters usually manage to exorcise the monster, but it isn't necessarily a happy ending. Sometimes, the damage of the monsters is irreversible. Sometimes, the monsters were hiding an underlying problem. The animes' reaction to this is that the aftermath of destroying these monsters can't be helped. The victims will just have to live on with the burden of the repercussions. The endings hold a tragic outlook with the hope that the characters, powerless to their situation, will somehow live on.

Mononoke and *Mushishi* might not keep you up at night with images of eldritch terrors. However, the way wonder, powerlessness, and tragedy are brought about through their monsters end up sticking to its audience just as deeply.

THE STORY WITHIN A STORY: PERFECT BLUE



NICK WONOSAPUTRA

1ST YEAR, MOLECULAR AND CELL BIOLOGY

STAFF WRITER

Perfect Blue is my favorite psychological horror film. If you like Serial Experiments Lain and the Monogatari series for their mind-bending cinematography, you'll love this.

Spoilers for the plot of *Perfect Blue*

As I was writing my article for *Bloom Into You*, I spent a lot of time thinking about the in-universe play in that series, and how it purposefully parallels one of the main characters' internal struggles. While that series uses its story within the story to clarify its main thesis, Satoshi Kon's *Perfect Blue* uses the in-universe crime drama, *Double Bind*, as a way to intentionally reflect the confused, seemingly delusionary, state of mind of the film's protagonist, Mima. This is achieved through the film's narrative structure, as it progressively shifts from the realm of reality to a world of never-ending red herrings.



The first act of *Perfect Blue* sets up a rather simple mystery: someone is clearly stalking Mima, and is threatening the lives of all those around her, all because she left her idol group "CHAM!" to start her career as an actress. The film provides various close-up shots of a certain security guard that is obviously obsessed with Mima, and he seems to be the one running the stalker website, "Mima's Room," as the "real Mima." This idyllic persona then starts to haunt Mima as a hallucinatory manifestation of her regrets and desires. Despite the hallucinations and escalating violence around Mima, the film's sense of reality is relatively intact, and it is still easy to follow what is actually happening in the real world.

However, the film takes a turn towards uncertainty when Mima voluntarily chooses to take a leading role as a rape victim in *Double Bind*... and thus enacts a rape scene for the show. Just like the character she plays in the crime drama, Mima is traumatized by the shooting of the scene, and Mima's mental instability spikes. She starts to see her ghostly alter ego more and more vividly, and the scenes of *Double Bind* start to bleed seamlessly into Mima's life. One especially memorable scene is when a woman seems to be consulting Mima on her hallucinations as they stand on a concrete platform at a harbor, a thin layer of rainwater covering the top of the concrete like a mirror. Putting her arm around Mima, she says, "There's no way illusions can come to life." However, a shot-reverse-shot cut is made immediately following this line, and shows the security guard, Mima's supposed stalker, standing amongst a crowd of onlookers. It is only when Mima lets out an off-script gasp is it made clear that she's actually on the set of *Double Bind*.



It's all right. There is no way illusions can come to life.

The lines between *Double Bind* and *Perfect Blue* only continue to blur, as the two stories begin to seemingly intersect, especially when the audience is treated to a scene depicting Mima violently murdering a shady photographer she worked with earlier in the film. I'm going to avoid spoiling the ending so you can go check it out yourself, but even without going into specifics, you can bet that the confusion between reality and fiction reaches a boiling point at the film's climax, effectively conveying the film's broader exploration of the clash between the dehumanizing and false nature of the persona versus the real person that is supposed to be behind it.

RASCAL DOES NOT DREAM OF A DREAMING GIRL REVIEW

Slight spoilers for *Rascal Does Not Dream of a Dreaming Girl*



ABEER HOSSAIN

3RD YEAR, MECH E AND ASTROPHYSICS

Quantum bull****

EDITOR IN CHIEF

Fall 2018 surprised everyone with the bait that was *Rascal Does Not Dream of Bunny Girl Senpai*, a single cour anime adopting the name of the first light novel in the series while including the story from the first four light novels. While the show promised a senpai in a bunny suit, and did deliver albeit with two or three scenes, it managed to achieve far more than nearly everyone expected. It had smart humor, quick witted banter, likeable characters and a surprisingly interesting yet highly derived story. Each of the three episode arcs were long enough to



give a solid exposition of the story but short enough where I didn't feel tired of any one character. However, this resulted in a very rushed feeling and often left many emotional moments feeling empty and sometimes comical. The animation was also nothing better than "okay."



I mention the original anime's strengths and weaknesses because, well, the movie is largely the same experience. It just happens to also be much worse than the TV show.

There's quite a lot to talk about, so let's start with something positive. The voice acting in the movie is phenomenal. The voices were full of emotion and strength, the cries full of fear and sadness, and the dialogue was just as snappy as before (though if you thought it was pretentious in the show, wait until you watch the movie). There's quite a raw scene at a train station where a character breaks down crying and the emotions are sent shooting through your body. The movie's voice acting is stellar throughout and there's honestly no down side here.

That same scene is absolutely ruined by the atrocious, mind-boggling, and insulting animation quality that refused to improve throughout the movie. Models were constantly off and faces were distorted. While the TV show didn't have spectacular animation to begin with, it was palatable. Going into an anime feature film, many would expect higher production values as it is a major theatrical event and anime movies in general seem to follow a trend of higher quality with movie releases. For *Rascal Does Not Dream*, CloverWorks decided to drop every



ball possible in terms of animation. Not only does the movie not manage to match the average-at-best animation of the TV show, it is a major downgrade in every aspect. Emotional scenes were marred by off-looking body and face models. Simple dialogue scenes couldn't hold a person's face together for more than ten seconds.

