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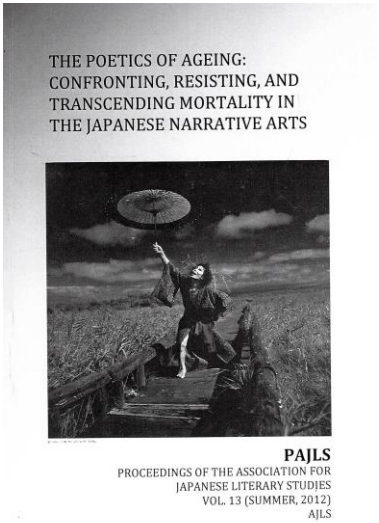

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Tsutsui Yasutaka's *Teki* (The Enemy) or Faust for the Twenty-First Century

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Aging and Modern Consciousness

A desire to affirm one's raison d'être while facing individual mortality came with modernity, that is, aging and death came to constitute a struggle tied to the question of self. Faust is an archetype in this struggle: he finds that nothing—not religion, not science, and not even magic—can change the fact that man's potential is as limited as his lifespan is short. The clock is ticking, urging him to reach ultimate wisdom and taste the greatest possible sensual pleasure before he perishes. A contract with the devil does fulfill his wishes for knowledge and sensual pleasure; it entails his death and submission to the devil's commands. Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus* (first performed in 1594, first text 1604) featured the scientist magician as a Renaissance man who challenges God's authority, but the play is a traditional cautionary tale, its plot leading to the punishment of man for his hubris. Surrounding the same archetype and including some of the episodes in Marlowe, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust*, Parts I and II (1810) was an experiment with an individual's epistemological struggle with mortality, which, by the nature of modernity, was necessarily complex and paradoxical. While Marlowe's Dr. Faustus finds himself in the company of fellow magicians, Goethe's Faust is almost completely isolated, a prototypical modern individual in search of his identity not in relation to his surroundings or to fate or divinity but to himself.

Fritz Breithaupt, who places Goethe at the most complex stage in the development of self in 18th-century Germany, points out the paradox of ego seen in Goethe's *Faust*. In "Faust's Study," Mephistopheles[1] offers an even exchange: "I'll bind myself to

[1] In this paper, characters' names in Goethe's *Faust* follow the spelling and diacritics in Stuart Atkins, ed. and trans., *Faust I and II* (Boston: Suhrkamp/Insel, 1984).

serve you *here*, / be at your beck and call without respite; / and if or when we meet again *beyond*, / then you will do the same for me" (Lines 1656-59).[2] Faust rejects the Devil's cosmology and sense of time by saying, "I do not want to hear still more discussion / of whether there'll be future loves and hates, / and whether also, in those spheres, / there's an Above or Below." (Lines 1667-70) Breithaupt argues that the self or "*Ich*" in *Faust* is not a stable existence but a transient phenomenon resulting from an imaging of Mephistopheles against which Faust can position himself. Indeed, Mephistopheles is Faust's own making so that Faust's denial of Mephistopheles' cosmology equals a denial of his own self. Breithaupt says "the *Ich* posits a *Nicht-Ich* in order to denounce it."[3] In short, there are two *Ich*s, "the image-producing, image-rejecting *Ich* and the images of the *Ich* (that are denounced as a *Nicht-Ich*, as fictions)."[4] An absolute *Ich* that is free from self-deception or from this *Nicht-Ich* cycle is imagined by Faust: "… and I'm resolved my inmost being / shall share in what's the lot of all mankind, / that I shall understand their heights and depths, / shall fill my heart with all their joys and griefs, …" (Lines 1770-73) This total self, or the "absolute *Ich*," as Breithaupt calls it, is on a much higher level because Faust sees himself as a universal consciousness but it cannot claim reality as it is unrelated to Faust's real experience and is possible "only by a denial of worldly phenomena."[5]

This instability of "*Ich*" in *Faust* characterizes *Ikiru* (To Live, 1952), a film adaptation of Goethe's work by Kurosawa Akira (1910-1998). The film depicts a Faustian pursuit in its main character Watanabe, a dead wood of a municipal office section chief, who seeks the meaning of his existence after he is diagnosed with terminal cancer. Watanabe wanders in the dark alleys of

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[2] Line numbers after a quotation from *Faust* Part I refer to those in Stuart Atkins' translation.

[3] Fritz Breithaupt, "Goethe and the Ego," *Goethe Yearbook* 11 (2002): 93. In my reading of Goethe, I was inspired by conversations with Fritz Breithaupt at the Institute for Advanced Study, Indiana University, where we were both research fellows.

[4] Ibid., 93.

[5] Ibid., 95.

Tokyo followed by a black dog and guided by a writer who calls himself his Mephistopheles. At the end of his search for a stimulus to his senses, numbed for two decades since his wife's death, he encounters Toyo, who becomes something of a Margarete to him. Inspired by her, he finds a way to declare his existence by fighting through the dense bureaucratic jungle of his own municipal office, building a small playground out of a trash dump. His achievement presumably brings to him a happy closure echoing the ending of *Faust Part II* where Angels sing, "for him whose striving never ceases / we can provide redemption" (Act V Lines 11, 936-7).[6] The completion of the task he has assigned to himself and his subsequent death on a swing while singing appear to present an image of a higher "*Ich*" that is firmly embedded in his life experience. This, however, is only an image, just as delusory as Faust's image of himself as the "*Ich*" that is a good and productive part of all humanity.

