

## 5. Tsutsui Yasutaka and the Multimedia Performance of Authorship



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In the summer of 1996 the prolific author Tsutsui Yasutaka helped found JALinet, a Web site hosting several writers that claims to be the “first literary server in Japan.”<sup>1</sup> Irrespective of the site’s claim to chronological primacy, Tsutsui’s involvement with this project was a significant literary event, coming as it did in the third year of the author’s highly publicized self-imposed cessation of print publishing. Rather than mark an entry into electronic media, however, the launching of this site marked a new phase in Tsutsui’s already extensive and controversial work across the boundaries of several media forms, electronic and otherwise. Alternately playing the prankster and the embattled cultural critic, Tsutsui brought a distinctively performative approach to the role of author in his 1990s encounters with new media.

Throughout a career spanning almost forty years, Tsutsui has maintained a sharp focus on the role of media in constructing contemporary experiences of the real and the imaginary, in works combining social satire, science fiction, and highly reflexive metafictional literature. Following the schema proposed by Takayuki Tatsumi, I trace three stages in Tsutsui’s treatment of these issues. In the 1960s and early 1970s, Tsutsui satirized how the mass media, in their insatiable drive to produce “news” and “images,” intrude into daily life and blur the line between the real and fictional. Tatsumi calls this first stage Tsutsui’s “pseudo-event science fiction,” referring to the historian Daniel Boorstin’s influential political

and social critique, formulated in 1962, which suggested that American society was increasingly dominated by pseudo-events “planned, planted or incited . . . for the immediate purpose of being reported or reproduced,” whose “relation to the underlying reality of the situation is ambiguous” and whose “interest arises largely from this very ambiguity.”<sup>2</sup> Early Tsutsui works in this mode include the stories “Betonamu kankō kōsha” (1967, “The Vietnam Tourist Bureau”), in which the modern battlefield is transformed into a theme park, and “Ore ni kan suru uwasa” (1972, Rumors about me), in which trivial events in the everyday life of an ordinary salaryman – in particular his unsuccessful attempts to date a coworker – become the subject of extensive national news coverage.<sup>3</sup>

In midcareer, Tsutsui focused on the surrealist mechanisms of literature and the ability of literary language to create a playful virtual realm, in which the words of fiction could simultaneously comment on their own fictivity – what Tatsumi calls his “metafiction” stage. Perhaps Tsutsui’s most audacious literary effort during this period is his novel *Kyokō sendan* (1984, Fantasy fleet), which presents a science fiction parody of world history in the tale of intergalactic warfare between a race of alien weasels and a race of animate writing instruments.<sup>4</sup> This stage culminated in one of Tsutsui’s best-known works, *Bungakubu Tadano-kyōju* (1990, Professor Tadano, literature department), an academic satire in which each chapter is keyed to a different school of literary theory. During this period, Tsutsui was also active as a literary critic, proposing a model of fictionality (*kyokō*) and surfictionality, metafiction, or hyperfiction (*chōkyokō*) that, together with the example of Tsutsui’s own fiction, has exerted a deep influence on a new generation of Japanese writers such as Takahashi Gen’ichirō, Ogino Anna, Shōno Yoriko, Kobayashi Kyōji, and Shimada Masahiko.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, in the 1990s, Tsutsui began to explore the possibilities of electronic media and the complex relationships between literary fiction, computer simulation, and the already hypermediated realm of daily life – his cyberfiction or, in Tatsumi’s terms, “slipstream” stage.<sup>6</sup> Representative works from this period include *Asa no Gasupaaru* (1991–92, *Gaspard of the Morning*), which I discuss below, and the closely related novel *Papurika* (1993, *Paprika*), featuring the eponymous protagonist, a psychotherapist, who with the aid of advanced technology is able to project her consciousness directly into her patients’ dreams.

In this chapter, I examine two episodes in Tsutsui’s involvement with electronic media during the cyberfiction stage of his career. The first is his experiment in combining newspaper serialization and an Internet salon to create the interactive science fiction novel *Gaspard of the Morning*, which appeared in the *Asahi shinbun* newspaper between October 1991 and March 1992. The second episode involves the controversy over his early



short story “Mujin keisatsu” (“Automatic Police”), which drew protests as discriminatory toward epileptics when it was slated for publication in a high school textbook. As a protest over what he claimed was a climate of censorship in the publishing industry and mass media, Tsutsui declared a cessation of print publishing in September 1993, and three years later began to release his work online.

