

Sex Every Afternoon: Pink Film and the Body of Pornographic Cinema in Japan

by

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For S.K.

Don't let it bring you down.
It's only castles burning.

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Introduction

Upon Entering the Pink Movie Theater

The subject who speaks here must admit one thing: he loves entering a Pink movie theater. Finding myself again outside on the soiled and half-lit Shinjuku streets (somehow I always go to adult movies late in the afternoon, or at night), stiffly exiting some café, I walk in silence (I do not care much to talk before seeing a film); I am limp, a little nervous, jacket open, sweating: I am awake.¹

The entrances to Pink cinemas are like strange archaeological gateways, hidden among the glass and concrete of constantly remodeled stores and eateries and industrially overshadowed by the carpet and chrome of the pristine mini-theaters and large multi-screen, studio-branded complexes that dominate commercial film viewing in Japan today. Neon-colored Pink cinema banners struggle to project expiring claims to class and prestige in the face of a gentrifying society, flaunting district titles and expired studio affiliations with a sense of authority that recalls the first run cinemas and second run art houses of the Golden Age of film. Shinjuku International Repertory Cinema; Cinema Roman Ikebukuro; Umeda Nikkatsu; Ueno Okura Theater; Asakusa World Hall.²

The entrances to these crumbling buildings are announced with photocopied schedules and hand-drawn banners that suggest a nostalgic counterpoint to the mass manufactured publicity materials adorning contemporary multiplexes. Signs scrawled in brightly colored paint quietly call to the street with stereotypically eroticized film titles: *The Widow in Mourning Dress: I Want It; Ripe Teacher: Soaking Wet Panties; The Housewife That Went Crazy for Young Men.*³ In the hallways and lobbies, posters—evicted years ago from their temporary homes on building walls and telephone poles due to complaints from concerned citizens and changes in city regulations—advertise past and current porn heroines and heroes from inside glass cases that are washed only by the flicker of dying fluorescent lamps.

As I take my first steps into that surreal illumination, I am very conscious of my own visibility. A pedestrian might notice, snickering at the cliché film titles as he continues on his way to a more reputable matinee. The odd tourist, in a self-conscious performance of half-feigned surprise, may find an excuse to take photographs of the theater's oddly antiquated marquee. A young couple exiting the pachinko parlor on the other side of the street, broke and exhausted from hours of unsuccessful gambling, could have a laugh at my expense: "He's not really going in there, is he?" However, most passersby will simply look the other way and slip into the cityscape without revealing any expression of recognition or interest.

The entrance to the Pink theater is hidden in plain sight, but it is increasingly hard to envision. Its seductive power is rapidly diminishing in urban neighborhoods and city suburbs where triple-feature public cinema screenings are little more than a figment of the imagination to all but those who remember how to imagine. The gaudy entrances to this odd world are strangely invisible, and customers entering those spaces are typically ignored by the eyes of the city. On

long afternoons I would search the streets and strain my eyes to find these secret theaters, hoping for a brief glimpse into the lingering effects of a dying film culture.

This project is an exploration of the worlds of production, representation, and exhibition in the rapidly collapsing industry of Japanese soft-core adult (“Pink”) cinema. It is an attempt to theorize, from the ground up, the spaces and meanings of contemporary adult cinema from the 1980s to the mid-2010s, in a region where cheap 35mm sex film production and public porn screenings have almost outlived the home video revolution. Blending production studies, historiographical research, and formal analysis, I have looked for ways to describe how Pink Films and their audiences struggled to locate themselves as parts of an industry, a discourse, and a mode of spectatorship during what are perhaps the final decades of their existence.

The bulk of my research took place on the floors and in the lobbies of different adult theaters in Japan. As such, my journey began and ended with people. Introduced via colleagues in academic and independent Japanese Film Studies, I eventually spent many late nights with staff and cast members who had worked on films for Shintocho, Kokuei, Xces, and Okura Pictures, the central production and distribution studios active at the time. Fleeting professional acquaintances grew into lasting personal relationships, and after countless hours talking with directors, screenwriters, actors, and producers, facilitated by conversations that were likely inspired as much by my own misunderstanding of the Pink Film format as my acquaintances’ difficulty in explaining it, I was eventually invited to observe the production of a number of Pink Films, from the brainstorming and writing stage, to filming, and post-production audio dubbing.⁴ I appeared on screen in six titles and in sound only in one other, and I translated English language subtitles for two films.⁵ In addition to my off-set relationships with Pink Film creators and fans, this fieldwork became the basis of my effort to theorize the contemporary Pink Film

through an active and physical engagement in the cinematic experience, an approach that is still sorely underrepresented in scholarly studies of media, Japanese film, and pornography.

My research was initially predicated on the belief that these cheap porno movies deserve historical recognition and some of the critical attention they beg for. Beginning in the early 1960s, Pink has existed as a commercial industry for more than 50 years. Like any other established film industry, it has explored a wide variety of subjects, genres, and levels of quality. In recent years, dozens of Pink titles (out of thousands made—many of which are no longer extant) have entered into the ranks of global cult cinema via international film festivals and boutique DVD label releases. The movies of Pink auteurs like Wakamatsu Kōji, Adachi Masao, Zeze Takahisa, and Satō Hisayasu have attracted the attention of scholars and journalists with their historically resonant stories and incisive political commentary. Pink's exaggerated reputation as a training ground for mainstream Japanese film directors is one of the reasons it continues to gain a limited amount of critical attention today.

Still, the bulk of Pink Film history is overlooked by the viewers and scholars alike. In global terms, the audience for Pink Film is larger than it has ever been, but the Pink canon remains small and frozen in amber. Auteurist works are given priority while average titles are brushed aside, despite the ability of even the most pedestrian and disposable of films to reveal moments of narrative or visual eloquence to attentive viewers. While a number of Pink Film scholars and critics in recent years have engaged the industry directly from a variety of methodological approaches and produced valuable historiographical and theoretical analyses of Pink Film, access to materials and resources is difficult to obtain from overseas. Newer English language writing on Pink Film struggles to engage the incredible diversity of production, while more historically detailed writing in Japan avoids the inherent contradictions of pornographic

film exhibition. In the reality of this aging industry, in the lived world of the Pink cinemas where the films of Wakamatsu and auteur-oriented production studio Kokuei are at best an anomaly, where in a month of viewing you might see three Nitta Sakae films and not a single Satō Hisayasu title, the films are little more than a sideshow.

Despite the gaudy posters and glaring film titles, Pink cinemas that I regularly visited consistently reneged on their promises for a distracting and relieving erotic moving image fantasy. As I entered these theaters, I would quickly realize (or remember—when one’s eyes are on the text, it is easy to forget the context) that the picture is corrupted and the sound is little more than a dull rumble. When I sat down, my attention drifted. The films’ settings were contrived, the characters were barely developed, and the narratives were almost negligible. Secondary identification with character positions was moot. At their worst, Pink cinemas provided a space to enjoy a tentative and temporary cinematic sleep where I could share the dreams of professional perverts. At their best, these spaces taught me to accept the fragile isolation of the public cinematic spectacle, an abstract elegy for the organic flicker of 35mm celluloid film. I struggled to maintain my focus on the bland screen images before me. I often wondered: why am I here? Sometimes I did not look at the screen at all, and as my experience grew I began to wonder how the Pink world spread open an opportunity to imagine what *not* watching film could mean for film and pornography studies.

With increasingly limited means, and to dwindling audiences, these venues embody the changing and elusive nature of cinematic exhibition. Viewers in these spaces gaze not at the screen, but beyond to an imaginary world where—as a young Ikejima Yutaka was once warned by his parents, decades before he emerged as the last international spokesperson for Pink cinema in the mid-2000s—movie theaters were considered mysterious, exciting, and potentially

dangerous places.⁶ While Ikejima was one of the few Pink directors I did occasionally run into at the adult cinema, his half-joking statement at the 2009 Pink Taishō awards ceremony reflected comments from many other Pink professionals I spoke to who actively discouraged me from entering the specialty theaters that screened the films they made. Directors, actors, and producers warned me of the dangers of watching a Pink Film in a Pink theater. My colleagues in Japanese film and media studies did the same. The idea of visiting an adult cinema, even for research, was often treated as if it was a joke, or worse, a threat to artistic prestige and to my own (and my associates') academic reputation.

One of the most compelling warnings I received was from an established and well-published scholar and curator of radical Japanese cinema. When I invited him to join me to see a mutual acquaintance's feature film play at an adult cinema in Tokyo, he relayed a story about how he was sexually assaulted at a Pink cinema years ago. Still suffering the burden of that trauma, he vowed to never return. Other friends and colleagues, both male and female, Japanese and foreign, relayed stories of harassment and unwanted physical contact. When I raised these stories with Pink production staff and cast members, they did not contest them; only rarely did they comment on them at all. Responses to my initial requests for information from Pink professionals commonly included a statement that I began to regard as a kind of stock catchphrase: "If you need to watch my movies, I'll give you a video copy. Just don't go to the theater." For a time I heeded those warnings, and for the preliminary part of my research I visited Pink cinemas only a handful of times, and only while accompanied by friends. Occasionally I would be invited to pre-release screenings at the film lab, encouraged to enjoy the feature in a silent and professional environment, surrounded by the cast and crew of the feature I was watching. I recall those films clearly, but I have dim memories of the venues I saw them in.⁷

When I returned to Japan to directly pursue research on Pink Film several years later, I decided to ignore the warnings completely. For roughly the last year and a half of my research, I attended screenings in thirty adult cinemas in Japan; roughly half of the theaters that were still active in the nation at the time. Over several trips between 2009 and 2013, I entered and exited Pink cinemas at least 130 times, and for the vast majority of those visits stayed for one full cycle of the multiple-feature program. It did not take long to realize that, with a few notable exceptions (such as the cramped Sekai Kessaku Gekijō, or World Masterpiece Theater, a 500 yen single-feature cinema in Ueno where I was immediately surrounded, cornered, and groped both times I entered it), my informants' warnings were greatly exaggerated.