The "*Ich*" in *Ikiru* is betrayed by the film's method of narration, which opens Watanabe's life to multiple interpretations. The first half of *Ikiru* depicts Watanabe's journey into the world of pleasure while the second half consists of his funeral scene during which Watanabe's work towards the construction of a playground and his dying moment are described only as flashbacks from the perspectives of his family, colleagues, petitioners for a playground, and a policeman. This latter half is a collection of conflicting interpretations, not a representation of a solid "truth." The discussion nevertheless brings his colleagues an epiphany: they realize, beyond all differences of opinion, how an individual can overcome seemingly insurmountable hurdles and reach a higher level of self. At the end of the film, however, these same colleagues are back to their heartless bureaucratic routine, forgetting their newly acquired insight. Thus, Watanabe's absolute *Ich* is blurred through the discussions at the funeral and in the end denied.

The film is a respectful adaptation of Goethe's work. Not only does Kurosawa borrow Goethe's characters and some of the plot from Part I, but he also makes an ironic use of democracy as a

[6] Act and line numbers after a quotation from Goethe's *Faust* Part II refer to those in Stuart Atkins' translation.

guiding principle of the story, similar to the way Goethe suspiciously acknowledges the dominance of Christian faith in framing the course of life. In addition to this textual similarity, Goethe's and Kurosawa's careers show certain affinities with each other. The two artists share a sort of cultural nationalism: each sought to reinvent a cohesive native culture that was in danger of falling apart. Goethe's *Faust*, whether or not its protagonist succeeded in reaching an ultimate knowledge, depicted the human struggle for meaning on a grand scale with the conflicting forces of reason and religion. As such, it must have shed a ray of hope for the German-speaking population of the Holy Roman Empire after its termination in 1806. At the peak of Napoleon's domination of Europe and the rise of French as the perfected modern language, Goethe's poetic drama of impassioned aspirations, both philosophical and sensual, affirmed not only the powerful human pursuits of the German people but also confirmed the beauty of their language in a standardized form. Kurosawa's task as a "humanist filmmaker" (as he is often called) concerned with the general loss of spirit in war-ravaged Japan during the 50s was not unlike Goethe's in the early 19th century. The end of the war had invalidated the notion of history as a succession of emperors and the belief in living and dying for the nation. Individual Japanese had difficulty finding self-identity in a world without any familiar framework. *Ikiru*, as with a few other post-war works by Kurosawa, was intended to teach Japan's public how "to live" (*ikiru*) as well as how to rebuild a Japan still reeling from the devastation of World War II. In short, the filmmaker shared Goethe's optimistic sense of a public future.

The Archetypal Model and Us

Can Goethe's or Kurosawa's approach to mortality and the limits of human capacity guide inhabitants of the 21st century? Tsutsui Yasutaka (1934 -), defender of heterodoxy, defies the great predecessors' romantic nationalism but explores the Goethe-Kurosawa model of the ambiguous "*Ich*" for his time. The source of anxiety for the aged is not the brevity of life (in fact, the Japanese life expectancy is the highest in the world) or the limitation of what one can experience (the capacity of science and information technology seems boundless) but the probability of

outliving one's means. When his novel *Teki* (The Enemy, 1998) was published, Japan's economic bubble had burst and the country was suffering in the aftermath, a far more incapacitating environment than those that formed the backdrop for Goethe's or Kurosawa's work. Germany in Goethe's time was a strong presence among European countries and was endowed with a positive energy that allowed it to become a cohesive entity. Japan in Kurosawa's time suffered from poverty and political corruption but, as his film shows, signs of economic revival and a will to work were visible. In post-bubble Japan, on the other hand, finances have been as threateningly volatile as the government has rapidly changed hands. Democracy and capitalism, which constituted a foundation for Japan's health during the latter half of the 20th century, have lost much of their validity. Having lost its short-lived economic glory, Japan's existence was fading away from the attention of the world. This situation puts a new and strange light on the matter of aging and selfhood. In Tsutsui's novel, the formation of self seems possible only in the management of an increased life expectancy and the diminishing power of finance.

In the sense that cohesive storytelling requires some degree of faith in the system, whether political, economical, or ethical, Tsutsui's work is being written in an extremely discouraging environment that lacks any narrative connection between the now and the future. In describing the history of science fiction in parallel with that of philosophy since the 19th century, Azuma Hiroki notes a shift during the '80s from the "grand narratives" with a vision of the ultimate truth as represented by Komatsu Sakyō (1931-2011) to "little narratives" concerned only with human relationships between characters as in the works of Arai Motoko (1960-), the acknowledged inventor of the currently popular "light novels."[7] Tsutsui, one of the "Big Three" (*gosanke*) of science fiction in Japan, does not abandon the "grand" scope of his narrative. In *Teki*, while he limits himself to

[7] Azuma Hiroki, trans. by Miri Nakamura, "SF as Hamlet: Science Fiction and Philosophy" in *Robot Ghosts and Wired Dreams: Japanese Science Fiction from Origins to Anime*, ed. Christopher Bolton, et al. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 79-80.

the quotidian details of an aging man's life seen from a scientific perspective, he tells a story of disruptive and degenerative history of the 21st century.