While the two episodes are of a very different nature, each provides a revealing look at the possibilities of electronic media and their relationship to existing modes of expression and dissemination. Furthermore, despite their apparent differences, the two episodes share a number of intriguing commonalities. Each one put Tsutsui into multiple feedback loops with his readers, with the author asserting a greater or lesser degree of control over the nature of the interaction. In each case Tsutsui split his voice across several media, both print and electronic, and played these voices off against each other, in ways that often highlighted the clashes of modality between established and emerging media. Finally, during each episode Tsutsui both confronted and teased readers: on the one hand, unleashing invective against his “enemies” – those he accused of misreading his texts – and, on the other hand, teasing his “loyal readers” by withholding his services as an author, manipulating the text of *Gaspard of the Morning* to frustrate readers’ desires for certain types of narratives, or ceasing literary production altogether during the controversy over “Automatic Police.” While both strategies of invective and withholding might seem to be extraliterary, they are in fact fundamentally constitutive of Tsutsui’s literary personality, honed over years of acute attention to issues of literature and mediation, and his cultivation of a performative sensibility expressed in various media contexts.

### **The Cybernetic Author as Despot: Gaspard of the Morning**

When Tsutsui announced to the readers of the *Asahi shinbun* newspaper that he was beginning his first newspaper-serialized novel, to be titled *Gaspard of the Morning*, he began with a question about the novelistic possibilities of the newspaper medium: “What is it that I can do *expressly because* it is a newspaper serialization novel with a daily limit of three manuscript pages?”<sup>7</sup> His answer was to capitalize on the incremental nature and widespread distribution of this medium by soliciting ideas and criticism for the ongoing novel via letters and an Internet salon;<sup>8</sup> this feedback was incorporated into the text; and the readers, the author, and newspaper fiction editor all entered the text as fictional characters. In this introduction, Tsutsui also alerts his readers to the fact that criticism will be an integral part of the novel, declaring in the opening sentences of his essay, “I would



like you to note that this piece of writing is part of the novel. In other words, the fiction *Gaspard of the Morning* has already begun.”<sup>9</sup> Aside from announcing that an Internet salon will be opened to receive electronic messages, Tsutsui makes little reference to gaming or cyberfiction in this introduction, instead citing the venerable precedents of the British novelists Samuel Richardson and Charles Dickens for their incorporation of reader response in serialized work. Nevertheless, the fact that computer-networking practices (or potential practices) such as interactive games were also an influence on Tsutsui’s conceptualization of the novel becomes clear once the narrative is fully underway.

Several days after this introduction, the serialization of *Gaspard* began in earnest with the scene of a squadron of heavily armed Japanese soldiers led by a Commander Fukae. The soldiers are trekking across an unknown desert planet, unsure of the reasons behind their orders to march and apprehensive of attacks by aliens. Especially given Tsutsui’s long association with the genre, readers would be justified from this opening to expect *Gaspard* to continue as a “straight” science fiction piece. Tsutsui places a typically wry comment on his story’s generic quality in his first description of the soldiers: “All of their faces, including Fukae’s, somehow resembled each other. They each had individual faces clearly expressing their own personal character, so looking at it that way their faces weren’t alike. But outlines of each of their faces bore a close resemblance to the characters in action movies. . . . Sometimes Fukae thought it must be the genetic influence of generations of *anime*-loving Japanese.”<sup>10</sup>

From the third installment, however, it is revealed that Fukae and his company will not be the novel’s chief characters but are in fact characters in a networked computer game called The Phantom Squadron being played by a second protagonist, a business executive named Kinohara Seizō (hence the “genetic influence” of anime-loving Japanese on Fukae and company is revealed to be more literal than it first seemed). This outer story takes place in a Tokyo of the near future, when the first generation raised on computer games has reached middle age. The business managers and top-ranking bureaucrats in Seizō’s circle are all avid players of The Phantom Squadron, and discussing the game is an indispensable element of their male-centered socializing. The rest of the novel alternates between occasional episodes following The Phantom Squadron and the unfolding of a marital crisis between Seizō and his wife, Satoko. Satoko, whose hobby is attending fashionable “home parties,” is involved in a computer game of her own – day-trading stocks through a networked “portfolio financial service.” After a downturn in the market, Satoko tries to cover her losses and plunges the household finances into deeper and deeper debt, unbeknownst to Seizō, who is too absorbed in playing The



Phantom Squadron to notice the looming crisis. After numerous subplots and digressions, the story spins toward its climax as Seizō and Satoko are pursued by a gang of yakuza online loan sharks, to be rescued in the end by Fukae and his phantom squadron, who, in a *deus ex machina* enacted through a combination of tantric Buddhism, high-tech weaponry, and particle physics, burst through fictional layers into Seizō and Satoko's world.

To make this baroque narrative even more multifarious, the parallel development of Fukae and Seizō-Satoko's worlds is interrupted periodically by the intrusion of the "author," fictionalized as "Kunugizawa," and the newspaper literary editor, fictionalized as "Origuchi," who introduce and debate the reader reactions and suggestions arriving daily. In fielding messages, Kunugizawa and Origuchi offer various metacommentaries on the narrative, including an elaborate explanation of the text's multiple layers of fictionality, complete with references to the literary theorists Gerard Genette and Wayne C. Booth. Even without Kunugizawa's explanations, however, the reflexive structure is difficult to miss, with the feedback loop between the unfolding narrative of *Gaspard* and the readers' letters and electronic messages modeled within the text by the feedback loop between the computer game The Phantom Squadron and the networked gamers such as Seizō and his colleagues.