Those warnings did leave one valuable impression on the development of this dissertation project—the lesson that it is indeed not safe to watch films at a Pink cinema. I should clarify that I do not mean to endorse the narrative that adult cinemas necessarily put spectators at physical risk; rather that they introduce viewers to a different kind of film world, one with different rules and completely different social boundaries, where the status of the filmic object is uncertain. In the Pink cinema, one must always be careful, aware, patient, and on guard. I began to suspect that my acquaintances' warnings were intended to keep viewers focused on their work as it played on the screen (ideally a video screen), and isolate them from the carnivalesque, contrarian, and often chaotic environment of the cinemas that these films were raised to live in.

I visited mainstream commercial and art cinemas in Japan scores of times during my research as well. Contemporary film spectatorship in Japan (as in any other region dominated by transnational film industries) has rules. Customers purchase one ticket for one person for one film. You enter before the single-feature begins, and you exit when it is over. Ideally, you do not move or speak. Barring the biological imperative to visit to the restroom, you do not stand up or

leave your seat. You do not sleep. You sit in silence and watch. When it is over, you struggle to understand what you have seen, and perhaps a day or two later you share the story with friends to convince them to also see (or avoid) the film. In this model, film becomes an information delivery device. The screen addresses “you”. This you pays attention, it reacts to what it has seen, and it waits patiently in its seat until the credits end and the lights come up. These were the rules of film viewing that I, a self-professed cinephile and film researcher, followed closely until I eventually learned how to enter an adult cinema in Japan.

Pink Film spectatorship has different rules. Those rules are usually posted on letter-sized sheets of papers by the theater entrance, occasionally emphasized by cheap photo frames. Sometimes they are projected on the screen in slides or short public service announcements between each cycle of the program. The rules typically state that customers must not engage in obscene behavior or steal other spectators’ belongings. Some state outright that cross-dressing is not allowed. Don’t grope; go to the lobby if you want to smoke; be careful with matches. If you commit an obscene act, the police will certainly be informed. Yet, perhaps by virtue of their superficially ceremonial enunciation, these rules are easily, constantly, and almost ritualistically broken. In practice, the adult cinema in Japan operates according to unspoken laws that are much more complex than these instructions for social interaction, and are accordingly much harder to ignore.

The law of the Pink cinema insists that screen space is almost completely negligible, but social space is not. Everybody in the auditorium must be totally active, aware, and physically, *tangibly* present. Viewers are free to try to watch the movie, if they are so inclined, if they dare, and if they are lucky enough to be undisturbed. However they must always be ready to respond to the call of the physical world around them. Time is negotiable: films are shown in double,

triple, or quadruple features with no designated entrance or exit time. Customers may enter whenever they choose, and leave whenever they like. The start of the show is at 10 or 11 a.m., when the metal shutters are raised and the theater opens for the day. The end of the show is eleven or twelve hours later (or for all-night programs, 5 a.m. the next morning), when the same shutters are locked. Some attendees stay for hours at a time, but on any given day probably no single patron will remain for the full day's program.

The laws of spectatorship in this world reverse the conventional practices of public film viewing—one film, one seat, one person, one identification. In the Pink cinema, identity is forfeited at the box office. The ticket price is a kind of bribe, or a declaration of independence: “I am not who I am outside.” The stairway up to the second floor or down into the basement is a portal into an alternate space. Subjectivity is released, not to be replaced by screen illusions, actors' performances, or other cinematic distractions, but to be deconstructed, reformed, multiplied, and then performed live in the seats, by the so-called viewers, on the auditorium floor, in the lobby and smoking lounges, and in the restrooms. The film is a prop, the auditorium is the *mise en scène*, and everyone present is an extra.

Usually located in a dark alley or hidden between imposing multi-story buildings, the Pink cinema is cut off from the flow of traffic and culture on the streets. It is an unprotected and endangered space, where imaginary viewing subjects can come to rest and reflect. In a very real sense, the adult movie theater in Japan exists in a space somewhere between a museum of film history and a public sperm bank, preserving and displaying a moving image material on the verge of collapse to audiences that follow an alternative and nearly forgotten set of codes and rules about film spectatorship. It offers a viewing experience that exaggerates the contrasts between disinterested ambivalence and absolute attention, between social escape and immediate

(and immediately forgettable) fraternal activity. It is the site of a unique kind of translation, projecting simulated images of the most intimate and the most imitated human experiences through an obvious moving image artifice, and channeling the spectator through a material, audio-visual portal from one set of social norms and expectations into another. As long as the stuttering 35mm projector can maintain the right focus and luminescence, the flickering light and shadow of the screen camouflages the irreversibly aged ornamentation of the theater and turns the content of the film print into abstraction. As I visited these theaters in a series of concentrated bursts between the late 2000s and the early 2010s, the atmosphere often reminded me of a cinematic condition described in a text that I had been introduced to years ago during my early graduate coursework—Roland Barthes' 1975 essay "Upon Leaving the Movie Theater."

The language of Barthes' ode to the cinema is both obscuring and revealing, much like the representational strategies of adult film itself. Piercing the shadowy space of the theater with the same anecdotal lyricism he used to describe a tentative, imaginary Japan in *Empire of Signs*, Barthes describes a pre-hypnotic condition that the spectator enters into before and after arriving at his seat and gazing upon the screen. The sloth, idleness, and sleepiness Barthes observes illustrates a viewing practice that vastly contradicts the conditions of cinema-going today, where the impulse to *see* a movie fits more closely the exception he wrote of; the empty quest for a film that is "chosen, sought, desired."

Like a metonymy become real, the darkness of the theater is foreshadowed by a "crepuscular reverie," (preliminary to hypnosis, according to Freud and Breuer) which precedes this darkness and draws the subject, from street to street, from poster to poster, to abandon himself into an anonymous, indifferent cube of darkness where the festival of affects which is called a film will take place.⁸

The rainbow metaphors of Barthes' essay reveal more than a glimpse of an erotic subtext. The darkness of the cinema, in Barthes' evaluation, is the "color of a very diffuse eroticism."⁹ It

is marked with an unceremonious condensation of human relaxation; with a bodily idleness that “best characterizes [the] modern ... eroticism of a large city.” (Not, as he specifies, that of advertisements or strip joints.¹⁰) Upon leaving the movie theater, Barthes describes a theatrical world where the importance of film narrative and spectacle was diminished in the face of a much stronger urge toward the hypnosis of the dark space of the theater itself. “When I say cinema, I can’t help think ‘theater’ more than ‘film.’”¹¹

In order to recover the pleasure (if not the text) of the viewing experience, Barthes ultimately doubles the spectator’s consciousness into two bodies—a narcissistic body that is fascinated with the image itself, and a perverse body that fetishizes “precisely that which exceeds” the image. Could there be, he concluded, “the possibility of deriving pleasure from discretion?”¹² With his caveats to the ordinary movie theater, the eroticism of the dark cinema space, and even cruising, it is not difficult to imagine myself crossing paths with Barthes, as he drowsily leaves the Pink movie theater that I find my perverse, caffeinated body entering. I imagine no greeting or acknowledgement when we pass at this fictional moment; only a muted mutual recognition and a shared fascination with the amorous distances of cinema.¹³

During my on-site research for this project, my most familiar research location was the aforementioned Shinjuku Kokusai Meigaza (Shinjuku International Repertory Cinema). Located only steps away from the south exit of Shinjuku Station, the Kokusai Meigaza was the last Tokyo-based first-run venue for adult film features produced by the legendary Shintocho company. Despite being hidden in the basement of an aging two-screen building where it attracted few customers, it was a remarkable space, with a large screen and cavernous auditorium.¹⁴ At the time of writing, Shintocho has not produced a new Pink Film on celluloid in years, and the Kokusai Meigaza screened its final triple feature on September 9, 2012. As with

most of the theaters I will discuss in the following pages, this journey must be conducted partly in memoriam.

After inserting 1,800 yen into the ticket vending machine at the entrance (approximately U.S. \$20 at the time—an average price for Pink triple features and single features at mainstream theaters), and after handing my stub to the exhausted employee at the counter, I would walk down the dusty stairs, past lobby walls sweating with decades of grime and tobacco smoke stains, and search for a seat in the stale atmosphere of the dilapidated theater. I visited the Kokusai Meigaza dozens of times, enough to retain a mental image of the seat layout. I always had a few preferable places in mind.

Choosing a spot in a venue like the Kokusai Meigaza required a certain attention to the details of the auditorium floor itself. Despite a spacious hall with over 150 seats, the rows were marked with damaged or completely destroyed seats that were no longer fit to support the weight of an adult viewer. Empty beer cans, cigarette butts, puddles of urine or other fluids, and discarded tissues marked areas utilized earlier in the day. The dim audio from the failing sound system invited one to sit in one of the few usable spots close to the screen, but for the rare viewer who entered primarily to watch the films, the unspoken rules of the Pink theater and the silent gazes of other viewers encouraged discretion in finding a more isolated position. For the pure film spectator, the only safe choices were aisle seats at the edge of empty rows, with a shopping bag or jacket placed on the adjacent spot to discourage uninvited companions. While the wide spacing of the rows presumably made it easy to isolate oneself from overly friendly neighbors (by the scars on the concrete floor of the Kokusai Meigaza, this seems to be an adjustment made well after the theater's opening decades ago, before its transition to a Pink specialty venue), it also facilitated another kind of spectatorship in the space of the movie theater.