In this novel, the self consists of a layered mixture of real and illusory, conscious, subconscious, preconscious, and unconscious—a merging of life and hell as shown earlier in his novel *Heru* (Hell, 2003). Psychoanalysis in *Teki* operates like Christianity in *Faust* or democracy in *Ikiru* as a mechanism for moveable and multiple interpretations. Goethe's *Faust*, unlike his much earlier *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774), was probably one of the first literary works in the German language that were so complex as to require intense and involved reading. Likewise, Kurosawa's *Ikiru*, by telling the story of Watanabe's dying efforts in the form of gossip and group discussion at his funeral, invited spectators to engage in different readings from moment to moment. Tsutsui's novel is not an obvious descendent of the two models but is something of a repressed pastiche: while the text is missing overt signs of likeness that would make it either a pastiche or a parody, hyper-reading reveals buried elements that bring the text close to moments of pastiche and parody. By the use of psychoanalysis as a means for opening up layers of possible meaning, the novel entices the reader to go deeper and farther to the point of psychotic obsession.

In *Teki*, Watanabe Gisuke, the family name intentionally echoing Kurosawa's character, I argue, is a 75-year-old retired professor of French drama and theatre and, like Kurosawa's Watanabe, a widower of 20 years. Tsutsui's Watanabe, however, instead of trying to escape the mechanical routine of his life, cheerfully and rationally engages himself in it. In fact, the routine itself seems to be a system he has invented to free himself from the anxiety of mortality. It is his own cybernetics controlling not only his surroundings but also himself as a biological and economic being. In negotiating between the conflicting forces of medical science and finance, he plots to live in fairly good health and die at age 80, ensuring that he expends by then his money and all other possessions. Toward this goal, he is perfectly self-disciplined. He sticks to his diet and to other rules since he can "easily imagine his irritation caused by a violation of his own

rules" (13).[8] In short, the ethics and aesthetics that drive Goethe's Faust and Kurosawa's Watanabe are here reduced and condensed into the management of one's health and finance, representing the diminutive world view of our century. Ways to "use" and expend his possessions is Watanabe's overt obsession. Here, ego can be acknowledged only by limiting time (until one is 80) and space (one's house and vicinity) and by exercising power on nobody but oneself. This reflexive structure (self=other) makes Watanabe a case of "*Nicht Ich*" and gives a repressive pattern to the narration of the novel.

Goethe's *Faust* Part I is organized into scenes, each with a short title such as "Night," "Faust's Study," and "Promenade." Likewise, *Teki* consists of short sections with similarly brief titles. "The Entrance Hall" reports in great detail the contents of the room, "The Storage" exhaustively lists Watanabe's possessions, and "Shopping" describes his habits in minute concreteness. The novel's hyper-involvement in details reduces the protagonist to the status of a pure consumer and the novel to an encyclopedia of a single man's quotidian life. Watanabe, thus isolated and programmed, is an uncontaminated object of observation, biological as well as anthropological. It is he himself who observes: he is conscious of every detail of his day, which he controls in order to reach his ultimate goal. There is something stoic about the way he measures what to buy and how much to eat as well as the frequency with which he allows himself to visit the bar in the neighborhood. The narrator observes Watanabe observing himself and his surroundings—"in the way an insect collector would go over his collection," says Kawamoto Saburō in his comments appended to the book.[9] Watanabe's and the narrator's viewing, however, is not merely through a microscope. A telescope and a video camera seem also to be involved. Even "DC-Mini," the high-tech instrument that allows the psychotherapist to enter and participate in the patient's dream—

[8] All translations from Japanese in this paper are mine. Parentheses after quotations from *Teki* refer to the page number in Tsutsui Yasutaka, *Teki* (Shinchōsha, 2001).

[9] Kawamoto Saburō, "Kaisetsu" in Tsutsui, *Teki*, 316.

yet to be invented for Tsutsui's novel *Paprika* (1997)—is anticipated in the way the aging Watanabe is observed.

Faust Psychoanalyzed

Of all operatic adaptations, Gounod's *Faust* (1859) simplified Goethe into a popular romantic tragedy derived from insurmountable conflicts between love and religion. The fulfillment of Faust's desire for romance requires the recovery of youth and that is the chief reward the embittered old man asks of Mephistopheles. His erotic pursuit and its tragic end occupy the entirety of the opera. In opposition to Gounod's departure from Goethe, Tsutsui's novel stays close to the original poetic drama in terms of the problematics of the "Ich" it reveals. In characterization, the protagonist, like Faust, is an aging and isolated professor, whose career has left little space for erotic pursuits. For Faust, sexual desire has to be instilled by Mephistopheles and activated by the stimulation of the conjured image of Margarete. In the case of Tsutsui's Watanabe, desire finds no path for expression; it seeps out in his dreams and fantasies, which act as the equivalent of Faust's experience under the spell of Mephistopheles.

Trapped by an infantile obsession with his genitals, Watanabe is a prototypical Freudian case—to the point of ludicrousness. In the section "Illnesses," the condition that annoys him most is his hemorrhoids, which break out every time he eats kimchi or spicy cod roe (*mentaiko*). Sensualist that he is, he takes chances with his favorite delicacies even risking hospitalization. Watanabe notes minutely and the narrator reports with relish the details of his pain, itching, and bleeding. In the same section, Watanabe, while taking his blood pressure, wonders, "what if I insert my penis into the cuff and feel the sensation of it being squeezed at its root." He amuses himself by imagining outrageous figures the monitor is likely to display to conclude that what has been inserted "does not correspond to the specifications of a human body." (p. 41)

The narrator surreptitiously slips psychological observations into apparently objective descriptions. Under the title "Noodles," for example, the novel becomes a cookbook, obsessively detailing Watanabe's preferred cuisines—Japanese,

Chinese, and Korean—with instructions on the method of preparation as well as recommendations for appropriate condiments. The sensuality of the cookbook narration easily slips into the psychological sphere as Watanabe longingly recalls the Italian pasta brought to him many years ago by a beautiful former student. This leads to the next entry titled, "Takatsukasa Yasuko," dedicated to the topic of the student. He muses that, the next time she visits and stays too long to make the last train home, he may casually suggest that she stay at his house. This becomes the chief theme of his dreams and hallucinations in the ensuing entries.