From the beginning, Tsutsui-Kunugizawa plays the letters and Internet messages off against each other as the two media carrying feedback on the novel. This dichotomy is especially problematic in its mobilization of gender in relation to media and fictional genres. In representing reader responses, Tsutsui-Kunugizawa draws a sharp contrast between the desires of the letter writers, gendered primarily as female, who want to see more development of the Seizō-Satoko plotline in the style of the so-called domestic novel, and the desires of the Internet users, gendered primarily as male, who want to see more development of the science fiction elements related to The Phantom Squadron. In the novel's opening stages, the balance between the installments devoted to Seizō-Satoko and the installments devoted to The Phantom Squadron is purported to be dependent on "majority rule" by these two constituencies.

However, since there is no way to independently verify the effect of reader input on the actual development of the novel, and since these two constituencies seem to have at best a very rough leverage on the narrative, it becomes an open question whether Tsutsui's text is really interactive at all. At one point, in fact, the editor Origuchi conveys some readers' suspicions that Kunugizawa has fabricated the letters and the entire science fiction-"domestic" debate, and had already planned the shifts in the story from before the serialization began.<sup>11</sup> While further examination reveals a more subtle degree of interactive "gaming" in *Gaspard*, the question of the

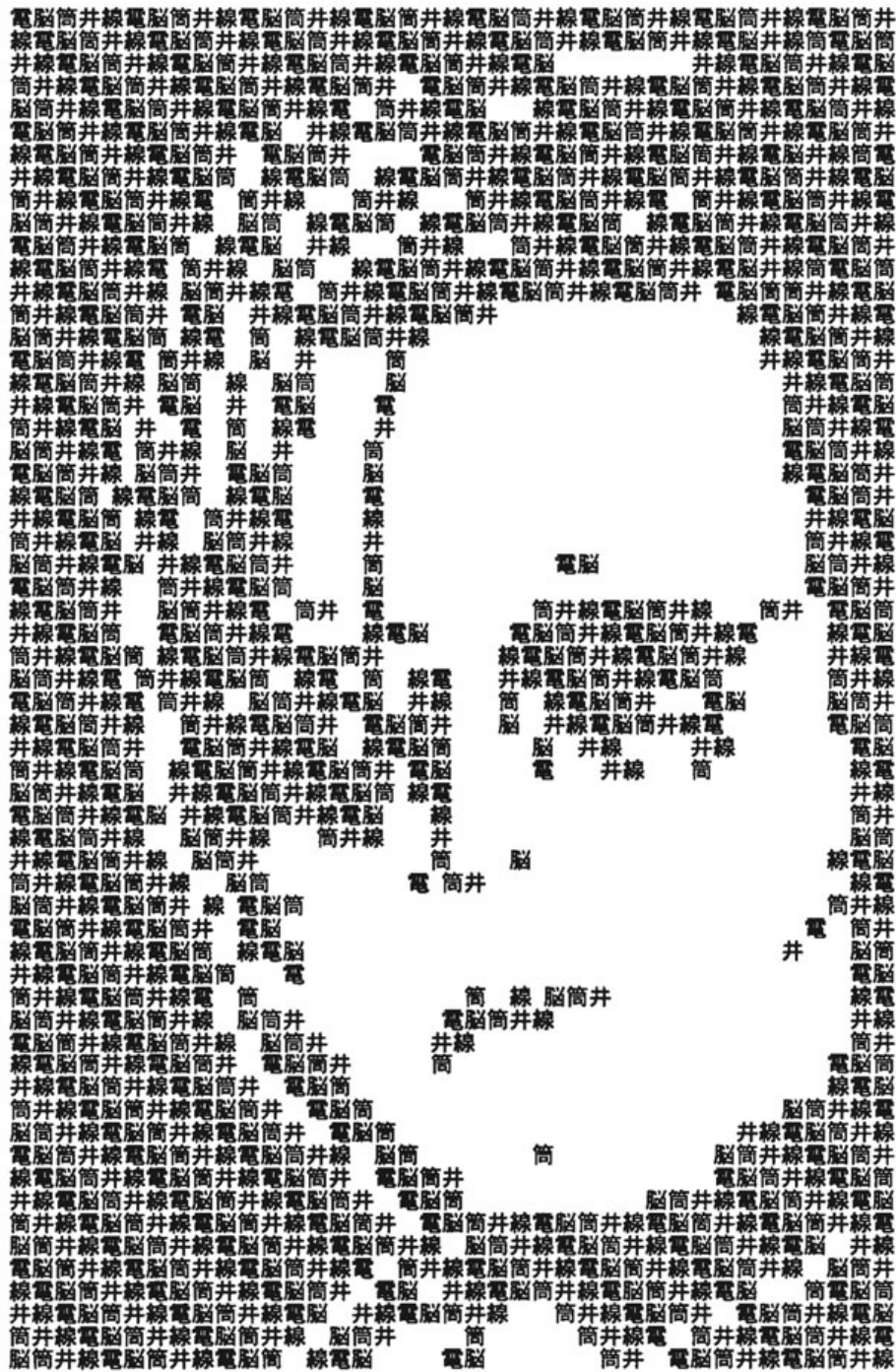


readers' actual input on the text is a fundamental one, speaking to the issue of authorial power that recurs throughout the text and through Tsutsui's 1990s multimedia career as a whole.

Although partisans of the "domestic" story line seem to have the upper hand during the majority of *Gaspard*, the actual numeric dominance of Internet messages over letters is striking: by the end of the novel's serialization, the *Asahi* newspaper had received over a thousand letters about the text, a respectable number that was nevertheless dwarfed by nearly twenty-four thousand Internet messages. Strikingly, the Internet salon *Dennō Tsutsui sen (Tsutsui Computer Front)*, established as a channel for readers' responses, sustained its own lively textual development parallel to the novel's serialization. For example, salon participants held online virtual parties during the Christmas–New Year's holidays (running parallel to the serialization of installments detailing the parties attended by the novel's heroine Satoko). Likewise, a party was held to celebrate the novel's hundredth installment, and a virtual funeral was conducted on the death of a number of its characters.<sup>12</sup> The discourse on the *Tsutsui Computer Front* can be characterized as employing a high degree of language play, as being highly reflexive of its own status as mediated discourse, and as involving a strong element of self-dramatization and performance – qualities, it should be noted, that are also prominent in Tsutsui's prose itself (Figure 5.1).<sup>13</sup>

