

**FOREWORD** **Tatsumi Battles the  
Pink Punk Cadillac Samurai  
Robot Cat in Space for  
Control of the Japonoid  
Reality Studio**

***'Cause it's hard to say what's real.***

**—The Flaming Lips, “One More Robot/Sympathy  
3000–21,” on *Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots***

**Buckle Up!**

Greetings fellow Japonoids!<sup>1</sup>

As Chief Design Consultant and Systems Analyst for Team Takayuki<sup>2</sup> for over a decade, I've been asked to say a few prefatory remarks about the remarkable journey you'll be taking in just a few pages when you board *Full Metal Apache*, the brilliant, paradigm-smashing study by Japan's hippest literary critic and cultural commentator, Takayuki Tatsumi.<sup>3</sup> Since this is almost certainly going to seem (at least initially) like a pretty wild, high-speed ride over unfamiliar, aesthetically “difficult” cultural terrain, I will focus on providing information about *Apache*'s background and evolution so that readers can make the adjustments necessary to avoid the sense of cultural vertigo, disassociation, info-overload, and other symptoms of dis-orientation.

Incidentally, don't be alarmed by that loud *boom* most of you heard just now—that was just the sound of *Full Metal Apache* breaking through the multicultural equivalent of the sound barrier somewhere over the Pacific as it headed eastward toward our shores.<sup>4</sup> That vir-

tual roar officially confirms that the fastest rising star from the land of the rising sun — my good friend and long-time collaborator, Takayuki Tatsumi — is finally about to make his long-overdue major label debut in America.<sup>5</sup> Clad in black leather and mirrorshades, and accompanied by his wife and cultural navigator, Mari Kotani (a.k.a. the “Queen of Heroic Fantasy”),<sup>6</sup> Tatsumi has been moving in our direction at breakneck speed along the recently completed system of global informational highways connecting East and West that has finally allowed cultural traffic to move freely in both directions.

Fully aware of how easy it is for even major critical studies to get lost amidst the profusion of (mostly forgettable) postmodernist titles being generated by America’s corporate-style university press system, Tatsumi and the entire crew of Team Takayuki have made every effort to ensure that his arrival here is a memorable one by having him roll into our neck of the woods *not* in one of those cramped, boxy, fuel-efficient literary vehicles usually associated with Japan<sup>7</sup> but instead in *Full Metal Apache* — which is to say, in the critical equivalent of a custom-built, souped-up Hummer stretch limo.

And, as is true of a Hummer, there’s a great deal more to *Full Metal Apache* than mere ostentatious display or aggressive iconography — there’s extra “leg room,” for example, to allow Tatsumi’s restless Japonoid imagination to roam around in, plenty of textual “space” to allow him to comfortably put on the many critical hats he likes to don for special cultural occasions (sample hat insignias: *I’m a hyper-queer cyborg feminist — and proud of it! Caution: deconstruction work ahead; I’m a creative masochist — go ahead and hit me!*; and *I was a teenage Japonoid!*).<sup>8</sup>

There’s even plenty of room inside *Apache*’s custom-made framework to accommodate the enormous, unruly multicultural crowd of radically innovative writers and artists from both sides of the Pacific who have been hand-picked by Tatsumi to accompany him on *Apache*’s joy-ride into the exotic, previously uncharted regions of Japonoid culture. And it’s an eclectic array of passengers indeed (think *Sgt. Pepper*’s album cover): fiction writers and poets, folklorists and filmmakers, architects and anime artists, graphic designers and graphic novelists, playwrights, musicians and manga creators, copywriters (as people who write ad copy for television ads are known in Japan), performance artists, and many others working in as yet unclassifiable mixed genre forms. But for all their heterogeneity of background, culture, formal interests, and genre, these passengers do share certain com-

monalities — an extremity of artistic vision, for example, that typically finds expression in the sorts of disruptive, transgressive stylistic practices formerly associated with the western avant-garde,<sup>9</sup> and a mutual urge to counter the orientalist and occidentalist stereotypes and assumptions by openly and exuberantly appropriating materials drawn freely from East and West from sources both high and low — and then remixing them into new, hopefully liberating combinations.