More experienced and more willing visitors would choose a central seat, perhaps one in the middle of a row, or even at the center of the floor. Those desiring spectators carefully picked a vantage point that left enough distance between themselves, the screen, and the other viewers to monitor the three dimensions of auditorium space. The regulars were accustomed to moving at a moment's notice. When a whispered conversation began on the floor of the theater, they would silently locate and stare in the direction of the voices, in hopes of uncovering a spectacle more engaging than the banal narratives of sexual experimentation flashing limply on the screen. The common result of these spoken or unspoken negotiations on the theater floor was the usual kind of sexual activity we have come to expect between patrons at an adult movie theater, from exposure and displays of masturbation to heavy petting and blowjobs.

Occasionally, customers would sit right in the middle of the front row, presenting themselves to the audience in the reflected light of the screen, waiting for a companion to join. If an opportunity for live entertainment presented itself elsewhere in the room, they would twist around, away from the flicker of the screen, and look over the backs of their seats to scan through the rows for eye contact. If some activity did begin, the voyeurs nonchalantly rose and repositioned themselves to a nearby seat, gaining a medium close-up view of the action, turned away from the screen, all but ignoring the films that superficially provided their excuse to enter the theater. Once this primary scene reached climax, the spectators immediately and just as casually dispersed, migrating to another seat or exiting the auditorium through the nearest side door, shunning the film being projected, mid-reel and often mid-scene. Sitting in one of my regular spots near the rear of this auditorium often meant gazing directly at the shadowy, backlit faces of other curious 'viewers' who were either engaged in or scanning for post-filmic sexual action.

Just as in mainstream film, most Pink narratives are strung together with an implausible and forced continuity of binary sex acts and opportunities, performed by heteronormative gender identities that appear ridiculously oversimplified in comparison to the activities practiced by the human bodies that watch, wait, search, or sleep adjacent to the image. As an almost exclusively soft-core pornographic format, Pink Films typically do not include footage of pro-filmic sex acts; almost none of the sex that occurs in the Pink frame is real. Pink narratives perform a kind of cinematic drag, reflecting the lifestyles and desires of the Japanese audience only through a highly mediated and blatantly obvious play with the artifice of filmic representation and identity. To borrow Judith Butler's description of gender in the context of drag, the imaginary sex acts performed in Pink Film are similarly a "kind of imitation for which there is no original."¹⁵

The disconnection between audience and screen in Pink theaters is not merely in the fact that viewers are enacting sexual fantasies that are rarely approximated in the big moving picture running in the background. It is also in the reality of widespread disinterest in the films to begin with, and in the rigidly sexed demographic of the Pink Film audience. While most Pink cinemas feature films about heterosexual relations between men and women, the viewers interacting with each other in the theater seats are almost always male. Whatever gaze, address, or call the film projects at its spectators, it is not reflected in any direct way. This distinction makes it very difficult—much more so than canonical studies of pornographic film would indicate—to casually justify a formal reading of Pink that attempts to find meaning in film texts that is abstracted from their social and spatial reception contexts.

It is exactly the prospect of exploring this continuity error that I found compelling as I began this project. Is it still possible to establish a metaphorical eye-line match between actor, camera, screen, and spectator? The seeming contradiction of Pink Film non-spectatorship

suggests an uphill battle in elucidating the positions of the small minority of viewers who (at least initially) like myself ignored the warnings of friends and colleagues and entered the cinema to watch the films. It also suggests fundamental questions about the practice of film and pornographic moving image studies. What do we see when we watch a film; how do we know what we are seeing? Even if we look into the reflected light on the screen, do we see something representational, something abstract, or something else entirely?

It is difficult to describe the many paradoxes of Pink cinema. I am convinced now that the role of the filmic text in the adult cinema is, at best, tenuous. Yet, when viewed from a safe distance (the position of most scholarly analyses of adult cinema, and of Japanese film) the pornographic film text appears to hold a mesmerizing, nearly inescapable control over consumers. I am tempted—I am in fact trained—to assume that moving images of semi-naked bodies on a screen do in some way capture or reflect the desires and gazes of viewers, the economic interests of distributors, and even the complaints of those who protest such films from afar. Sexualized identification (if not identification with a specific character or characters of one gender or another, with the presumably human eroticism or movement of a film's content) is unquestioned. And with the proper timing and circumstances, physical sexual satisfaction is supposedly guaranteed. Adult film and video is defined as it is contested—as a form of “masturbatory” media. The mythology of pornography depends on the unchallenged assumption that its lure is undeniable; that the absolute function of sexually explicit films is to elicit a nearly tangible, tactile spectatorial engagement that exceeds the address of the apparatus of more mainstream industrial or commercial cinemas. The address that pornography offers is not a call, but a touch.

In its basest, most basic sense, the adult moving image is a story of forbidden love between the human viewer and the screen. I feel obliged to remain committed to this romance, however fleeting it may be, and to the ideal that textual, cultural, and industrial analysis of cinema cannot exist without the belief that movie stories, characters, and settings *matter*. I must believe that this love exists, and I must have faith in the idea that, somehow, the movies might someday acknowledge and return my affection. However, this project has radically challenged my assumptions about what kinds of pleasures movies and viewers are able to offer to each other.

The scene of adult cinema in the scholarly imagination too often becomes a melodrama not of representation, but merely of presentation; pornographic texts are treated as immediate and knowable.¹⁶ Despite its low cultural position, and despite the great amount of sensitivity (or reluctance) shown when discussing sexually explicit or implicit moving images in an academic context, pornographic film is treated as an exalted format that embodies and mythologizes a kind of pure or total cinema. It strives to prove the ultimate success of a one hundred year tradition of cinematic representation that stretches back to the Lumières' *The Arrival of the Train at La Ciotat* (*L'Arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat*, 1895).¹⁷ Yet, the primal scene of physical-cinematic identification is as difficult to explain as it is impossible to forget.

In 1991, two years after publishing her groundbreaking analysis of pornographic film and video *Hard Core*, Linda Williams drew from Carol Clover's idea of the body genre (in which "horror and pornography are the only two genres specifically devoted to the arousal of bodily sensation"¹⁸) to emphasize the particular excesses of filmic spectacle and indexicality in pornographic representation and to explore the "system and structure" of body genre sensation and "its effect on the bodies of spectators."¹⁹ Williams' characterization of pornography as a low

body genre depends on the hypothesis that the pornographic image (like the melodramatic or the horrific) elicits a unique kind of physical response in viewers; essentially, that the body of the film text is connected to the body of the spectator, and that the spectator, voluntarily or involuntarily, physically responds in concert with the images on screen.

Rather, what may especially mark these body genres as low is the perception that the body of the spectator is caught up in an almost involuntary mimicry of the emotion or sensation of the body on the screen along with the fact that the body displayed is female...

In the body genres I am isolating here, however, it seems to be the case that the success of these genres is often measured by the degree to which the audience sensation mimics what is seen on the screen. Whether this mimicry is exact, e.g., whether the spectator at the porn film actually orgasms, whether the spectator at the horror film actually shudders in fear, whether the spectator of the melodrama actually dissolves in tears, the success of these genres seems a self-evident matter of measuring bodily response.²⁰

I find Williams' analysis of these body genres to be stunning; her close analyses of genre and pornography were one important catalyst for my own entrance into pornography studies.

However, her description leaves many standing generalizations about porn unchallenged. She reminds us that pornographic texts are "texts to which some people might be inclined to "jerk off"; that critics have noted that performers "actually do the acts depicted in the film."²¹

Williams reifies the beliefs that the filmic text is a trigger for spectators' *physical* pleasures, and that pornographic moving image photography presents real acts in a way that is exceptional and somehow more direct or compelling than other forms of live action cinema.

In *Hard Core* as well, Williams' analysis develops from an initial definition that film pornography is "the visual (and sometimes aural) representation of living, moving bodies engaged in explicit, usually unfaked, sexual acts with a primary intent of arousing viewers."²²

Williams complicates this description through analyses of the ontological operations of pornographic images in film (and ultimately other moving image media as well), but I have

always been haunted by this and subsequent porn studies' descriptions of a verifiable connection between the eroticized moving images of body genres and the physical human body. Williams suggests that "as a heterosexual woman" it would be presumptuous for her "to interpret pornographic texts aimed primarily at men"; that she cannot map lesbian and gay pornography as genres because they "do not address me personally."²³ These caveats too rely on an assumption that viewers have identifiable and stable subject positions that bind them to certain kinds of narrative and representational content.

The Pink industry creates an environment that complicates and contradicts such claims in spectacular ways. It forces viewers to measure their discrete pleasures and emphasizes the distances between camera and screen, screen to spectator, and between the spectators themselves. The screen remains a world of representation, of distance, of uncanny disinterest; the theater, however, becomes tangible, physical, and erotic.

Pink Filmic representations do not stimulate the viewers; other viewers do. The viewers do not "jerk" themselves off in time with the film image and audio for their own pleasure; they jerk as a display, or as an invitation to be jerked off by other viewers. The intercourse on screen is always faked. In the small handful of Pink Film cases where actual intercourse was reportedly shot live on-camera, penetration and genital contact is unrecorded and unverifiable on the release print.²⁴ In cinemas displaying heterosexual porn stories to audiences of heterosexual men who are there to have sex with other straight or queer men, there is no simple way to trace gender positions from screen representation to spectator performance. In the Pink cinema, the romantic narrative of bodily contact between screen and viewer is unrealistic and virtually unreal.