Thus, while letters to the newspaper's literary editor and online messages were structured as parallel channels of reader feedback, the *Tsutsui Computer Front* literary salon allowed the development of a semi-autonomous fan community in a way impossible to duplicate through the letter-to-the-editor channel. This fan community can be compared with the *otaku* community of manga fans who circulate alternative versions of their favorite works at manga conventions, or to television fans who create alternative narratives based on their favorite shows in fanzines and other "fan art" media – a process that the American media studies scholar Henry Jenkins, following Michel de Certeau, has dubbed "textual poaching."<sup>14</sup> In fact, these communities of media fans in both the United States and Japan have significant roots in science fiction fan communities, whose close interaction with science fiction authors has been one of the distinguishing features of the science fiction genre itself.<sup>15</sup> Kotani Mari and Saitō Tamaki explore these practices in some depth elsewhere in this volume. Here I would like to point out that the *Tsutsui Computer Front* differs from earlier writer–fan interactive forums, as well as paper-based amateur manga and fanzines, in several key respects, including the increased volume, interactivity, and instantaneous temporality of reader–writer exchange made possible by the online medium. Furthermore, the *Tsutsui*





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**Figure 5.1.** An ASCII-art portrait of Tsutsui Yasutaka included in a posting to Tsutsui’s online salon, by the participant Itagaki Wanren Taisuke. The characters that make up the image spell the name of the salon, *Dennō Tsutsui sen* (*Tsutsui Computer Front*). “Otohidama (Dennō fukuwarai),” posted January 1, 1992, archived on Asahi Net BBB (accessed January 29, 2002).

*Computer Front* was an exceptional experiment in that it was synchronized with the serialization of Tsutsui's work in a mass-circulation newspaper, and Tsutsui's own participation in the salon allowed content to migrate in two directions between the serialized "master" text and the communal textual performance generated in the salon.

Tsutsui participated in the salon under the pseudonym Shōkenrō (Laughing Dog Pavilion) and praised the online messaging as a "linguistic game of a very high level."<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, Tsutsui embedded the pseudonyms and personalities of a number of the online participants in the *Gaspard* text, making, for instance, the user pseudonym Hinshuku no Maō (Frowning Demon King) into an alien encountered by Fukae and The Phantom Squadron. These characters in the novel can be seen as "avatars" (or, in the language of the novel, "shadows") of their online counterparts, just as Kunugizawa is a shadow of Tsutsui and Fukae is a shadow of Seizō. The text of *Gaspard* thus incorporates a hidden level of interactive play between the "author" and the participants in the Internet salon, not readily apparent to readers with access only to the print text of *Gaspard*.