Moreover, *Apache*'s cast-of-thousands include not only contemporary Japanoid writers and artists, but earlier figures, including several whose careers stretch back to the nineteenth century when Japanese and western cultures first began to interact with one another after Japan's long, 250-year, self-imposed period of isolation.<sup>10</sup> Tatsumi has thoughtfully seated these figures in the first-class compartment next to contemporary Japanoids with whom they share affinities. A few examples of *Apache*'s seating chart will illustrate the sorts of odd juxtapositions that result from this multicultural intermingling:

- Edgar Allan Poe (the subject of Tatsumi's Ph.D. dissertation at Cornell) is seated next to Hungarian composer, Béla Bartók, who in turn is positioned next to the renowned Japanese playwright Shuji Terayama, who in 1977 staged in downtown Tokyo what Tatsumi describes as “a phantasmagoric hyperkitsch musical” entitled *The Miraculous Mandarin*, which incorporated his adaptations of Bartók's 1919 ballet *The Miraculous Mandarin* and Poe's story “The Man That Was Used Up.”
- Japanese folklorist Kunio Yanagita (best known in Japan for his enormously popular compilation of Japanese folktales, *Tono Monogatari* [*The Legends of Tono*] 1910) is paired up with Lafcadio Hearn, who had westernized many of these folktales even before Yanagita had been able to compile them.
- Avant-pop author Masahiko Shimada and Paul Auster are seated in a replica of the same Chinese restaurant in Manhattan they used as settings in their novels; joining them is the darling of post-World War II Japanese literary experimentalism, Kobo Abe.
- Japanese emperor Hirohito, General Douglas McArthur, and American presidents Thomas Jefferson and Bill Clinton are seated at the crowded guests-of-honor table, joined by Shozo Numa (author of the legendary Japanese meganovel, *Yapoo the Human Cattle*); Italian opera superstar Puccini; filmmakers Ridley Scott, D. W. Griffith, Tim Burton, and Kiyoshi Kurosawa; American authors

John Luther Long (whose 1898 novel *Madame Butterfly* inspired the Puccini opera), Michael Crichton, Philip K. Dick, Steve Erickson, and Washington Irving; and Japanese avant-playwrights, Yoji Sakate and Hideki Noda.

Finally in keeping with postmodernist collapse of genre boundaries and its blurring of any distinction between art and criticism, Tatsumi has made sure there's ample room for the entire staff of Team Takayuki, whose ranks include nearly all the usual American and European suspects, as well as several Japanese theorists.

While readers may be able to recognize some of these critics and a few of the older figures with established reputations, nearly all of the Japanoid writers and artists (including the Americans) appearing in *Full Metal Apache* are likely to be almost completely unfamiliar to most Americans. Indeed, one of the things that makes it such a landmark work in the fields of postmodern culture generally, and Japanology in particular, is the way Tatsumi's individual commentaries and exhaustive citations of bibliographical information combine to form the first reliable cognitive map of the Japanoid culture that has been thriving and mutating ever since its emergence during the late 1980s.

Of course, it goes without saying that a vehicle carrying a cultural load this "heavy" requires plenty of power—not just intellectual horsepower (though the crew of critics and theorists Takayuki has on board ensures there's plenty of that) but enough electrical juice to power up the satellite dish, CD and DVD players, the laptops and electronic notebooks, and miscellaneous other writing machines that function as a nonstop interface between the protocoybogs Takayuki and Mari and the Japanoid cultural world of the hyperreal. Fueled by a new, high-octane gas that is just one of many practical applications of Tatsumi's discovery of the untapped energy potential contained in "junk" (a key trope throughout *Apache*) and "chaos," *Apache's* difference engine features Tatsumi's revolutionary paradigm (gear)-shift mechanism, which replaces the outmoded "o(rientalist)/o(ccidental)" paradigm, whose basic design flaws became increasingly apparent when they resulted in a series of spectacular critical "flameouts," thus littering the cultural highways with useless (and hazardous) skeleton frames of burned-out critical vehicles. In developing this new paradigm (gear) shift mechanism for use in *Apache*, Tatsumi based his design on two mutually supporting principles that emerged out of the turbulent wake of the rise of hyperconsumerist capitalism

in the 1980s, whose logic required an acceleration in the amount of cultural data being exchanged globally, and thus produced an ever tighter feedback loop of mutual borrowings and other forms of cultural interaction exchange between Japan and the West. In *Apache*'s concluding chapter, Tatsumi describes the two components of this paradigm shift as follows:

1. Since the 1970s Japan's own excessive occidentalism has sometimes gone so far as to simulate the most canonical discourse of western orientalism. However, in Japanese postmodern literature, the logic of imitation has been replaced by one of "synchronicity" between American and Japanese works. It is the logic of hypercapitalism that requires us to throw away our bullshit ideas about causal relationship and to be confronted with the multinational synchronicity between "literature" and "paraliterature."
2. The 1980s saw another revolutionary paradigm shift. For the first time since John Luther Long's novel *Madame Butterfly* (1898), Anglo-American writers, through their own logic of mimicry, imitated and reappropriated "Japanesque" images, that is images that at once draw on and distort Japanese culture. At the same time their Japanese counterparts came to realize that writing subversive fiction in the wake of cyberpunk meant gaining an insight into the radically science-fictional "Japan." Thus, the significance of "Japonism" at the fin de siècle is precisely repeated and radically modified by the rise of what we would like to designate "neo-Japonism" around the new turn of the century ("Waiting for Godzilla").