As expected, his dreams are colorfully Freudian. Those featuring Takatsukasa Yasuko (throughout the novel, she is referred to by her vaguely aristocratic full name) and Sugai Ayumi, a student waitress at the bar that he visits once a month, figure prominently in Watanabe's paltry sex life. According to the report in the "Sex Drive" section, Watanabe's adolescent habits of onanism and voyeurism have persisted into his old age. His first experience of coitus was with a high school classmate, which left on him no remarkable impression. Despite being married to a beautiful woman, his uneven experience with sex continued through his marriage due to his wife's lack of enthusiasm in conjugal acts. Although he has strayed neither during his marriage nor in his widowhood, insufficient opportunities for sex with women have encouraged his old habit. He intellectualizes the situation in a positive manner: his "self-control" afforded by his onanistic practice kept him out of trouble with those seductive women of the world who could have ruined his career; and his wife's frequent rejections kept him "in a perpetual state of longing for her and that was the reason for the romantic happiness of their marriage." (109) There is neither "self" nor "control" in what the narrator calls "self-control." There is only a delusion of ego based on denial.

Watanabe's sexual desire bares itself in his dreams featuring Takatsukasa Yasuko. She stays long into the night—as she often has in Watanabe's imagination—encouraging him to make the suggestion that he has rehearsed so many times in his mind. This time, he manages to pop the suggestion and she asks, in uncharacteristically crude language, "Do you mean you want to do it with me?" (112). He is so embarrassed that his mouth goes

dry and he is only able to say, "Yes, but, well, then…" recalling a scene in Kurosawa's *Ikiru*. Here, Kurosawa's Watanabe, who has little time to live, loses words trying to explain to the healthy young woman what he wants of her. Asked why he keeps following her, he blurts out, "Well…no, I…just that," and she shoots back, "Can't you say anything clearly? Don't talk like rain drops—drip, drip, drip…" [10] In *Teki*, Takatsukasa Yasuko's consent, unexpected by the protagonist or the reader, makes the moment resemble a goofy final take of the scene so frequently rehearsed in his mind—detaching the reader from any trust in the reality of the story's development. Indeed, Watanabe's singularly true experience of intercourse with the woman turns into a wet dream.

Narrative Repression

Despite the appearance of an almost scientific observation of details and facts, the protagonist's understanding of himself is repressed and this same repression implicates the narrator. Bound together as they are, the narrator frequently misleads the reader. Watanabe's dreams and fantasies slip into the narrator's report, the reader caught unaware when the narrator abruptly announces that Watanabe wakes up from a dream or "dismisses" the fantasy he has just pursued. The protagonist's inarticulateness seen in his "rain-drop-like" utterances in the "Sex Drive" entry is shared by the narrator's inability to verbalize the synesthetic representation of reality. Both Watanabe and the narrator possess a keen sense of sound and appreciation for the appearances of things in their dense uses of onomatopoeia (*giongo*) and descriptive expressions of manner (*gitaigo*). Those expressions, in turn, are imaged as unusual combinations of *kanji* characters so that they tend to signify, as though coincidentally, an unorthodox content. For example, "gota gota" (troubles) turns into " 語多語多" (words many, words many), enacting scenes of possible turmoil with those troublesome temptresses Watanabe fears (p.110). As though to represent Watanabe's inability to express his desire in words, dripping rain—"*shito shito*"—is heard in the narrator's report in

[10] Kurosawa Akira, et al., *Ikiru*, in *Zenshū Kurosawa Akira* (Iwanami Shoten, 1988), 180.

the form of *kanji*, "使途"(uses) and "使徒" (disciple) and, in the end of the novel, "死都 " (dead city).

The uses of those *kanji* also bespeak the unreliability of Watanabe's reality and the narrator's descriptions. Like Faust, whose solitary company is kept by the single and inadequate disciple Wagner, Watanabe has two inept pseudo-disciples. Kabashima, an incompetent entrepreneur, has an almost masochistic sense of the teacher-student relationship and the obnoxious former student Inumaru keeps appearing to interfere with Watanabe's tête-à-tête dinner with Yasuko, Ayumi, or both—in what turns out to be Watanabe's dreams. Since finding ways to "use" and expend all of his possessions in his lifetime is Watanabe's overt obsession, the appearance of the same kanji "*shi"* in both "uses" (*shito*) and "disciples" (*shito*) may ironically suggest that he has used up all his students from the past so that their number is decreasing like rolls of toilet paper. His students are now down to three and even they exist only in his delusions.

The two *kanji* for "disciples" apply specifically to biblical figures, suggesting Watanabe's fantasy about his relations with his former students, who are now nonexistent. Toward the end of the novel, the transcription of "*shito shito*," as "dead city," becomes dominant, moving the story toward the destruction of Tokyo in Watanabe's mind. This type of synesthesia is one of Tsutsui's means of stepping into a character's psyche as utilized in several of his novels. In his *Kazoku Hakkei* (Eight Family Landscapes, 1992), a socially indifferent abstract painter perceives people around him as geometric forms, a case of a "grapheme-color synesthete." Most, including his immediate family, turn into Kandinsky-like triangles and trapezoids in bright colors. Anyone who draws his interest turns into a dot, and, if he is erotically attracted, the dot expands into a white circle.[11] The idea of a perception of people as colorful geometrical shapes seems to have been further developed into the new scheme of turning sounds into visual characters in *Teki*.