In contrast to Tsutsui's positive engagement with the Internet salon in his Shōkenrō persona, however, the attitude of Tsutsui's fictional shadow Kunugizawa toward the salon is extremely hostile, habitually referring to this group of readers as "the Internet science fiction idiots" (*intanetto no sf baka*). Toward the end of the serialization, Kunugizawa unleashes a stream of invective against the Internet participants that continues through a remarkable number of installments. Kunugizawa reacts particularly strongly to several participants who "flamed" the salon with cursory negative comments such as "No good. This serialization is a failure," "The emperor has no clothes," "Hey! It's boring, give it up," and "Barf!" (*uu-gerogero*). This launches Kunugizawa on a tirade about the lack of civility on the Internet, which quickly escalates into Kunugizawa's own "flaming" denunciation of the parties involved with a series of elaborate and highly creative insults.<sup>17</sup> Kunugizawa's invective, in its playfulness and excess, is one of the most conspicuously performative elements in the *Gaspard* text – one of the Internet reader/commentators, in fact, compared it with the "abuse of the audience" (*kankyaku batō*) that occurs in some modern theater.<sup>18</sup>

Tsutsui-Kunugizawa's counterattack on reader criticisms goes beyond the denunciation of readers in these performative passages representing Kunugizawa's speech and extends into *Gaspard's* plot development as well. A good portion of the serialization was taken up by lengthy satirical descriptions of the parties attended by the heroine Satoko, which introduced dozens of partygoers as secondary characters. According to Kunugizawa and Origuchi's representation of reader responses, these party





episodes were particularly disliked by the online science fiction faction. Both letters and Internet messages reportedly complained that there were too many secondary characters introduced in these scenes and that readers of the serialized text, who typically had only one brief episode in front of them at any one time, could not possibly keep track of them all. Two-thirds of the way into the serialization, in a willful and deliberately extreme response to such criticisms, Tsutsui-Kunugizawa loads the greater portion of these secondary characters onto the inaugural flight of a superatmospheric high-speed shuttle between Tokyo and Washington, and has the shuttle explode, killing all on board.

In the symbolic violence of this response to purported reader criticism, Tsutsui-Kunugizawa demonstrates his ultimate “authority” over the text, performed with an air of paranoid despotism. Rather than celebrate the democratic possibilities of networked discourse in the newspaper-serialized text of *Gaspard*, then, Tsutsui problematizes the conflicting desires and reading-writing strategies between “author” and “readers,” and draws attention to the issue of the power to control speech in emergent media environments. By highlighting these issues within his highly performative text, Tsutsui confirms *Gaspard*’s metafictional status as, in the author’s own words, a “novel that critiques novels” or, more precisely, an interactive fiction that critiques interactive fiction.<sup>19</sup>

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of Tsutsui’s performance of authorial control in *Gaspard of the Morning* is largely a matter of perspective. For readers who followed the serialization or purchased the paperback edition subsequently issued by Shinchōsha Publishing, Tsutsui has retained ultimate control of the narrative, and his fictional alter ego Kunugizawa has had the last word over letter writing and e-mail sending critics represented in the text. However, the nearly three hundred reader-writers who participated in the online salon jointly created their own performative and discursive sphere, with its own distinct value as a critical and creative expression unfolding in real time. That sphere remained largely hidden from readers of Tsutsui’s newspaper serialization, but its 23,805 messages are now archived with the Asahi Net Internet service and comprise a body of writing quite different in style, scale, temporality, and materiality from either a newspaper novel serialization or a printed book.

### **The Multimedia Cacophony of Silence: “Automatic Police” and the “Pseudo-Event”**

After the success of *Gaspard of the Morning*, which received the Japanese Science Fiction Grand Prize for 1992, Tsutsui continued to pursue the themes of cybernetics and virtuality with his next novel, *Paprika*. While hailed by



some critics as a magnum opus, *Paprika* was soon overshadowed by a controversy over the textbook publication of Tsutsui's early short story "Mujin keisatsu" (1965, "Automatic Police"). This controversy prompted Tsutsui to dramatically reposition himself versus print and electronic media, and cast a new light on the issues of authorial and readerly power raised in a playful manner in *Gaspard of the Morning*.

Tsutsui's short story "Automatic Police," first published in the author's debut year of 1965, ostensibly focuses on the power of the state rather than the power of media and so would seem to differ slightly in theme from the early works identified by Tatsumi as "psuedo-event sf." Reminiscent of the light and ironic style of the Japanese science fiction pioneer Hoshi Shin'ichi, "Automatic Police" concerns a future society monitored by robotic police. The first-person protagonist "I" (*watashi*) narrates his encounter with a robotic police officer on the day he decides to walk to work – an unusual choice in a society where transportation is dominated by "air cars." Arrested en route by a robotic officer for no apparent reason, the protagonist's distrust of the robotic force quickly transforms into overt hostility. When the robot's memory is analyzed at the police station to determine the cause of arrest, it is revealed that the robotic patroller was a new model equipped with the ability to read minds. This experimental model had overstepped the bounds of its programming to read only surface thoughts and had detected the protagonist's deep-seated unconscious antipathy toward both robots and police. The story gets a final twist when the senior officer, who is expected to intervene on the protagonist's behalf, is revealed to be a robot, too.<sup>20</sup>