Continuing with the negatives, we come to the story of *Dreaming Girl*. However, this conversation needs to be prefaced with a couple of disclaimers and some background information. The TV show didn't blow anyone away with its story. The problems each of the girls faced were interesting and we were pulled along at a brisk pace through their story. The explanations for each of these "Puberty Syndrome" instances were ridiculous at best and Futaba's mention of quantum mechanics every other minute didn't help the story. Whether or not the people watching understand anything about quantum mechanics, throwing out buzzwords every time as an ad hoc explanation of each problem made me care less about the story and laugh off these serious moments in the show. The movie compounds these faults until I just couldn't take it anymore. Series like *Monogatari* don't try to create pseudoscience to explain the

abnormalities of its world. Vampires, demons, spirits, etc. all exist in that world naturally and the author didn't feel a need to bring nonsensical explanations to justify the existence of these supernatural elements. *Seishun Buta Yarou* dives deep into this method of world building and fails at every aspect. Without going into heavy spoiler territory, I can confidently say that *Dreaming Girl* aims high and falls far in its plot, especially with the Puberty Syndrome instance at hand. However, if you liked the assimilation of science into the story from the TV show, this is more of the same and if you're willing to accept some nonsensical, outlandish plot twists, then these issues will not affect you as much as they affected me.

Overall, *Rascal Does Not Dream of a Dreaming Girl* is much less than its TV show counterpart. Emotional moments didn't strike as strongly, the animation suffered greatly, and a character I should have been highly invested in and cared for was lost in her own needlessly complex story. If you liked the show, you should still definitely watch the movie, as it somewhat explains many of the leftover questions from the thirteen episode run. However, if the show isn't your cup of tea, this movie will definitely not change your mind on the series. Makinohara Shouko is just as enigmatic to me now as she was before and she may well still be dreaming as far as we all know.



SPOOKTOBER SADNESS: WHERE HAS THE HORROR GONE?



AIDAN KEESING

5TH YEAR, JAPANESE AND EAST ASIAN STUDIES

A Horror fan's inane ramblings

EVENTS

In a world where massive anime streaming sites like Crunchyroll no longer list "Horror" as a sortable genre, where can one turn to find a reliable source of animated seasonal scares? The dearth of quality horror anime released in the past few years has left fans of the genre scraping and clawing at the bottom of the anime barrel in order to dig up even the faintest hints of scariness needed to sustain them through the Halloween season.



To understand the plight of the oppressed class that is the "Horror Anime Fan" I invite readers to follow along in a simple exercise. Simply go to MyAnimeList, a wonderful repository of information on all of the best and worst anime known to mankind, navigate to the Anime Search tab, and under the "Genres" click on the horror section. At first, you might say to yourself "Wow there are 436 Horror films and series listed here why would this person ever complain for a lack of spooks to choose from?", and indeed you would be right. The Horror category finds itself in a comfortable pole position resting slightly above wonderful genres like Harem, and lagging every so slightly behind popular categories like Demons and Space. However, once you actually begin to peruse the wealth of shows given the Horror tag, you realize that many of these options are shows like *Tokyo Ghoul* where the horror tag has been haphazardly applied because the edge factor is too high for those who can't handle the sight of blood.

Let me say for the record that what one person finds scary is completely relative and it is more than understandable for people to have a lower or higher tolerance for violence or gore, just as it is for people to have variance in their tolerance for spicy food. With that clarified, I say that applying the horror tag to series that are focused mainly on action is the equivalent of calling Doritos too spicy. Sure, the disturbing imagery of a show like *Terra Formars* could spook someone out of watching the show just as a micrometer of black pepper could destroy the taste buds of someone without any spice tolerance, but when *Jojo's Bizarre Adventure* is listed as a horror series, I think we might have gone too far.

This isn't to say that the trend of overly violent action-centric shows somehow detracts from the genre of Horror as a whole, in fact, the recent remake of *Devilman Crybaby* is one of my personal favorites of the last few years.

This is simply a yearning for more shows that are written and directed to give audiences the type of anxiety that keeps you up watching Slice-of-Life shows at 3am to calm down before you can finally go to sleep. The glory days of Madhouse Inc., which dominates the Horror genre with its flurry of great releases spanning from the 90s through the mid-2000s prove that gory-action and horror can exist both together and separately. It's my personal hope that success of Psychological Horror shows like *Yakusoku no Neverland* earlier this year can guide the industry back to making shows meant to keep you on the edge of your seat.



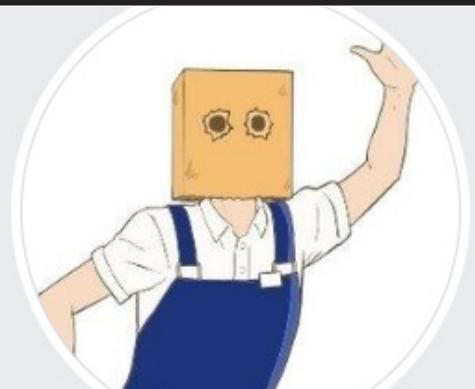
UPCOMING EVENTS

ANIME DESTINY \$8 EARLY BIRD SPECIAL



November 3rd
10 am - 8 pm
Pauley Ballroom
[Squareup.com/store/AD2019](https://squareup.com/store/AD2019)

Details
Coming Soon



BAY AREA ANIME AND GAMING MARATHON



KONO SUBA! MOVIE TRIP

November 12
7 pm
Regal/AMC
Bay Street

VOLUME L, ISSUE 06 — OCTOBER 31, 2019

GARRY AND IB
IB

Art by Kate B

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