The narrative fallacy of this novel consists in the trick of shifting words first into sounds and then into characters unrelated to the original words all the while recording Watanabe's fantasy as

[11] Tsutsui Yasutaka, *Kazoku hakkei* (Sinchōsha, 1975), 171-194.

though it were a real experience. In the entry entitled "Sake," Watanabe is seen watching a baseball game on the TV with Kabashima, who "has been summoned to join him as he often is when a game is on." After some discussion on the game, Kabashima says, "You can use another, can't you, Professor?" (206) and goes to the kitchen to fetch another bottle of beer. As Watanabe responds in thanks, the narrator continues in the same sentence, "while walking to the kitchen himself to get another bottle" (206). Taken by surprise by this last line, the reader realizes that Kabashima's presence and Watanabe's conversation with him while watching the TV exists only in Watanabe's delusion. The erasure of the borders between reality and fantasy seems to be a natural strategy for denying a memory that is overwhelmingly large and powerful.

The hyper-details in the narrator's reports serve to hide or erase Watanabe's childhood memories of the war, which Watanabe himself keeps out of his consciousness. Judging from the collection of facts reported in the entries, Watanabe belongs to the same generation as novelist Furui Yoshikichi (b. 1937-) and critic Hasumi Shigehiko (b. 1936-), the generation of Japanese who "cannot hear any kind of explosive sound without recalling bomb blasts on the streets during the war."[12] Watanabe may have spent his childhood running through air raids on his way to and from school, and sitting with neighbors in suffocating underground shelters. He may have lost members of his family in battles or because of air raids. After the war, he would have experienced starvation and seen injured soldiers, orphans, and beggars who filled the dark streets. But the narrator cleanly wipes away and covers over these dregs of Watanabe's memory.

Blog, War and the End of the World

Sporadic and inarticulate messages conveyed by the internet bring the story to an end with a seemingly final and total destruction of Tokyo, perhaps even all of Japan. Watanabe in his solitude comes upon a chat room, where a message about the coming of "the enemy" is suddenly announced and passed on. The messages multiply, each time repeating earlier ones, so that the

[12] Hasumi Shigehiko, *Zuisō* (Shinchōsha, 2010), 81.

body of fragmentary missives received by Watanabe becomes both heavily repetitive and voluminous. Some express fear of the unknown enemy and others suspect a hoax; although none contains information on the enemy, the sheer frequency accelerates the correspondents' anxiety to the point of panic, involving Watanabe in an illusion of a war. He is drawn into a battle as an army seemingly attacks the neighborhood. The barking of a black dog, recalling *Faust* and *Ikiru*, heightens not only the frantic confusion around his house but also the protagonist's sense of an approaching end. Eight refugees from the north, all of whom turn out to be the members of the chat room "Heart-Throbbing Promenade," run westward, the most dangerous direction according to the game's premise. Watanabe suddenly finds himself in a trench accompanied by his devotee Kabashima, his obnoxious student Inumaru, his only neighborhood friend Yushima, and his deceased wife, who comments on men's taste for war. When Inumaru dies by Watanabe's hand, his dead wife psychoanalyzes the killing stating that Inumaru, by virtue of appearing in Watanabe's dream (she is aware that it is a dream), represents Watanabe, and through his hatred of himself, he has killed his alter ego. Clearly, this is a case of "*Nicht-Ich*," and Watanabe enforces his denial of himself by justifying the murder as "only a dream" (265-6).

The discussion between the characters about the psychoanalytical cause of wars is simultaneously insightful and absurd. Watanabe's repressed memory of war breaks out, as it were, in the illusory war scene, bringing together the characters and moments that occupy the portions of his memory that he has allowed to exist. The scene also gives the novel a characteristically Tsutsui ending—fantastic, chaotic, and apocalyptic. The tricky narration prepares the reader to be subconsciously drawn into the battle scene imagined in the Internet chat room, allowing the reader to experience the war that Watanabe would have seen and now imagines. At the same time, the reader shares the protagonist's senescence, where memory, fantasy, and factual reality, along with the conscious and the subconscious, or the id,

the ego, and the superego all mingle in a hazy, layered world.[13] This image of the end of life is enforced in the entry called "Auditory Hallucinations," which densely lists fragments of dialogues: many repeat conversations from earlier entries while others seem to mix probable comments by Watanabe's wife with remarks made by others upon the death of Watanabe himself. Inserted among the fragmentary dialogues are the warning words about the coming of the enemy.

The apocalypse, however, is softened by an epilogue. The ruins after the battle change into the garden of the convent from the last scene of Edmond Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac* (1897), starring Watanabe with an artificial red nose. Having delivered the famous last lines, he regrets that, by uttering Rostand's words he has exposed his true feelings to Takatsukasa Yasuko, his Roxanne. On stage, he is surrounded and affectionately treated by Yushima, Kabashima, and Takatsukasa Yasuko as though he were about to die. He is applauded wildly by the audience, who seem to assume that this is his last performance. He awakens from his delusion to a gentle rain, which announces the approach of spring, and he looks forward to seeing Ayumi at the bar. If *Teki* can be called a work of "senescence literature" (*rōjin bungaku*), this would make an appropriately happy ending but its happiness may be illusory. Watanabe may or may not be awake, let alone be restored to his normal routine. He questions whether he is actually hearing the rain or imagining it. The sound the protagonist is not hearing, or the protagonist may no longer be there to hear, is being offered in the form of barely visible *kanji* characters for the reader's seeing and reading.