In July 1993, a few months after Kadokawa Shoten published its new high school textbook *Kokugo I* (Japanese I) that was certified by the Ministry of Education for publication the following year, Kadokawa received a letter of protest from the Japanese Epilepsy Association (*Nihon tenkan kyōkai*, JEA) about the inclusion of "Automatic Police." The JEA charged that Tsutsui's story "was based on the misunderstanding of and prejudice against epilepsy," and that publication of the story would further spread such misunderstanding through society.<sup>21</sup> The JEA also issued a statement ending with a series of demands that (1) the textbook's certification be withdrawn, sales of the textbook be suspended, and the story excised; (2) school boards and teachers refrain from adopting the textbook; and (3) all previously published versions of the work in short story collections or as part of Tsutsui's complete works be retracted, and future editions of the story be rewritten or annotated appropriately.<sup>22</sup>

As the synopsis above should indicate, epilepsy is not the thematic focus of "Automatic Police" but appears as an example of the types of behaviors and conditions normally monitored by the robotic police. The



robot policeman is equipped with a speed monitoring device, an alcoholic intake detection device, and a brain wave calibrator to detect irregular brain waves of epileptic drivers who might have a seizure while driving. It was two references to this fictional seizure-warning device that attracted the JEA's attention.

The JEA articulated a number of reasons for concern over the adoption of "Automatic Police" in a high school textbook. First of all, the issue of driving and epilepsy is a sensitive one: in contrast to the United States and most countries of Western Europe, where driver's licenses can be issued based on epileptics' current condition and program of medication, Japan still unconditionally prohibits all epileptics from obtaining a license to drive – a situation that the JEA has been actively campaigning to reform. In addition to concern that the story would spread fear and misinformation about the issue to impressionable students, the JEA also raised concerns over the story's effect in reinforcing the stigmatization of epileptics and particularly in undermining the social and emotional well-being of epileptic students in classrooms where the *Kokugo I* textbook would be read.

As the JEA's protest was taken up in the press, Tsutsui responded with a lengthy defense of his work. While he maintained, on the one hand, the position that epileptics should not in fact be allowed to drive, he also argued that a reading which regards the story as condoning a view that criminalizes epilepsy misses the entire point of the story, since the vision of a future society intrusively monitored by robots is clearly dystopic. Finally, with regard to the issue of damage to the emotional sensitivities of students, Tsutsui responded by placing himself in the literary tradition of "black humor" whose very nature is to offend conventional sensibilities, to "laugh at the systematic good conscience of readers, to peel away their masks, to touch off their evil and irrational and prejudicial feelings, and to appeal to their anti-systematic spirit."<sup>23</sup> If this one story were to be censored, he wonders, what would become of his other stories with even greater potential to offend? From Tsutsui's perspective, the attempted suppression of "Automatic Police" must have seemed eerily reminiscent of the future society described in the story itself, where even unconscious thoughts are criminalized and all suspected criminals are expected to voluntarily turn themselves over to the authorities.

Even though Kadokawa did not actually retract "Automatic Police" from the textbook, as the debate about the story continued, Tsutsui displayed more and more dismay over the JEA's position and more broadly over the state of public discourse in Japan. He expressed particular anger over what he perceived as the unfair and inadequate representation of his position by television and newspaper journalists, whom he accused of practicing de facto censorship. In this debate over regulating public



expression, Tsutsui and his interlocutors increasingly employed the term *word hunting* (*kotobagari*) to describe the practice of making certain words and expressions taboo. The rapid rise of this neologism, it might be noted, underscored a remarkable synchronicity in the debate between Tsutsui and his critics and the controversy over “political correctness” in the United States.<sup>24</sup>

Finally, in September 1993, Tsutsui declared his intention to protest what he perceived as the increasingly repressive state of public discourse in Japan by ceasing publication of his work in print media.<sup>25</sup> In an interestingly atavistic reference to an earlier mode of writing technology, Tsutsui titled his statement the “*danpitsu sengen*,” or literally “breaking the brush declaration.” Rather than enforce a self-imposed silence, however, the *danpitsu sengen* arguably only increased Tsutsui’s “bandwidth” on multiple media channels.