Re-reading these passages after watching hundreds of Pink Film prints in Japanese adult theaters, I realize that my research has lead me to confront another kind of cinematic fetish or

perversion—that of cinematic realism or verisimilitude, or simply of believing what one sees. I remain unconvinced by the notion that genres such as pornography (if that is indeed a genre) or horror should be privileged over other moving image content for a hyperbolic connection to the physical body. All film performs a kind of practical function on (or with) the human body; sitting, looking, and listening are physical processes in themselves. A film image can flash light into eyes and it can shake eardrums. And yet the moving image has no mass; it cannot touch the body. The moving image cannot simply interpellate viewers on the basis of their gender. Highlighting certain genres' abilities to address the human body based on representational and narrative content sets up a hierarchy of film and video style that would be extremely difficult to demonstrate on the floor of an adult cinema. Viewers of pornographic cinema exist—we can observe them, we can talk to them, we can slap their probing fingers from our buttocks—but we cannot presume to know their deepest desires. It is unclear if we even understand our own.

Aside from the rapidly shrinking number of producers and creators, and an equally negligible number of devoted fans, humans typically do not watch Pink Films for any kind of direct identification or physical/sexual release. Spectator positions in Pink cinemas are temporal, temporary, and technological; not human, not social, not 'real' in any physical or historical sense. The Pink Film's most devoted viewer is itself. In the context of this pornographic film culture, the "body" of the body genre is no more than the celluloid material of the film print. The human body is an entirely separate entity, with its own unique (and essentially non-cinematic) habits and desires. To force an understanding of pornographic cinema through metaphors of the viewers' human bodies is to misinterpret the materials, histories, and the theoretical possibilities of pornographic film. In opposition to a theory of engagement with pornographic film, I argue

that the only release Pink cinema customers receive from the filmic image is a release from the call of the apparatus itself.

This argument depends largely on the social and industrial characteristics of the Pink Film industry. In Japan as elsewhere, pornography's well-sustained reputation as a special kind of moving image has become particularly apparent in the video era. Now mostly abstracted from public movie houses, reflective screens, and even the material of film itself, pornographic media exists as a diverse variety of moving image content defined almost exclusively by its narrative and representational features. Adult film's global exit from the cinema has precipitated an even more elaborate rationalization for its stability as a genre and for the strength of its effects on lived experience and living human bodies. Moving swiftly and transcendently through the devices and digital screens that we now live in, the pornographic image demands mental attention and physical response. In the age of smartphones and touch screens, it is now possible to establish some kind of tactile relationship with the screen (even if the image itself is ultimately elusive).

Despite moving image media's continuing global migration from material to signals and data—television, home video, streaming websites, even video projection—Pink Film always was produced and distributed primarily as a theatrical format, shot on 35mm film, and displayed in the physical and social spaces of adult cinemas scattered across the Japanese islands. At a time when the moving image is increasingly abstracted from lived reality, Pink Films matter even more. They radically complicate theories of screen interaction and identification. They highlight not the stability, but the fragility of pornographic and all moving image representation.

The rich and contradictory operations of this cinematic form will not be revealed in an attempt to reconcile an imaginary pro-filmic world with the tactile negotiations happening in

parallel on the theater floor. Nor will it be salvaged in industrial histories that endorse spurious claims to the format's specificity. While attempting to navigate both of these points, I will instead strive to frame the contradictory ways in which Pink articulates its own mediation. "Like a metonymy become real," as Barthes wrote, the Pink Film and Pink theater allow a transformed social and spectacular world where the actions of screen and spectator alike theorize the industry's conception while simultaneously eulogizing its decline. Pink Film is a medium that mythologizes the primal scene of its creation and theorizes its own reproductive energies, discursively reconstructing itself through its constant encounters with uncooperative and disrespectful audiences, and continually asserting its existence through meta-narrative cycles of courtship, lust, and post-coital regret with competing image technologies.²⁵

Thus, the goal of this project is to interrogate the epistemology, the performance, and the reality of Pink Film in its three most prominent spaces—as a film production culture, as a cinematic text or representation, and as a spectatorial activity. Pink Film destabilizes the seemingly obvious notion that film (and especially adult film) is something that must be watched, can be immediately understood, and intimately connects to human pleasure.

In chapter one, I will provide a brief historiographical critique of the specificity of Pink Film, and of how it was reified as a film genre through multiple critical publications in the early years of home video. In chapter two, I enter the location of Pink filming and examine the work of veteran pornographic set photographer, Tsuda Ichirō, as a basis for a theory of the material limits of representation in Pink Film photography. In chapter three I explore the increasingly reflexive content of Pink Films of the late 1980s and early 1990s, when video technology began to merge into the adult film industry. In chapter four, I return to the cinema to navigate the uncertain

spaces of the adult film auditorium and consider the differences between the experience of the Pink cinema and representations of that space in Pink Films.

This project is a critique of the representational space of Japanese adult film as a moving image medium. It is also a reevaluation of the influence that viewers and scholars impart on body genres, and of the representational slippage that occurs between pro-filmic bodies and their representations as they negotiate the boundaries between hard reality and the soft screen.

This is how I often entered the Pink movie theater. But how do we leave it?

¹ Written with respect to Barthes, “Upon Leaving the Movie Theater.”

² Shinjuku Kokusai Meigaza; Shine Roman Ikebukuro; Umeda Nikkatsu; Ueno Ōkura Gekijō; Asakusa Sekaikan.

³ *Mofuku no Mibōjin: Hoshii No* (dir. Watanabe Mamoru, 2008); *Uregoro Kyōshi: Nuresugita Panti* (a.k.a. *Teacher in Heat: Full Exposure Pervert* [*Hatsujō Kyōshi: Sukebe Marudashi*], dir. Nitta Sakae, 1996); *Wakai Otoko ni Kurutta Hitozuma* (a.k.a. *Masturbation and Lesbian: Young Wife Crying in Agony* [*Onanii & Rezu: Modakenaku Hitozuma*], a.k.a. *Super Hard Core!! Housewife Real Masturbation* [*Gekinama!! Hitozuma Honki Onanii*] dir. Nitta Sakae, 1995)

⁴ Unfortunately, I was unable to view any editing sessions first hand. I had hoped to correct that gap with additional research, but now that the Pink industry no longer shoots on 35mm film stock, that opportunity may have passed.

⁵ I performed in scripted roles in *A Fabulous One-Sided Love* (*Suteki na Kataomoi*, dir. Moryama Shigeo, 2006) and *The Wife who Became a Beast* (*Kemono ni Natta Hitozuma*, dir. Satō Osamu, 2008). I appeared as an extra in a prominent sections of Aizome Kyōko’s retirement film *Slave Ship* (*Doreisen*, dir. Kaneda Satoshi, 2008) and *A Me-Colored Kiss* (*Boku-iro no Kuchizuke*, dir. Tanaka Yasufumi, 2013). I was a minor extra in *Molester Train: Secret Clam Fingering Technique* (*Chikan Densha: Hikai Itazura Shigi*, dir. Moriyama Shigeo, 2006) and *Lewd Family: Melting and Wet* (*Sukimono Kakei: Torokete Nururu*, dir. Moriyama Shigeo, 2008). I also had a small voice-only part in *Lost (Sister) Confession: Shyly Trembling* (*Sōshitsu [Imōto] Kokuhaku: Hajirai no Furue*, dir. Yoshiyuki Yumi, 2010).

Unfortunately, none of these gave me an opportunity to perform any *karami*, or simulated sex scenes. Late in my research I was invited by director Hamano Sachi to act, with sex scenes, in a film she was preparing to shoot, but due to a communication error (apparently Hamano and her filmmaking partner Yamazaki Kuninori had difficulty emailing the schedule and details to me), it did not happen. The two films I subtitled for international distribution are *Bitter Sweet* (*Bitā Suiito*, a.k.a. *Concentrated Adultery: Taken Woman* [*Nōkō Furin: Torareta Onna*], dir. Meike Mitsuru, 2004) and *Sex Machine: An Obscene Season* (*Sekkusu Mashiin: Hiwai na Kisetu*, dir. Tajiri Yūji, 2005).

⁶ Ikejima Yutaka, presentation at the *Pink Taishō* awards ceremony, Teatoru Shinjuku, Tokyo, June 20, 2009.

⁷ Two individuals who guided me on these early trips to see Pink Films, at the Pink cinema and at the Toei film laboratory, were Japanese film scholar Sharon Hayashi and film researcher Jasper Sharp. At the time, Hayashi was continuing her incisive research on Japanese film and media and Sharp was preparing his manuscript on Japanese adult cinema, *Behind the Pink Curtain*. I recall their kind invitation to join them in 2004 to see Meike Mitsuru’s excellent Kokuei Studios film *Bitter Sweet* at the Shinjuku Kokusai Meigaza—a film in which Hayashi herself appears as an extra. I arrived at the theater entrance late, barely in time for the screening, and was sternly informed that I almost ruined the trip. The movie only played a few times a day in a limited run as part of the rotating triple-feature schedule—a system that I was not yet accustomed to. Their anger at my tardiness was justified. Meike’s film, with a deadpan dramatic approach that evoked 1970s Cassavetes and an oddly rhythmical pacing of flashes between the 35mm present and 8mm flashbacks, unlocked my appreciation for contemporary

Pink Film and inspired me to explore new research and eventually meet and know the figures in and behind the screen. I will forever be grateful to Hayashi and Sharp for their invitations to enter the Pink movie theater. I will also forever wonder how the experience would have changed if we had entered the auditorium late or stayed to enjoy the complete triple feature.

⁸ Barthes, "Upon Leaving the Movie Theater," 1.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., 2.

¹¹ Ibid., 1.

¹² Ibid., 4.

¹³ While I respect Barthes' writings, I am also conscious of his curious approach to Japan, and of the legacy of other distant observers in Japanese film and media studies. This project raises unwieldy concerns about spectatorship, identity, and national cinema culture. It questions the intentions/positionalities/identities of Japanese Pink Films, adult cinemas, pornographic film producers, and porn film viewers. It also questions my own identities, as a student, a spectator, and a momentary participant in the Pink Film industry. Japan became an imaginary or theoretical point of reference in Barthes' writing; an object of discourse and analysis, just as film or art was. In my own writing, I do not wish to reduce the national context itself to an abstraction. I also do not aspire to objectify, mystify, or de-mystify an image of Japan. I can only definitively claim my own research, theories, and experiences. I will remain conscious of one central question: Who are the subjects of this narrative?