As is also true of a Hummer, *Apache* is a literary vehicle designed to do much more than languidly cruise around the cultural Mainstreets before picking up the kids from soccer practice. To the contrary, it has been constructed so that it's operating at its most ferocious efficiency while crashing through the outdated roadblocks and detours erected years ago by orientalists and occidentalists and then heading "off road" along the confusing trails of historical, economic, political, and cultural circumstances leading into the heart of the heart of the Japanoid desert of the real.

Of course, all vehicles, no matter how superbly designed, have their limitations. Even a greatly expanded, retrofitted Hummer, for instance, is only as good as the person behind the wheel. Fortunately, in the case of Takayuki Tatsumi, you've got an experienced driver with a "track record" so impressive that it has made him . . .

## Big in Japan . . .

xvi

There may be other Japanese scholars with more established reputations, or who have been around longer, but there is probably no other figure that has had a greater impact on the postmodern literary and cultural scene in Japan than Takayuki Tatsumi. Currently a professor of American literature at Tokyo's prestigious Keio University, Tatsumi (b. 1955) received his Ph.D. at Cornell in 1987, where he studied with such theory luminaries as Jonathan Culler (who chaired his thesis on Edgar Allan Poe), Cynthia Chase, Henry Louis Gates Jr., Gayatri Spivak, Mark Seltzer, and (probably the figure having the greatest long-term impact) gay, black American SF innovator and theorist Samuel R. Delany. Upon his return to Japan, Tatsumi immediately established himself as a major player within Japan's vital American studies community, when his very first book-length critical study, *Cyberpunk America*, was selected as the recipient of the 1988 Japanese-American Friendship Award. Part meticulously researched historical overview, part highly personal (and often playful) commentary, and part theory-driven critical study, *Cyberpunk America's* eclectic methodology and its focus on art existing on the margins of the avant-garde and pop culture (particularly SF), established the template Tatsumi would be using in the barrage of critical texts he would publish during the next dozen years. In this veritable tsunami of publications, which includes everything from academic essays, interviews, reviews, dialogues (highly popular in Japan), translations, anthologies, manifestos, and commentaries, up through (at last count) sixteen major book-length critical studies, Tatsumi draws upon insights from nearly all the leading critical methodologies—Jamesonian and Baudrillardian Marxism, the semiotic approaches of Barthes, Foucault's cultural archeology, feminism and postfeminism (especially Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto," whose influence is everywhere apparent in *Full Metal Apache*), queer theory, Said's orientalism and other postcolonialist approaches, new historicist, and miscellaneous theorizations of postmodern literary production such as "paraliterature" (Samuel R. Delany), "slipstream" (Bruce Sterling), "posthumanism" (Katherine Hayles), and "avant-pop" (Larry McCaffery)—to explore the entire range of postmodern literary and cultural production.

This flurry of activity has gained for Tatsumi not only the attention and respect of his academic peers, but a level of popular recognition

that rivals that of some of the literary celebrities he writes about; just as important, the steady stream of publication in Japan's leading newspapers and magazines, not to mention the personal contacts he has developed with writers and other artists from both sides of the Pacific, has thrust him into a prominent position of influence within the Japanese publishing scene, which increasingly began to rely on his insights and recommendations concerning what works should be translated and published, and which trends were worthy of being introduced and promoted in Japan.

xvii

### **Why Tatsumi Was Born to Run**

Even the sketchiest outline of Tatsumi's personal and educational background reveals the degree to which the multicultural perspectives he relies on throughout *Full Metal Apache* have always been less a theoretical abstraction than simply part of his daily reality matrix. Tatsumi grew up as the only son in a privileged, intellectually sophisticated family environment headed by his father, Tatsumi Toyohiko, a distinguished professor of British literature whose academic specialty was the work of Cardinal Newman. Both his father and his mother had likewise been raised in families that had been deeply influenced by western culture—and for which the importance of travel and the value of being educated abroad were simply givens.