Features on Tsutsui’s *danpitsu sengen* declaration, including numerous interviews with the author and commentary by prominent writers, artists, and other cultural figures, were carried by the Asahi, Yomiuri, Mainichi, Tokyo, and Sankei newspapers and in such mass-circulation magazines as *Sapio*, *Marco Polo*, *Takarajima*, *SPA!*, *Shūkan bunju*, *Shūkan gendai*, and *Shūkan posuto*, as well as more specialized journals such as Kadokawa’s *Kokugoka tsūshin* (National language department newsletter).<sup>26</sup> In an interview with the manga artist and novelist Uchida Shungiku, Tsutsui noted that a book of essays about the controversy was selling better than his new novel *Paprika* and joked that he might be accused of being a “*danpitsu profiteer*” (*danpitsu narikin*).<sup>27</sup>

Nor was the mediation of the *danpitsu sengen* controversy limited to print alone. Another site of heated discussion was “221 jōhōkyoku” (“Tsutsui Information Bureau”), the online Tsutsui fan club and discussion group hosted by Asahi Net as an extension of the Internet presence Tsutsui established with *Gaspard of the Morning*. Two days after the *danpitsu sengen* was issued, Asahi Net established another discussion site titled “‘Word-hunting’ considered” (“‘*Kotobagari*’ o *kangaeru*”). In a hybrid media experiment reminiscent of the *Gaspard* episode, Tsutsui appeared on a special episode of the television program *Live TV until Morning* titled “Freedom of Speech and Discrimination,” which was intended to respond in real time to discussion on the “‘Word-hunting’ considered” Internet site. The differing temporalities and modalities of the television and Internet media soon became apparent, however, as the television staff was unable to keep up with a deluge of over four hundred Internet messages in four hours.<sup>28</sup>

As the controversy over “Automatic Police” and “word hunting” died down, Tsutsui continued to pursue alternative means of public expression while maintaining his self-imposed cessation of print publication. In



the summer of 1996 he established his own literary home page (JALinet) and began to release his works over the Web, independent of the print publishing industry. Within a year of his move to online self-publishing, Tsutsui reached an agreement with his conventional publishing outlets over the issue of “word hunting” and resumed print publication, terminating his *danpitsu* period.

### The Author as Multimedia Performer

While there are important differences between the two episodes, the *danpitsu sengen* controversy makes an interesting comparison with the *Gaspard of the Morning* project, since both episodes placed Tsutsui in feedback loops with his readers through multiple media channels. In *Gaspard of the Morning*, Tsutsui pointed to the literary potential of interactive electronic media while problematizing the issue of the power over speech in a highly mediated society through his own performative display of authorial control. In the debate over “Automatic Police,” however, he found himself displaced from the seat of authorial power and less able to proscribe or co-opt the “misreading” of a different interpretive constituency, the JEA, which established its own media contacts and attempted to alter the forms of Tsutsui’s print work. In response to this perceived crisis, Tsutsui counter-attacked by launching his own highly mediated “pseudo-event,” the *danpitsu sengen*, or “breaking the brush declaration.” Tsutsui’s *danpitsu sengen* corresponds strongly to Boorstin’s original formula of the pseudo-event as an incident “planned, planted or incited . . . for the immediate purpose of being reported or reproduced.”

Tsutsui brought a markedly performative sensibility to both the experimental fiction *Gaspard of the Morning* and to his role as free-speech advocate during the *danpitsu sengen* episode.<sup>29</sup> In *Gaspard of the Morning*, he dramatized his authorial persona as Kunugizawa within the novel’s uniquely Tsutsuian world of slapstick (*dotabata*) science fiction while cultivating the online persona Shōkenrō in his contacts with the *Tsutsui Computer Front* Internet salon. Although his performance as social critic during the controversy over “Automatic Police” appeared more earnest, he brought to this debate a canny knowledge of how to deploy his authorial persona and manipulate Japanese media outlets, culminating in his staging of the *danpitsu sengen* as pseudo-event. It is noteworthy in this context that Tsutsui has been deeply involved in theater, film, and television as an actor as well as a writer throughout his career.<sup>30</sup> During his *danpitsu* period, Tsutsui invested much of his energy in performance projects, and his current online presence has a definite performative emphasis, including a “Multi Media Theater” page featuring QuickTime audio and video clips of Tsutsui



giving readings of his work, playing jazz clarinet, granting interviews, and appearing in TV commercials, as well as textual information on Tsutsui's appearances as a film actor and stagings of his dramatic work.<sup>31</sup>

It would be tempting to view Tsutsui's 1990s career through the lens of the ongoing debate over the future of traditional print publication versus emerging electronic media. We might construct a narrative of the science fiction and "metafiction" pioneer who, as a protest against a climate of self-censorship in the publishing industry, withdrew from print publication and turned to the new medium of online publishing to distribute his work directly to his readers. Such a narrative would have a certain iconic appeal, but it would ignore several important aspects of the *dan-pitsu sengen* episode, including the fact that Tsutsui failed to establish a viable economic model for the online publication of his work and reached a rapprochement with the publishing industry soon after he began releasing work on the JALInet site.