The Author-Reader Conspiracy

In addition to the narrator's overlay, a conspiracy between the author Tsutsui and the reader creates a superior semiological layer for the text. The entries that comprise the novel include ample information on Tsutsui's own likes, dislikes and habits. Typical Tsutsui readers are familiar with such information,

[13] Tsutsui's image of senescence as a psychoanalytical and semiological conglomeration of layers is echoed in his portrayal of death and afterworld in his novel *Heru* (Bungeishunjūsha, 2003).

consumed through the author's numerous works of fiction, plays, TV dramas, songs, essays, films, lectures, interviews, panel discussions, and, especially, blog in which he freely exposes his personal habits. Hollywood movie actors who appear in Watanabe's dreams (152) are those familiar in Tsutsui's film reviews and other writings, collected in *Furyō Shonen no Eigashi* (A Delinquent's History of Cinema, 1985). Works in literature, philosophy, psychoanalysis, etc., referred to in the novel are also familiar from references in his essays and autobiographical writings, later organized into a newspaper series and published as a book, *Hyōryū: Hon kara Hon e* (Drifting: From Book to Book, 2010). The accounts of his wife being a great beauty and collector of European haute couture have been trumpeted not only by him but also by his writer friends, becoming an established part of the Tsutsui myth. The inevitable connection between eating and sex in *Teki* recalls his short story, "Yakusai Hanten" (Herbal Cuisine Restaurant, 1987), in which 34 invented dishes with outrageous Chinese names trigger a scatological and sexual slapstick. The art of cooking and dining so suited to Watanabe's budget grace several entries in *Teki* reading like a fictionalized encyclopedia of Tsutsui's culinary life in his old age—a refined joke between the author and his reader.

Tsutsui is one of the first and dedicated practitioners in Japan of interactive cyber-communication with the readers. His *Asa no Gasupāru* (Gaspard of the Morning) was serialized in the *Asahi Shinbun* newspaper from October 8, 1991, to April 6, 1992, during which time readers were invited to submit comments on the Internet. Not only were some of their responses incorporated into the story of the ensuing installments, but also the readers themselves appeared as characters along with the author's own alter ego.[14] It was a reflexive metafiction in which writing, reading and marketing freely mingled. The author's notes and messages to

[14] For a full discussion of the making of this cyberfiction, see William O. Gardner, "Tsutsui Yasutaka and the Multimedia Performance of Authorship," in *Robot Ghosts and Wired Dreams: Japanese Science Fiction from Origins to Anime*, ed. Christopher Bolton, et al. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 84-91.

readers, to friends, and even to the publisher's staff invaded the narrative. Tsutsui himself is the super narrator who knows much more than either the protagonist or the narrator and eagerly shares his knowledge with the best of his readers, who, in turn, enjoy the repeated references to the familiar fragments of knowledge. In *Teki*, Tsutsui occasionally slips into the blog mode speaking directly to the reader. In the entry entitled "Savings," Tsutsui takes over the narrator's job and anticipates the readers' responses and speaking to them directly as though in a chat room, "You, readers, must be curious by now about the balance figures in the protagonist's savings" and lists Watanabe's former base salary, retirement pension, income from his lectures, and losses resulting from interest cuts (142). In certain aspects, his readership is very like the fandom of kabuki and Takarazuka reviews, which places great value on the person of the actor and the significance of every piece of costume or prop surrounding her/him. What distinguishes the community of Tsutsui's fans is an element of masochism: they thrive in the author's insults and abuses of them in his blog.

The rain drops in the end of the novel point to an episode in the author's career that is familiar to readers. The *kanji* characters that represent them are printed sparsely and in small letters, only up to eight *kanji* scattered in three lines per page so that the last eight pages of the book look nearly blank. (305-310, and Figure 1) Those pages are reminiscent of the ending of his metafictional novel, *Zanzō ni kuchibeni o* (Lipstick on the Lingering Image, 1989), in which the author deprives himself of a number of characters in each chapter until the novel ends with an "n," the last letter of the Japanese syllabary. The desolate ending of this novel is recalled by those nearly blank pages in *Teki*, suggesting the failure of story telling caused by a deprivation of words.

Tsutsui's traumatic fear of vanishing words peaked in 1993, when his early short story, "Mujin Keisatsu" (The Automated Police, 1965), that had been authorized by the Ministry of Education for inclusion in a high school textbook, had to be removed from its contents. The story introduces a robot policeman, programmed to scan human brains in order to prevent traffic offenses by pursuing any pedestrian who shows signs of

epileptic tendency, intoxication, or criminal intention." [15] The Japanese Association of Epilepsy found this uncomplimentary image of the disease prejudicial to its victims.[16] Intellectuals like Ōe Kenzaburō (1935-) as well as various groups representing the interests of victims of discrimination criticized Tsutsui for political incorrectness. Along with another post-war neo-*gesaku* novelist, or modern parodist, Inoue Hisashi (1934-2010), Tsutsui had fought against the publishers' politically correct rules that sought to eliminate certain words from print. He fought back by issuing a "Danpitsu Sengen" (A Declaration to Break the Pen) that accused the media of voluntary censorship thus depriving authors of their freedom of speech and creating a climate that belittled the signifying power of language. In the "Declaration" he says, "The number of words we are not allowed to use is rapidly increasing. Even the word 'prejudice' is being replaced by the euphemistic expression, 'human rights issue,' so that we can no longer even refer to prejudice as a topic of discussion."[17] He returned to fiction in 1997, willing to write only after his publisher signed a contract agreeing that under no circumstances would they censor his manuscripts. This marked a turning point in Tsutsui's career because he gained complete power over the major publishers who agreed to his rules. *Teki*, which belongs to his post-1997 experiments, explores and plays out a fear of the disappearance of words through the diminishment of Watanabe's words and worldly possessions as he approaches death. The synesthesia that represents the repression of protagonist and narrator points not only to an aged person's, but also to the author's fear of the loss of verbal powers.