¹⁴ The even larger second floor theater, the Shinjuku Kokusai Gekijō or Shinjuku International Theater, specialized in films by Xces, a different Pink Film production company with ties to the once-dominant Nikkatsu Studios' line of Roman Porno adult films.

¹⁵ Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," 313.

¹⁶ The discourse of pornography's media effects and affects is slowly facing increasing scrutiny. The inaugural double-issue of Routledge's controversial new journal *Porn Studies* (2014) includes no fewer than three essays that deal directly with this topic; Susanna Paasonen's "Between Meaning and Mattering: On Affect and Porn Studies", Brian McNair's "Rethinking the Effects Paradigm in Porn Studies", and Kath Albury's "Porn and Sex Education, Porn as Sex Education."

¹⁷ Martin Loiperdinger's "Lumiere's *Arrival of the Train: Cinema's Founding Myth*" provides a fascinating reevaluation of the story of the effects that Lumiere's film had on viewers in 1895.

¹⁸ Clover, "Her Body, Himself," 189.

¹⁹ Williams, "Film Bodies," 3.

²⁰ Ibid., 4-5.

²¹ Ibid., 5-6.

²² Williams, *Hard Core*, 30. As we shall see, this definition is untenable for soft-core adult film formats such as the Pink Film.

²³ Ibid., 6-7.

²⁴ One example of a Pink Film that was filmed with live sex acts on the set is director Imaoka Shinji's 2004 film *Lunch Box* (*Tamamono* a.k.a. *Mature Woman in Heat: Ball Sucking [Jukujo Hatsujō Tama Shaburi]*).

²⁵ Barthes, "Upon Leaving the Movie Theater," 1.

Chapter 1

History: Legends of the Pink Margin

The theatrical soft-core pornographic film industry of Japan is perhaps one of the most unusual commercial film production systems in the world. The industry formed in the early 1960s as a form of low-budget, adult oriented, and semi-independent film production that filled theaters as television spread and mainstream movie attendance declined. Identified in public discourse with a term coined by journalist Murai Minoru in 1963,¹ these Pink Films (*pinku eiga*) still linger on the screens of dozens of Japan's darkest, dungiest movie theaters today.

Until recently, the Pink industry was capable of producing scores or hundreds of new productions a year. Only a short time after Pink Film's inauguration, mushrooming independent production companies produced an output nearly overwhelming the number of releases from the major studios.² For half a century, this prolific industry has managed to supply a wide variety of genres and stories that rival and in some ways surpass the diversity of mainstream Japanese films in domestic release: anything from melodramatic period films to psychedelic neo-horror stories, lighthearted comedies about the day to day life of businessmen in the capital, feverish tales of sadism and sexual power, and even the kinds of politically or visually experimental offerings that tempt the desires of international film festivals.

Despite the industry's status as a crucial cog in the machinery of postwar Japanese moving image culture, Pink Films are often misidentified, hidden, or spoken of with an air of uncertainty. Either too obscene or too banal for wide recognition, the films are watched fleetingly; celebrated by fans but disregarded by serious film criticism. While paraded as a 50-year old bastion of studio-style filmmaking, as a training ground for generations of budding auteurs, and as one of the last ways to see films on celluloid film, Pink movies have always been cheap and ephemeral. They are created specifically to be shown in cinemas that are unmaintained and poorly attended by meager, aging male audiences. Even among fans and producers, Pink specialty cinemas are routinely dismissed as male cruising spots (*hattenba*)—a characterization that, despite its near-universal applicability at Japanese adult cinemas, is usually redacted from historical accounts and filmic representations (especially representations *within* Pink Film and adult video narratives) of the same adult cinemas.³ Indeed these unusual adult movies, so often defined by critics and scholars for their essentially cinematic context and politically controversial content, are generally ignored in their native exhibition context by the spectators who pay to see them. Pink Film is not a respected format; even with its core audiences it engenders a kind of blatant disrespect, if not outright ignorance; a lack of attention to the textual and contextual details of Pink and adult film's place in the world.

However, regardless of its status from the point of view of many Western film historiographies as an even more underground or independent cinema within the non-Hollywood, 'alternative' national cinema of Japan, Pink Film never has difficulty attracting overseas viewers. In fact Pink Film's history in Europe and the United States goes back almost to the birth of the industry. As early as 1965, Wakamatsu Kōji's *Secrets Within Walls* (*Kabe no Naka no Himegoto*, 1965) introduced the Japanese sex film to a wide foreign audience as a questionably

authorized submission from Japan at the 15th Berlin International Film Festival, when it embarrassed Japanese officials and audiences and was labeled a national shame in the Japanese press.⁴

In the following decades more and more soft-core Japanese porno films were distributed internationally to theaters and, later, video. Today, overseas viewers can choose from scores of Pink Films available on DVD and streaming video. Retrospectives of Pink directors and producers continue to play at recent film festivals such as Rotterdam, Hong Kong, and Frankfurt's Nippon Connection, and subtitled DVD releases have been known to outsell more respectable forms of Japanese film on retail web sites like Amazon.com.⁵ While relatively few professional scholars have published on Pink Film (even within the Euro-American porn studies and Japanese film studies communities), their numbers are growing, augmented by scores of non-professional bloggers and independent researchers who write enthusiastically about the bizarre or entertaining content of Pink Films on the Internet.⁶ As is typical of Japan's place in the film world, much of the novelty of Pink is sought in its presumed uniqueness and specificity as an industry or, as it is often tenuously identified, as a genre.

The common mantra that summarizes the format's characteristics goes as follows: Pink Films are soft-core, adult-rated narrative pornographic films that are shot and released on 35mm film and are intended for theatrical release in Japan. Technically speaking, they are silent films, shot completely without any live audio, that have dialogue, sound effects, and music dubbed during post-production in a small recording studio (specifically, the cramped Cine Cabin on the east edge of Shinjuku in downtown Tokyo). They are one hour to seventy minutes in length, and generally play on triple-bill features at the roughly fifty remaining specialty Pink theaters in Japan, most of which are concentrated around major urban areas. Each film contains

approximately one simulated sex scene for every ten minutes of footage, and sometimes (although today, not often) includes one or more scenes of rape or sexual violence. The dominant story genres in Pink theaters however are melodramas, comedies, and thrillers.

While the Pink Film industry is nominally a loose coalition of independent producers and filmmakers, and directors are hired on a film-by-film basis, the distribution and funding system follows a model that might be seen to approximate the hierarchy and stability of the now defunct studio system. This system has given many post-studio era directors to the mainstream—such as Takita Yōjirō, director of the Academy Award-winning *Departures* (*Okuribito*, 2008) as well as many Pink Films in the 1980s, including a cycle of releases in the Pink *Molester Train* (*Chikan Densha*) genre—practical training and opportunities for advancement to commercial film production. The director (who often doubles as producer) learns how to plan and complete a film with meager resources and is limited to the techniques and equipment affordable within the budget allotted for Pink Film production—typically 3 to 3.5 million yen, or roughly U.S. \$30,000-\$40,000 in the last years before the shift to digital photography. This base budget, the reason for Pink Film’s nickname as the “3 million yen film,” has not changed in fifty years. Shooting schedules are very short (once around one week, later Pink Films were shot within about 72 hours), and expensive flourishes or optical effects like titles and scrolling credit sequences are often impossible. As long as the film is sufficiently sexy and fits within rough generic boundaries set by the studio-determined release title, the director is allowed a large amount of freedom in style and content.

Jasper Sharp, whose writings as co-editor of the website *Midnight Eye* were a significant factor in Pink Film’s re-introduction in the West in the early 2000s, has surmised that the structured narrative of Pink Films is an unusual characteristic for a pornography industry and is

largely determined by the format's technological characteristics and theatrical exhibition context. Unlike the presumably private viewing conditions for hard core adult videos (commonly referred to as AV, or *ei vui*), that today fill large sections of Japanese video rental stores and dwarf the number of Pink Films available on video, "there's no fast-forward button in the cinema, so the Pink Film has to maintain interest between the sex scenes by other means—namely, a plot."⁷ Pink's difference from video, its symbiotic relationship to celluloid film, and its reliance on public specialty theaters as its primary mode of exhibition are qualities that, as Sharp summarizes, makes them "something of an anachronism, especially in a country that is often looked to as a technological trailblazer for the rest of the world."⁸ Japanese film scholar Roland Domenig as well emphasizes that it is a "uniquely Japanese film genre that has no equivalent in the West" and highlights the idea that "In no other country has the sexploitation film played a more important role than in Japan."⁹

The rhetoric of Pink's consistency (or antiquity) as an industry, as a text, and as an exhibition system has hardly evolved or been questioned over the last three decades, despite a rapid decline in production, changes in content, and a crumbling theatrical distribution infrastructure. Efforts to establish the historical importance and cinematic location of Pink Filmmaking typically repeat the terms of its uniqueness—as a part of Japanese national cinema and a style of exploitation film that presumably did not exist in the West—and its adherence to certain idealized rules of film production and spectatorship. Pink is seen as a kind of throwback compared to the pornography industries in the U.S. and elsewhere, where an overriding emphasis on text over context has facilitated the notion that 35mm adult film was replaced by home video formats and shunned by an audience whose interest is defined as a purely private, personal (autoerotic, masturbatory) interaction between the viewer and the moving image. Pink

miraculously remains in public view, on film, resilient to shifts in technology and demographics, somehow capturing a nostalgia for social conventions that defined erotic filmmaking and the realities of film spectatorship half a century ago.