Rather than restrict my focus to print versus electronic publishing, I have attempted to outline how Tsutsui, whose early works were among the first to fictionally explore the hypermediated society, deftly employed a variety of media throughout the 1990s. These include newspaper, journal, magazine, and book publications; postal communication, Web pages and Internet discussion groups; and television and stage performance. Rather than the author's being a single all-powerful agent in these media, his presence is combined with that of other speakers and intermediaries with their own agendas (represented within the fiction of *Gaspard of the Morning* by the newspaper editor Origuchi, as well as the inventors and managers of the networked computer game *The Phantom Squadron*). Moreover, several of these media not only provide channels for readers' feedback to the author but also establish forums for readers to create their own communities of expression. While electronic media are only one element of this mix, Tsutsui's 1990s experiments highlight the degree to which networked electronic media offer new parameters of temporality, modality, and interaction, often incompatible with the old ones. Through both his fictional works and his broader activities as an author and public figure, Tsutsui has given us an intriguing, vexing, and often comic view of our densely mediated future.

## Notes

1. Tsutsui Yasutaka et al., JALInet, <http://www.jali.or.jp>. Tsutsui's English-language profile with the assertion about Japan's "first literary server" can be found at [http://www.jali.or.jp/tti/prof\\_e.html](http://www.jali.or.jp/tti/prof_e.html) (accessed May 23, 2006).

2. Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), 11; originally published as *The Image, or What Happened to the American Dream* (New York: Atheneum, 1962).

3. Tsutsui Yasutaka, "Betonamu kankō kōsha," in *Betonamu kankō kōsha* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1979), 189–221; Tsutsui, "Rumors about Me" ("Ore ni kan suru uwasa"), trans. David Lewis, in *The African Bomb and Other Stories* (Tokyo: Kōdansha Eigo Bunko, 1986). For a discussion of the theme of reality and media in Tsutsui's early work, with reference to Boorstin, see Tsutsui Yasutaka, "Zen'ei wa goraku de aru," interview by Larry McCaffery, Sinda Gregory, and Tatsumi Takayuki, *Gendai shisō/Revue de la pensée d'aujourd'hui* 23, no. 11 (1995): 136–37; translated as "Keeping Not Writing: An Interview with Yasutaka Tsutsui," Center for Book Culture.org, [http://www.centerforbookculture.org/review/02\\_2\\_inter/interview\\_tsutsui.html](http://www.centerforbookculture.org/review/02_2_inter/interview_tsutsui.html) (accessed May 23, 2006).

4. Tsutsui Yasutaka, *Kyokō sendan* (Fantasy fleet) (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1984). Tsutsui's 1984 essay "Kyokō sendan no gyakushū" ("Counterattack of the *Fantasy Fleet*"), first published in the evening edition of *Mainichi shinbun* on July 6, 1984, issued a series of withering replies to the work's detractors. It can be recognized as one important event in the development of the author's distinctive strategies of confrontation with his critics – strategies that will be elaborated in the *Gaspard of the Morning* and the *danpitsu sengen* episode discussed below. The essay is reprinted in Tsutsui Yasutaka, *Kyokō sendan no gyakushū* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1984), 204–8.

5. Tsutsui Yasutaka, *Bungakubu Tadano-kyōju* (Professor Tadano, literature department) (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1990). Tsutsui has been a prodigious critic and theorist; for one important statement of his views on fiction and surfiction, see *Chakusō no gijutsu* (Techniques of imagination) (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1983). For a view of Tsutsui's work in the context of the development of metafiction in Japanese and American literature, see Tatsumi Takayuki, *Metafikushon no bōryaku* (Ideology of metafiction) (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1993), 61–96.

6. Tatsumi Takayuki, *Nihon henryū bungaku* (Slipstream Japan) (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1998), 213–32; Tsutsui Yasutaka, *Asa no Gasupaaru* (Gaspard of the morning) (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1995); Tsutsui, *Papurika* (Paprika) (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1997).

7. Tsutsui, *Asa no Gasupaaru*, 6; my translation. The novel was serialized between October 18, 1991, and March 31, 1992, in the morning edition of the *Asahi shinbun* newspaper. The paperback (*bunkobon*) edition cited here appeared in 1995. The title is a reference to the prose poem collection *Gaspard de la nuit* by Aloysius Bertrand (1807–1841).

8. Circulation for the *Asahi shinbun* morning edition in 1989 was just over 8 million, making it one of the most widely read periodicals in the world.

9. Tsutsui, *Asa no Gasupaaru*, 5.

10. *Ibid.*, 8–9.

11. *Ibid.*, 78–80.

12. *Ibid.*, 317; Ōkami Asami, "Dennōroku: Kaisetsu ni kaete" (Computer record: In lieu of an afterword), in Tsutsui, *Asa no Gasupaaru*, 319, 325–28.

13. "Dennō Tsutsui sen/salon," message archive on the Asahi Net Bulletin Board Browser, <http://bbb.asahi-net.or.jp/bbb/bbs/old.tti.+salon> (accessed May 23, 2006).

14. Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992). For information on *otaku* and manga conventions, see the introduction to this volume and chapter 11. See also Sharon Kinsella, *Adult Manga: Culture and Power in Contemporary Japanese Society* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000), 1002–38.