Such values were reinforced by anecdotes Takayuki was told as a child by his great-aunt, Wataruko Kawase (1900–2003), about the fabulous voyage she had taken as a young woman of twenty when she departed from Yokohama as part of the second wave of foreign travel undertaken by Japanese artists, educators, and intellectuals just after World War I; sailing through the Suez Canal, she arrived in England, where she studied literature at University College of London. The indelible nature of the impact that her stay abroad would have on her life was evident not so much by the degree she returned with, nor by her impressive command of written and spoken English, which she spoke utterly fluently with a slight British accent still evident when I met her seventy-five years later, but by her deep understanding and appreciation for western culture.

### **Creative Masochism**

By the time Tatsumi entered high school in the late sixties, he had blossomed into a bookish youth already displaying features of his father's

intellectual rigor and appreciation for the monuments of western high culture. But he was also developing a prodigious appetite for rock music, jazz, American TV shows, cheap paperback genre novels, and other western pop forms that initially began trickling into Japan during the American occupation after the War and whose flow by the late sixties had reached the flood stage. As was the case with so many other members of this generation, the source of Tatsumi's fascination with western pop culture was considerably more complex than the obvious enjoyment of consuming the exotic other (though this was certainly involved). True, American subculture was appealing to Japanese youths from this period due to its novelty, its exoticism, and of course its ready availability; but equally important was the way it provided a kind of masochistic thrill of willing subordination to a dominant other.

The masochistic streak runs very deep within Japanese culture, and its real sources lay not in the reactions to events following World War II but in several deeper factors ranging from childrearing practices and rigid gender relations, to a sense of national identity containing several radically opposed components—that is, hyperinflated egotism and sense of racial and cultural superiority *and* equally pervasive sense of abjection, cultural inferiority, and insecurity<sup>11</sup>—whose irreconcilability lead to maladjustment. But as has been perhaps most memorably depicted in Tanizaki's novels, however we locate its sources, the masochist nature of the Japanese relationship to western culture has been evident throughout the twentieth century. At any rate, the impact these masochist impulses have had on contemporary Japanese culture recurs throughout *Full Metal Apache*, often via Tatsumi's optimistic concept of "creative masochism."

Irrespective of whatever psychosexual appeal it might have, the growing appetite on the part of Japanese youth for western pop was also clearly rooted in more immediate circumstances. Its conspicuous consumption became a means for this post-postwar generation of proto-Japanoid youths to signify their break from the past and to establish their own identity—a newer, hipper, hybrid identity freed from the old-fashioned occidentalist attitudes and values of their parents. This consumption also became an expression of the spirit of renewal and change that was brewing within a Japanese youth eager to connect up with the sense of rebellious cultural energy and radical utopianism that was becoming so visible in the West during the sixties.



Meanwhile, Tatsumi's deepening fascination with western pop forms began to manifest itself in more personal, creative ways. An accomplished piano player, trained since childhood to play western classical music, Tatsumi began to jam with several other jazz aficionados, and by the time he was in college he was playing keyboard for a jazz band whose repertoire included the Beatles, R & B, western classical, and jazz fusion.

### **Portrait of the Japanoid Critic as a Young Cyborgian Otaku**

But it was another distinctly American form of pop culture—that is, SF—that was to have the most decisive long-term impact on Tatsumi.<sup>12</sup> Although the impact of technological change on Japan had been of central concern to pre-World War II Japanese writers and artists from Soseki to Ozu, the American brand of SF that had been emerging in the United States—first as the pulpy space opera forms of Doc Smith and Buck Rogers in the thirties and later as the more sober, speculative forms that rose to ascendancy under editor John Campbell—had never been practiced in Japan. This began to change during the late forties and early fifties, when the thousands of cheap SF paperbacks left behind by American servicemen began to circulate among Japanese youths via the black markets operating in Tokyo and other major cities. The rise of SF to prominence was given an enormous boost in the late fifties with the release of several classic Japanese SF films, including *Mothra* and especially the camp classic *Godzilla*, whose portrayal of a radiation-spawned monster wreaking havoc on the streets of Tokyo tapped into the deeper societal fears on both sides of the Pacific (so much so that *Godzilla* remains the most recognized Japanese cultural artifact ever imported to America). By the late sixties when Tatsumi first began reading widely in SF, Japanese SF was beginning to mature, and Tatsumi was able to find a sense of personal and intellectual connection with the legions of similarly geeky, disaffected youths who comprised the active and vital community of Japanese fandom.<sup>13</sup>