While the historical impact of the Pink industry is undeniable, at best, these standardized descriptions of it require further qualification and specification. The privileged cinematic space that Pink exists in is a discursive construction; a kind of product differentiation supported both by domestic producers, eager to carve out a domestic and international niche for their product, and foreign programmers and cultural commentators, anxious to find the next example of unusual Japanese media culture. Historical and textual analyses of Pink Films in works such as Jasper Sharp's *Behind the Pink Curtain* and Markus Nornes's *The Pink Book* have contributed greatly to a more nuanced and historical understanding of the abilities and the limits of the Pink industry, but there is still a need to complicate these generic definitions and look at the many ways in which Pink images, crews, theaters, and audiences continually and productively cross the borders that define the format. A fine line must be drawn between the theory and the practice of Pink.

For film industry professionals, Pink is hardly a mark of prestige. The career trajectories of directors like Kurosawa Kiyoshi, Wakamatsu Kōji, or Zeze Takahisa may give the impression that Pink is a training ground for internationally-admired auteurs, or that all Pink directors are trained professionals who easily transition to non-pornographic or mainstream work, but directors in recent years have been more likely to go into debt making a Pink Film than they were to land a mainstream directing job. Many directors and actors support themselves with regular work in the adult video industry. Most new leading Pink actresses in particular are recruited from the end of their brief careers in AV. Indeed, Pink's constant cannibalization of

tropes and troupes from the AV industry is one clear example of the malleability of the Pink industry, and of how the defining features of and presumed boundaries between these different adult media formats are shifting and unreliable.

The legendary 3 million yen budget is also a romantic (or derogatory) exaggeration. In 1983, prominent Pink historian Suzuki Yoshiaki criticized that number in his book *Pink Film Water Margin*, perhaps the most detailed history of Pink to be written in the 1980s. Repeatedly referring to “independent film”—a kind of euphemism that was used to describe Pink Films in the trade press—Suzuki noted that even Wakamatsu Kōji’s first Pink feature was produced for a quite different amount.

1.8 million yen! To hear that Wakamatsu Kōji’s first film was made on a budget of 1.8 million yen... that’s not even close to 3 million yen... The established saying that ‘Pink Film equals the 3 million yen film’ is an absolute misunderstanding. It was clear to me from the fact that Wakamatsu Kōji’s first film *Red Trap* (*Akai wana*, 1963) was made for 1.8 million yen that Pink Films had been called that mostly to put them down, or to ridicule them. There are many different budgets for independent films. While some are (made for) 1.8 million yen, other large productions are made for 10 million yen.¹⁰

Nikkatsu’s Roman Porno line of soft-core adult films, which began production in November 1971 to capitalize on the popularity of soft-core pornography at the time, are typically *not* considered Pink because they were shot with a studio cast and crew and made for seven to seven and a half million yen, or approximately twice the Pink budget.¹¹ However, even first-generation Pink studio Okura Pictures attempted to compete with Nikkatsu’s higher budget porn with Ogawa Kinya’s (a.k.a. Ogawa Takuhiro) *Sex Manual for Humanity* (*Jinrui no Seiten*, 1973), reportedly made for 100 million yen.¹² Additionally, film critic Ogawa Tōru claims that the nickname for Pink Films was not 3 million but the “2 million yen film” in the mid-1960s.¹³

While Suzuki’s implication of the derogatory nature of “3 million yen” is unclear, his point about the unreliability of this nickname resonates.¹⁴ Certainly most Pink titles have been

shot with extremely limited funds, and dwindling budgets have resulted in even more restrictive production conditions today, but Pink budgets can fluctuate widely. Indeed, if the 3 million yen number has not changed in 50 years, then the standard Pink budget has in fact changed drastically. Now, directors may try to supplement their funding with cable television and video release agreements. Many, for reasons that are as economic as they are aesthetic, use VHS, digital video, or 8mm footage freely in films that are otherwise claim a monogamous relationship with 35mm film. This romanticized notion of working on celluloid within a limited and unchanging budget is one example of how Pink discourse has been fascinated with an unreliable fixation on limited material practices—as Alex Zahlten puts it, an “image of petrified stability.”¹⁵ Like many of the defining features of Pink, this image must be put into focus.

The need for further in-depth research on Pink presents a challenge to Film Studies. Attempts to accurately historicize the industry are thwarted by the ephemeral nature of printed resources on adult film and erotica, and a history of competition and collaboration in the changing relationships between scores of fleeting production units. While a number of published books and magazines on Pink Film are available, they are often long out of print, difficult to locate, and prohibitively expensive. Out of the thousands of Pink Films produced since the 1960s, only a fraction are available for viewing, whether at specialty theaters or on home video. With the exception of the work of internationally recognized auteurs like Wakamatsu, prints of films from before the 1980s are exceedingly difficult to view.¹⁶

Still, there are many underexplored avenues of research. One place to start may be with the term “Pink” itself, a word that is typically defined by redundant and unsure statements, even in the words of Murai Minoru, the journalist who claims to have coined it.¹⁷ Murai states that the staff at the *Naigai Taimusu* newspaper he wrote for were trying to come up with other names for

erotic cinema in their reviews to replace “boring” terms like *oiroke eiga* (sexy movies). He states that “eroduction” had been coined by fellow *Naigai Taimusu* writer Fukuhara Isamu, but another term popped into Murai’s head: “That’s right, it was ‘Pink Film’ (*pinku eiga*). These weren’t Blue Films, but movies with sexual representations that were, well, more on the level of a Pink color. That’s what it meant.”¹⁸

Suzuki Yoshiaki’s etymology is equally vague. Describing the difference from the frank films (*zubari eiga*), birth films (*osan eiga*), dirty films (*sukebe eiga*), and blue films (*burū firumu*) that predated Pink, Suzuki explains the younger term in typically circular language.

But Pink Films are different from Blue Films. Perhaps this goes without saying, but Pink is not blue. In Japan, there are troublesome (*yakkai na*) things like (censorship law) Article 175 (of the Criminal Code) and [film industry censorship board] Eirin. These certainly are troublesome, and I will refrain from analyzing how they are troublesome here, but given that these two troublesome things exist, Pink Film is Pink Film.¹⁹

There are other reasons to suspect that the name of Pink Film may not be as stable or specific as it is assumed to be. The “Overseas Show Business Report” column from the *Yomiuri Shinbun* on February 27, 1971 provides one example. Drawing from a report in the U.S. trade journal *Variety*, the short piece raises the question of Marilyn Monroe’s participation in a “Pink Film” (*pinku eiga*). Upon discovering this article in my research, I expected to find debunked rumors about Monroe acting in a Japanese sex film. To my surprise, the title in question was the well-known U.S. blue film compilation *Hollywood Blue* (dirs. Mike Lite, Bill Osco, and Howard Ziehm, 1970). The *Yomiuri* article highlighted the confusion surrounding Monroe’s supposed appearance in an adult film, but did so without attaching any kind of national specificity to the term Pink. “A rumor is circulating in Hollywood that the late Marilyn Monroe appeared in a Pink Film ... The film, called ‘Hollywood Blue,’ is a compilation of Pink shorts.”²⁰ While the article reveals that the erotic scenes in the film did not actually involve Marilyn Monroe, the film was

still distributed in Japan two years later by major studio Toei as *Hollywood Blue: The Hidden History of True Account Porno* (*Hariuddo Burū: Jitsuroku Poruno Uramenshi*). The movie's promotional poster featured an image of the near-nude Monroe crouching in a shallow pool of blue water.

Curiously unspecific articulations of Pink moving image content circulated throughout the first two decades of the Japanese adult film industry. In a 1970 commentary on “Pink Film Theory,” film critic and theorist Tsumura Hideo described a letter of protest sent by press associations regarding recent newspaper advertisements for certain films and the bad influence they have on young readers. In it he also used the term Pink with no fixed national referent, distinguishing only between “foreign film [releases], which includes a number of Pink titles” and domestic Pink titles.

I have long been a proponent for the reform of (censorship board) Eirin. I have pointed out the abundance of vulgar representations in films from the five Japanese major as well as in foreign films. On this occasion, I even went to see domestically-produced Pink titles (*kokusan pinku mono*) at two theaters. In the four independently-produced Pink titles I saw, I was surprised not only at the images, but also at how excessive the women's shrieks and sexual utterances were...²¹

At least into the 1970s, the concept of Pink Film was not absolute. In fact, Western adult films, including the censored versions of hard core titles like *Deep Throat* (domestic release 1972/Japanese release 1975), *Behind the Green Door* (1972/1976), and *Pussy Talk* (*Le Sexe qui parle*, 1975/1975) that played on Japanese movie theater screens, were and are still commonly referred to as *yōpin*, an abbreviation for *yōmono pinku* (alternately *yōga pinku*), literally “Western Pink.” A quick visit to any major Japanese video rental store or streaming video website today will show that the term *yōpin* is still used to identify American and European adult films and videos.