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[15] Tsutsui, "Mujin keisatsu," in *Tsutsui Yasutaka Zenshū*, vol. 1 (Shinchōsha, 1983), 234.

[16] For discussion on the "Mujin keisatsu" incident and the ensuing "Danpitsu Sengen," see Gardner, "Tsutsui Yasutaka and the Multimedia Performance of Authorship," 92-95.

[17] Tsutsui, "Danpitsu sengen" (1993), in his *Shōkenrō yori no chōbō* (Shinchōsha, 1994), 431.

The Author's/ Character's Death and Beyond

When Kurosawa made *Ikiru*, he was forty-two, his six-foot tall body towering over his crew. Shimura Takashi (1905-1982), who played the protagonist, was forty-seven, a stocky man, who had drastically reduced his weight to fit in the role of the haggard protagonist. The fruit of their collaboration bespeaks their sophisticated and sympathetic understanding of the isolation of senescence: the film was a work of fiction and performance at an early stage of their glorious careers. Tsutsui's position at the time of the publication of *Teki* was closer to Goethe's. Although *Faust* was a culmination of his earlier writings, when Goethe presented the completed work, he was self-conscious about his age in relation to the literary trends of the day. The play opens with a "Dedication," in which the poet appeals to his audience:

> My tragic song will now be heard by strangers
> Whose very praise must cause my heart misgivings,
> And those to whom my song gave pleasure,
> If still they live, roam scattered everywhere. (Lines 21-24)

The aging poet finds himself speaking to an audience of an entirely unfamiliar generation. In spite of his expression of uncertainty and modesty, however, he is aware that he is creating something new to reach the future generations of Germans. In the "Prelude on the Stage," the Manager asks the Poet and the chief Actor, "now that we're here in Germany, / how well you think our enterprise will fare" (lines 35-6), and concludes, "What glitters, lives but for the moment; / what has real worth, survives for all posterity" (lines 73-4). Goethe's ambition is to create literature that is of "real worth" for the future of his nation. And yet, in terms of philosophy, aesthetics, and religion, *Faust* is not a straightforward drama. The protagonist is torn between erotic drive and ethical pursuit, rationality and faith, reality and ideal, thus complicating the work's signification.

Des McAnuff's production of Gounod's *Faust* by the Metropolitan Opera in its 2011-12 season was a successful rereading of Goethe within the framework of Gounod. The production immediately indicates its setting in the prelude, during which the aged Faust wanders between the dust-sheet-clad

scientific machinery of the now-dismantled Atomic Institute, while shadowy figures of the victims of Hiroshima pass through in the background. The entirety of the opera begins and ends within a few minutes in 1945, in which the Faust brings a glass of poison to his lips, speaks with Mephistopheles, and finally takes a sip of his poison and falls to the floor. Between these two moments, Mephistopheles sends Faust on an illusory journey through his life since World War I, during which time Faust is an atomic scientist and Margarete is a worker for a military factory. Through this staging, the piece departs from Gounod's romanticism without altering the libretto at all.

Anthony Tomwasini's review in *The New York Times* voices the taste of traditional Met fans by wishing that the production had not "look(ed) too deeply for elements of existential despair that are simply not in the piece."[18] This existential despair, indeed, is the core of both this new production and Goethe's original *Faust*. MacAnuff's interpretation brings Gounod's opera much closer to Goethe's modernity in the sense that it questions the authority of religion and history. Goethe's text renders itself well to psychoanalysis: the struggle of id and superego in Faust parallels a similar battle within Margarete except that her superego is a fundamentalist image of God. Faust, through his delusory sexual adventures, reaches a self-inflicted death, a rational conclusion to his life; while Margarete, through her real-life affair, pregnancy, and childbirth, ends in madness and illusory salvation. Gounod's opera ends as Mephistopheles leads Faust away from the prison cell that holds Margarete. In McAnuff's production, Faust returns to his study of the first scene and takes a sip of poison from the glass he was holding at Mephistopheles' first appearance, falling to the floor. Since the moment is played in silence, without the conventional song of the dying protagonist assuring the audience of her/his end, Faust's death is not a certainty. This change makes his entire experience with the Devil a delusion that assaults him at the moment of his death and, at the same time, a replay of the history of twentieth-century wars. The idea of a suicide in this production resonates with the plan

[18] Anthony Tomwasini, "This Faust Builds Atom Bombs (He Still Sings)," *The New York Times*, November 30, 2011.

Tsutsui's Watanabe makes to end his life at the age of 80, and, like McAnuff in his *Faust*, Tsutsui ambiguously indicates the protagonist's death. Both texts characteristically echo our time, when there is no visible hope for a goal or conclusion to be reached through an individual life.