This early immersion in SF was something Tatsumi would draw upon later when he began exploring postmodern culture more systematically.<sup>14</sup> By the mid-eighties when he was studying at Cornell, Tatsumi was also attending numerous American SF conventions, including several that helped launch the cyberpunk movement. Rec-

ognizing that cyberpunk authors shared a number of important thematic concerns and formal impulses with postmodernist authors such as Burroughs, Pynchon, and DeLillo, Tatsumi attended the 1986 SFRA Conference held in San Diego that featured a number of panels dealing with cyberpunk. It turned out that the director of that conference was someone who shared Tatsumi's conviction that American SF had not only recently emerged as a major literary form, but that in many ways the cyberpunk movement in particular could be seen as representing a kind of apotheosis of postmodernism. The director also gave Tatsumi an early draft of the entry he was writing about contemporary American fiction for *The Columbia Literary History of the U.S.*, an essay entitled "The Fictions of the Present" that used the opening lines from Gibson's *Neuromancer* ("The sky above the port was the color of a television tuned to a dead channel") and whose central thesis was that only SF and quasi-SF authors were dealing with the most crucial aspect of contemporary American life—that is, the growing impact of technological change on the lives and imaginations of ordinary Americans. Two years later, Tatsumi devoted the concluding chapter of *Cyberpunk America* to this conference director—which is how I came to be one of the first Americans to join Team Takayuki.

### **Two Side-Trips Conclude this Prefatory Detour**

Just as even the most elaborately retrofitted Hummers have their limitations, so, too, do introductory critical analogies that rely on them. The truth is that no automobile analogy, no matter how rich and ingeniously worked out is capable of accurately modeling a critical sensibility as complex and richly nuanced as Tatsumi's, or of adequately suggesting what readers are going to encounter once they take off with Tatsumi in *Apache*. I will therefore now turn off the ignition to my Hummer analogy, leaving the car motif to recede, like an image in a rearview mirror, and conclude my preface with two brief side trips—after which: you're on your own. Sayonara!

#### ***Prefatory Side Trip No. 1: A Selection of Haiku and Poetry Inspired by Full Metal Apache***

The postmodern pond  
 A "frog" jumps in  
 The "sound" of the "water."  
 The silkscreen door slams

Mari's kimono  
Waves.  
On the young shoots of the leaves  
appearing on the computer screen  
A spider's web lies suspended  
The World Wide Web.  
To what shall I compare  
this so-called "real world"?  
To the white wake behind  
A rocket ship that has roared away  
At dawn!  
The cries of the sim-insects  
are buried in the coded roots of  
the sparse pampas grass program—  
The end of humanity's autumn is in  
The millions-of-colors prints of the last leaves.  
To bird and butterfly  
it is unknown, this "flower" here:  
the autumn sky above the port  
The color of a television  
tuned to a dead channel.<sup>15</sup>

xxi

*Prefatory Side Trip No. 2: Final Coda: It's all over now . . .*

*Take what you have gathered from coincidence . . .*

—Bob Dylan, "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue"

Takayuki begins most of his individual discussions by citing purely random coincidences, and I will conclude my foreword in a similar manner by asking readers to consider the curious set of synchronicities involved in the U.S. publication of a book about Japanoid culture that has a concluding chapter whose humorously ominous title—"Waiting for Godzilla"—raises expectations that seem to be directly answered by the simultaneous arrival on our shores of an actual Godzilla, the great Japanese slugger Hideki Matsui; this new, appropriately Japanoid incarnation of Godzilla then proceeds to once again take center stage in a large metropolis, amidst thousands of screaming citizens, who react to his appearance not in the clichéd, panic-stricken manner we expect from the orientalist paradigm but in the typical Japanoid three-step process: appreciation, appropriation, remixing.

I'm not sure what conclusions Tatsumi would draw from this im-

probable set of coincidences, but I suggest that it provides another demonstration of the validity of the highly unorthodox, argument-from-random-coincidences methodology Tatsumi employs throughout *Full Metal Apache*. More fundamentally, it also literalizes Tatsumi's underlying point that as far as Americans are concerned, the waiting is finally over. Japanoid culture isn't threatening to arrive, it's already here. Japanoids are not creatures spawned from the orientalist paradigm representing the exotic other who are adept mimics capable of imitating us. Japanoids are people just like me. Japanoids are our next-door neighbors. Japanoids are our closest friends, our wives, our children.

Indeed, as Tatsumi convincingly argues throughout this marvelous, eye-opening study, Japanoids are already . . . you.

*Larry McCaffery*