Clearly the erotic implications of the word have roots that stretch far beyond film. Indeed, Pink has been used widely to refer to erotic or adult content in a variety of contexts relating to international moving image media as well as the domestic sex industry. Despite the lists of pre-Pink terms that historians use to highlight Murai's apparent lexical brainstorm in 1963, the term actually has a precedent. Before Pink there was *momoiro*. The *Shogakukan Unabridged Dictionary of the Japanese Language* dictionary entry for *momoiro* (“pink”; literally, “peach-colored”) includes as its fourth definition “issues relating to male-female lust.”²² In the Japanese press, *momoiro eiga* was used widely to identify adult or sexual material in moving pictures as early as the 1930s. One *Yomiuri Shinbun* article from 1936, for example, discusses paid underground screenings of “peach” or “ero films,” while another from 1937 relates the story of Shochiku Ofuna studios actor Nakajima Ichirō, who was arrested for making nearly 100 16mm *momoiro* films of unwitting young women and distributing them to foreigners.²³

Into the postwar period and the 1960s, *momoiro* began a transformation into the foreign loan word Pink while retaining much of the same meaning.²⁴ Articles about Pink-related crimes, businesses, and products appear widely in the postwar Japanese press, especially from the 1960s onward, including in mainstream newspapers such as the *Asahi Shinbun*. A 1960 article introduced a new Sunday late night Fuji Television show called “Pink Mood Show” (“*Pinku Mūdoshō*”), featuring “adult-oriented” skits and dance routines. The piece includes a still photo from a performance in the first episode entitled “Negligee and Perfume.”²⁵ A 1970 article reported on a group of six people who were arrested under obscenity charges for selling 5,000 copies of a “Pink (audio) tape” entitled *Sexpo '70* that was made for car audio use.²⁶ In 1972, the *Asahi* reported on the Pink TV problem (*pinku terebi mondai*) and the arrest of stripper and adult film actress Ichijō Sayuri for her appearance on the Osaka television program *Yoshino Music*

Theater.²⁷ Today, Pink is still used to refer to a number of services and businesses in the quasi-illegal sex industry—pink salons (*pinku saron* or *pinsaro*), pink services (*pinku s̄abisu*), pink cabarets (*pinku kyabarē*), pink bars (*pinku bā*), and so on.

While use of the term *momoiro eiga* stretches back at least to the prewar period, Pink's place in the postwar lexicon is overdetermined. Similar to the way that *anime* (an abbreviation of another English loan word that, in Japanese use, simply means animation and is not necessarily associated with any regional or cultural context) has in the international realm come to mean specifically *Japanese* animation, "Pink," filtered through domestic and international applications that have constantly adjusted to the transforming market of adult media around the world (especially the material and representational transformations of moving image media in the 1980s) has over time come to identify a specifically Japanese product.

This façade of specificity exists despite the fact that most of Pink's defining characteristics could be used to accurately describe pornographic film production in other national or industrial contexts as well. The U.S. adult film industry was similarly swollen with a variety of soft-core sexploitation films in the 1960s and 1970s by directors like Joseph Sarno, Russ Meyer, and Doris Wishman. Many well-known American and European adult films, such as *Flesh Gordon* (dirs. Michael Benveniste and Howard Ziehm, 1974) or the infamous *Caligula* (dir. Tinto Brass, 1979), were produced in a way that allowed easy addition or removal of inserts of explicit footage so the films could be marketed as both soft- and hard-core. The rule to have at least one sex scene (simulated or otherwise) for every ten minutes of footage is not unique to Japan; popular U.S. films often followed a similar pace within a comparable sixty to seventy-minute running time.²⁸ The notoriously pervasive sexism and misogyny in Pink, and the supposedly prerequisite scenes of rape and sexual violence that were so common from the 1960s

to the 1980s, are seen in American and European films of that era as well. In Japan, these unpleasant narrative elements have since been slowly phased out of Pink Films due to cultural pressure, changes in industrial policy, and attempts at ostensibly cleaning up film content so that the audience demographics can expand to include women, but the portrayal of the Japanese adult entertainment industries' predilection for sexual violence persists. Close observation of *yōpin* also reveals that many scenes—especially sex scenes—are shot silent and dubbed in post-production, just like Pink Films.²⁹

Pink's status as a part of Japanese national cinema is an issue that deserves closer attention as well. It is perhaps no coincidence that Pink Film came to life in the early 1960s, when international distribution of North American, European, and Asian soft-core films stretched the limits of sexual representations in transnational contexts, when racy Western erotica played on Japanese screens, and when discourses of the national and universal collided to create seemingly clearly defined boundaries of cultural production. The reputation of the Pink Film industry as unique and resilient in the face of demographic shifts and technological change echoes the orientalist image of Japan in the postwar world; a nation of uncanny balance, where the traditions and technologies of porn sit against each other like oil and water.

In fact, this Japanese form of exploitation cinema was never alien to U.S. or European audiences. Just like the animated feature films and period dramas that came to define a new Japanese national cinema to global audiences in the 1950s and 1960s, Pink Film was quickly exported to commercial cinemas in the United States. *The Love Robots (Shirō no Jinzō Bijo*, 1966), directed by Wakamatsu and scripted by his longtime collaborator Adachi Masao, was perhaps the earliest Pink Film to reach commercial audiences in the U.S., having its “first U.S. showing” at the nearly 1000-seat Lyric theater in Huntington Park, California in October, 1967.³⁰

The film screened in a number of other U.S. cities as well. An advertisement for the Continental theater in *The Arizona Republic* from November, 1967 promotes the film as “the first eroduction ever shown in this state,” while an advertisement for the Park cinema in the *Van Nuys Valley News* adds an important note: “Special prices in effect in order to defer the tremendous legal costs involved.”³¹ Screenings of *The Love Robots* were also advertised in the *El Paso Herald Post* in October 1967 and July 1968, *Corpus Christi Times* in November 1967, and the *Chicago Tribune* in October 1970. The *Tribune* announced the film’s “Midwest premiere” as a double-feature with *Hot Spur* (dir. R.L. Frost, 1968) at the Follies cinema on S. State Street, two blocks away from the Art Institute of Chicago.³²

Indeed, as the *Valley News* advertisement foreshadows, in addition to being perhaps the first Japanese eroduction to screen in the U.S., *The Love Robots* was also quick to be seized on obscenity charges. The November 10, 1967 issue of the Long Beach *Press-Telegram* includes an article on the bottom corner of the front cover about a police raid on Jerome Knell’s East Ocean Boulevard cinema The Movie that resulted in the confiscation of a print of *The Love Robots*. The article also includes a brief description of the film by the police: “*The Love Robots*, raiding officers Lt. L. H. Jacobsen and Sgt. W. T. Robertson said, is a Tokyo-made film depicting the kidnaping, drugging and hypnotizing of 20 Oriental girls who are taught ‘unnatural, morbid sex acts.’”³³ In 1968, the trade journal *Boxoffice* reported two similar indictments in Portland, Oregon and New Brunswick, New Jersey.³⁴ The *Union Bulletin* of Walla Walla, Washington also ran a short Associated Press report addressing the case against the Aladdin Theater in Portland.³⁵ Not only did Western films *similar to* Japanese Pink exist in foreign markets in the 1960s, but the Pink Films themselves were exhibited, discussed, and censored overseas.

While most contemporary definitions of Pink Film depend on extratextual or industrial details, the content and in particular the visuality of Pink cinema is rarely treated in a such systematic and critical fashion. It is then somewhat ironic that Pink's narrative and visual characteristics were noted by pioneering Japanese film scholar Donald Richie in one of earliest English language essays on Japanese soft-core adult film content.³⁶ Richie's article was written at a time when it would have been impossible to see a large number of Pink Films anywhere but in Japanese theaters (thus implying a certain amount of ethnographic research on Richie's part). It was also a time when hard core pornography in America and Europe was starting to shift the focus of adult film representation onto footage of presumably real pro-filmic sex acts—in other words, a time when Pink's soft-core bias was becoming a distinctive characteristic. Richie notes the Japanese porno film industry's photographic limitations in his essay, entitled "Sex and Sexism in the Eroducton."

The eroductions are the limpest of soft-core, and though there is much breast and buttock display, though there are simulations of intercourse, none of the working parts are ever shown. Indeed, one pubic hair breaks an unwritten but closely observed code. Though this last problem is solved by shaving the actresses, the larger remains: how to stimulate when the means are missing.³⁷

Without once using the then supposedly decade-old term Pink, Richie runs through the standard list of defining characteristics for the eroduction ("a Japanese portmanteau-term coined from 'erotic production'")³⁸—budget, shooting schedule, length, violence, etc. He then couples his brief observations on representation with a speculative sociological analysis of Japanese film and society. Although he does not make this point explicitly, Richie suggests that the void left by the eroduction's representational lack seems to be (over)compensated for by regular scenes of violence against women. Richie attributes this characteristic to Japanese cultural factors, while constructing a binary between the eroduction's tendency to avoid explicit representation of these

“working parts” and American pornography’s tendency toward “showing all,” without qualifying or historicizing either. In Richie’s early analysis, U.S. pornography is essentially hard; Japanese eroduction is essentially soft.

This leads us to one more point in the conventional definition of Pink Film that stems from a problematic distinction from the types of pornographic features that filled Western screens since the early 1970s and have, to a large extent, determined critical discourse on pornography in the West. Pink movies include no explicit representations of sexual intercourse. As Richie described in his 1972 article, they are soft-core films; sex films that feature only simulated scenes of sex. To be more specific, as the rules of soft and hard-core pornography often fluctuate widely depending on context, they include no explicit images of full nudity and are almost never shot with genital contact occurring in pro-filmic space—a characteristic that is itself, due to the selective nature of photography and editing, is often impossible to confirm visually.³⁹ In Pink and other soft-core adult film formats, cameras can be angled to avoid clear views of actors’ genitalia and images of nude bodies are partially obscured. Full frontal nudity and pubic hair is usually avoided, and acts of intercourse are implied by showing moving bodies in close contact but without the “meat shot,” or explicit, close-up of image of male and female reproductive organs.⁴⁰

We must note that this characteristic applies to commercial adult film production in the U.S. and elsewhere in the 1960s as well. Hard-core adult cinema did not exist as a mainstream, commercial phenomenon when Pink was invented, and soft-core pornography continued to be produced into the 1970s, 80s and later. While most Western analyses mark this observation in their lists of essential Pink characteristics, it is strangely often unwritten (or implied) in many

Japanese texts. Nonetheless this is a significant distinction for Pink Film, and it is one that deserves careful consideration.