In *Teki*, as in Goethe's *Faust* as interpreted by Breithaupt and McAnuff, the ego is open to conflicting struggles that are self-destructive. Like Faust, Watanabe plans at the outset to kill himself. Watanabe's fantasies and dreams expand his extremely limited life only up to that specific moment of death just as Faust's romantic venture liberates him from human limitations only to the point of his death. In either case, experience is both limitless and limited, real and unreal at the same time. The self is declared in reality only in the will to commit suicide. Toward the end of *Teki*, the war on the blog becomes increasingly unreal and threateningly real simultaneously, and this scene functions like Faust's journey into history, myth, and the magic land of Part II. In the last part of Tsutsui's novel and in Part II of *Faust*, the individual is blurred and eventually erased in an overwhelming world of war and magic. Tsutsui's last pages, sparsely marked with tiny raindrops of *kanji*, suggest Watanabe's death, the end of language, and the end of the human world, where self, ego, and even id no longer matter.

Teki can be seen as the author's demonstration of his dying self. The association of himself with the protagonist of the novel, discussed earlier, is enforced in the photograph of himself posing as Watanabe on the dust jacket of the paperback edition of the book: his salt-and-pepper hair parted in an old-fashioned style and a heavy mustache hanging over his mouth, seated against a shoji door. (Figure 2) After his return to fiction writing in 1997, Tsutsui abandoned the dark glasses and forehead covering bangs that had been his trademarks. Having reentered the business as a popular fiction writer, he presented a new self: no longer a rebellious young artist but a powerful master writer—clad in a stylish kimono and sporting a mustache. Tsutsui's current image is not very different from that of Watanabe portrayed on the dust jacket photograph for the book. The cover design places the photograph on the ground amidst dead leaves, a classical Japanese metaphor for old and forgotten pieces of writing. While the ending of the story within *Teki* announces the coming of spring, the late

autumn scene in the photograph on the dust jacket may suggest that much time has passed. Like a dead leaf, Watanabe is gone and forgotten. This seems to be Tsutsui's ironic image of his own end as a novelist.

In reality, Tsutsui the writer continues to flourish in 2012—his Rabelaisian scatology, nonsensical slapstick, and loud condemnation of dominant opinion all intact. Looking back, we might credit *Teki* for its precursory insight into the Japanese worldview of the 21st century. Its "real worth" is the advance warning the novel conveys on a total destruction of the Japanese language and denial of self that comes with it. The loss of language has become a conspicuous theme among Japan's public. The shock of the Eastern Japan disaster of March 11, 2011 was far more acute than the bursting of the economic bubble in 1990. The horror of the events and sadness of the victims were so overwhelming that they were deprived of words to report the scene or express feelings. Ambiguous arguments and explanations surrounding the cause and effect of the nuclear leakage from electric generators resulted in a general distrust of what was being said by the government, the electric company, and the media.

To recover a trust in words and offer solace to the victims of the disaster, the Internet *Asahi Shinbun* recently posted "Kotonoha 311" consisting of a group of individual poetry readings. The paper chose twelve poets, including aged ones such as Tsujii Takashi (84), Ishimure Michiko (84), Tanikawa Shuntaro (80), Takahashi Mutsuo (74) and Yoshimasu Gozo (73) perhaps for their position of being able to place these devastating events in the context of their personal experience as well as the history of modern Japan. We cannot fail to note their evocation of the loss of words. Takahashi opened his reading with the line, "Words, they were the first to be destroyed."[19] Yoshimasu, placing himself in a desolate landscape of an estuary of ice-filled Ishikari River in Hokkaido, read a poem that enacted the destruction of words. The poem's bilingual title, "Shi no Katawara (Côté) de" (On the Side [Côté] of Poetry), itself invites multiple reading. Surrounding the repeated line, "…from afar faintly/ true voice is heard," disjointed

[19] "Shinsai kara saiseisuru kotoba," the *Asahi Shinbun*, February 22, 2012.

words are strung together chiefly by audio or visual association. "White waves" inspires "white monkeys" by the kanji "shiro" and "Alice" invites "Iris" by the sound "a," and followed by "akauma" (a red house), of which the *kanji* "aka" invites a connection to the place name "Akagi." This is the name of a mountain known for the legend of a gigantic flood that carried part of it to a distant region to form a new mountain there. The name of "Rikuzen Takata," the city ravaged by the tsunami, conjures up, by the sound, the word "tekizen" (in the face of the enemy), which is conventionally followed by "jōriku" (landing), laying an image of the most intense moment in a battle over the landscape of a tsunami-devastated city. The poem is studded with the sound of "u!"—variously written in *kanji*, *katakana*, and *hiragana*, suggesting the hesitating utterance of "uh" as well as painful or joyful cry of "Ooh!" One of the *kanji* used for the "u!" is "usagi" (rabbit) suggesting, in the connection with "red horse" in the preceding line, the word "sekitoba" (horse called Red Rabbit), the famously fast horse in China's history and historical fiction. The poem, enigmatically disjointed and fragmented, conjures up the images of overwhelming waves, floods, fires, and people fleeing, wishing as they run for a faster method of escape, all within Japan's geography, mythology, and history—including that of World War II. The poem thus enacts our century's crisis of "Ich," in which the unspeakable in our memory and history is about to overwhelm words' will to signify. At the same time, the flashes of images and fragments of sounds in the poem demonstrate the struggle of language to overcome destructive forces to communicate. Something of a collective "Ich" seems to rise here. Yoshimasu is not any younger than Tsutsui, but this poem places him in the "posterity" of Tsutsui's novel. It is a poetic post-3/11 version, and a more productive one, of Tsutsui's sparse rain drops in *Teki*. Here, Tsutsui's post-bubble fear of vanishing words has materialized as a real-life phenomenon, and Tsutsui's repressed rain drops are successfully vocalized in Yoshimasu's grunts, sighs, and shouts, encouraging the involved reading attempted in the above.

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