David Andrews, author of *Soft in the Middle: The Contemporary Softcore Feature in Its Contexts*, has analyzed the significance of the hard/soft distinction in adult media and its transformative potential for studies of film and pornography. Soft-core genres, he argues,

are inexplicit forms situated in cultural and industrial ‘middles’ ... because it is difficult to discuss soft-core without also analyzing its shifting relations to more *and* less explicit sectors, a focus on soft-core yields the kind of nuance most likely to demystify porn both in classrooms and in academic publications.⁴¹

Andrews’ justification for research on this middling form of adult cinema carries a metaphorical resonance for Pink Film as well, which is itself located in the in-between spaces formed by the compromises between national and international reception contexts, translations between film and video materials, and the constantly shifting relationships between textual and contextual factors that define the limits of visibility and invisibility in the film image. Andrews finds strong potential in studies of soft-core to sidestep the challenges of adult film studies by presenting non-explicit content that does not necessarily conform to the rules of hard-core pornographic representation. I agree with Andrews’ impulse to complicate ideals of soft or hard (or perhaps we should say, “fake” or “real”) sex in film. As he argues, “positively or negatively valenced, essentialism falsifies porn, cleaving it from the contexts that are its richest sources of meaning.”⁴²

There is a long history of partial nudity and soft-core eroticism in both national cinema traditions, and both the Japanese and American pornographic film industries have edged toward more explicit representations over the decades. In the four decades since Donald Richie’s article was published, restrictions on Japanese films have relaxed to the point where nipples and buttocks are much more casually shown in Pink, and where even once-forbidden pubic hair may

no longer be singled out as a reason for censorship. Nonetheless, even today, in the vast majority of Pink productions, actors do not have sexual intercourse before the rolling camera; they only pretend to do so. This is certainly not an absolute—some Pink Films do claim to include footage of pro-filmic intercourse, just as many so-called hard-core adult videos (especially in the 1980s) included simulated sex that only seemed more real due to the different flicker and frame rate of interlaced video images (or due to post-production pixelation that made it, again like Pink Film, enticingly difficult to verify).

Pink Film raises questions of representation and visibility that, if not entirely unique to Japanese adult film production, are extremely salient in adult moving image entertainment industries. This is partly due to industrial and historical circumstances. Although Richie uses the term “soft-core” to describe the production, there seems to be no direct equivalent to hard core/soft-core terminology in the Japanese language. There are a number of terms that refer to explicit pornography, such as *nama* (raw or live), *honban* (a main act or real performance; also used on film sets in the sense of a shot or a take with the film rolling, as opposed to a test), or the Japanese transliteration of hard-core, *hādokoa*. On the other hand, although there are infinite ways to address soft-core material in the Japanese language, as a discrete term it exists predominantly in the foreign loan word *sofutokoa*. While *honban* adult material has been produced for Japanese release from the 1980s on (and mostly for the AV market), the fact remains that industrial censorship prevents any kind of Japanese-produced or Japanese-released film or video material from legally showing the visual evidence of explicit sexual activity and intercourse on screen. The visual *proof* of pro-filmic intercourse is essential to Western definitions of hard-core, but such proof is legally impossible in Japan. In Japanese adult film and video, the distinction between soft and hard content takes on a very different meaning.

Pink is often defined by what it is *not*—a distinction that can often be as misleading as it is productive. As noted above, without further historical and formal specification, many of these presumed differences are negligible. Given the inherent uncertainty in Pink's defining characteristics, it may be time to again look closely at Pink Film itself, and in doing so not only ask how the Pink industry represents itself, or how global film discourse represents Japanese sex cinema, but also to do the dirty work on the sets, in the studios, and in the theaters; to ask how Pink is invested in questions of visibility, representation, and cinema. As shown in the complex histories above, many questions still remain about Pink's seemingly limited modes of sexual representation and pornography's perceived *obligation* to reveal all in the face of the audience for maximum erotic impact. The timing and placement of Pink Film's rediscovery by film studies gives us the unique opportunity to question the ways we envision and represent the life and the death (and even the reanimation) of a film world that seems elusive to the point of becoming invisible.

Perhaps the most significant quality of Pink today is not in the idea that it is somehow essentially different, or that it played some industrial or cultural role that is unheard of in other contexts, but that it simply exists. The prolific international soft-core films of the 1960s, and even the hard core productions of the 1970s and later, have all but disappeared from movie theater screens around the world. In Japan, however, porno films may still be seen in many theaters, and the vast majority of films today that meet the essential condition of being screened are titles that were produced from the 1980s on; films that, as I will show in the following chapters, exhibit as much a remediation of and commentary on different moving image and audio-visual representation technologies as they exhibit any kind of function as a discreet, unique, or pure celluloid film tradition, adult-oriented or otherwise. Indeed, the most succinct

explanation of the specificity of Pink Film may simply be to see it, and thus to know it.⁴³ That, however, presents another problem. It presumes that we can know what we see. It also presumes that the audience is actually looking.

For who watches Pink Film? Pink fans? Maybe, the few that exist, who make small contributions to the film budget to visit crews on location, or attend retrospective screenings at art cinemas or occasional opening day celebrations to meet their favorite actresses at the Ueno Okura before blogging about the experience on the internet. What about Pink casts and crews? Filmmakers are always expected to attend test screenings when a title is completed, but those are usually held at the comfortable screening room at the Toei laboratory. Most of the cast and crew members I met during my research absolutely refused to go to Pink theaters to watch films. It is not the foreign audiences, who today rarely have access to prints at festival screenings and are much more likely to see video transfers of Pink Films on private TV and computer screens. It is not the remaining domestic audiences, who instead either sleep in their seats or cruise for male-male sexual action with other audience members. Pink's reputation as a unique and an essentially cinematic and nationally specific pornography industry is certainly not validated by a theatrical exhibition context that caters to regular audiences who are anything but interested in the films playing.⁴⁴ If nobody watches Pink Film, how can we know what we are not seeing?

¹ Murai, *Hadaka no Yume Nendaiki*, 17-20. Murai coined the term (at the time with the honorific prefix as *o-pinku eiga*) in an October 1963 *Naigai Taimuzu* article on the production of Seki Kōji's *Cave of Desire* (*Jōyoku no Dōkutsu*), the sequel in a series of a "female Tarzan" films. The first Pink Film is considered to be Kobayashi Satōru's *Market of Flesh* (*Nikutai no Ichiba*), which predated Murai's term by over a year. See also Suzuki, *Pinku Eiga Suikoden*, 34-39. See also Roland Domenig's historiographical account of early definitions of Pink Film, "Market of Flesh and the Rise of the 'Pink Film.'"

² Newspapers reported widely on the boom in the Pink Film industry in the late 1960s. An *Asahi Shinbun* article from December, 1968 claims that Pink Films released that year were expected to outnumber films by the five major studios. The article cites Eirin figures from late November that counted 415 total films rated, 187 of those having been produced by the majors. While the remaining 228 includes independent productions like Hani Susumu's *The Inferno of First Love* (*Hatsukoi: jigokuhen*, 1968) or Imamura Shōhei's *Profound Desire of the Gods* (*Kamigami no fukaki yokubō*, 1968) the author assumes that "more than 90%" of the non-major studio releases in Eirin's figures are "eroduction" films. "Go sha," 7. A *Yomiuri Shinbun* article from the following year reported a

slightly different total for 1968, but cited National Police Agency figures that counted 244 independent adult-oriented (*seijin muke*) films released, versus 218 films from the major studios (21 of those adult), and 259 foreign or occidental films (of which 15 were rated for adults). “Pinku Hanran Mō Yurusenai,” 6. Alex Zahlten cites a figure from *Kinema Junpō* that claims Pink Films made up 44% of feature production in 1965. Zahlten, “The Role of Genre in Film from Japan,” 73. Joseph Anderson and Donald Richie claimed that “since 1965, at least half of all Japanese feature film production has been extremely cheap pink movies.” Anderson and Richie, *The Japanese Film*, 454.

³ See Chapter 4 for a more detailed description of filmic and video representations of Japanese adult cinema spaces.

⁴ See Kusakabe, “Sekai ni 'Kōkai' Shita Nihon Eiga no Haji,” 6.

⁵ Hollywood DVD distribution company Pink Eiga's English subtitled DVD release of Ikejima Yutaka's *The Japanese Wife Next Door* (*Inran Naru Ichizoku: Zetsurin no Hate Ni*, 2004), is said to have become the top-selling Japanese Film on Amazon.com in 2009. “Nihon Eiga Uriage Zenbei No. 1 wa Igai ni Mo!?”

⁶ Two major English Language books on Pink Film have been published in recent years; *Behind the Pink Curtain: The Complete History of Japanese Sex Cinema* (2008) by Jasper Sharp and *The Pink Book* (2014) edited by Markus Nornes. The most prominent online source for articles and interviews about Pink Film is the *Midnight Eye* web site, edited by Tom Mes and Jasper Sharp.

⁷ Sharp, “Inside Pink,” 52.

⁸ Sharp, *Behind the Pink Curtain*, 10.

⁹ Domenig, “Vital Flesh.”

¹⁰ Suzuki, *Pinku Eiga Suikoden*, 26, 36. Wakamatsu himself recalls a budget of approximately 1.5 million yen for the film, or half the typical amount allotted for Pink production. Wakamatsu, *Ore wa Te o Yogosu*, 70.

¹¹ Matsushima, *Nikkatsu Roman Poruno Zenshi*, 33.

¹² Hayashida, “Pink Film History”; Uplink Company “Pinku Eiga no Rekishi.” Zahlten notes that this “prestige project ... failed to make any significant impact,” thus securing Pink's future as a low-budget enterprise. Zahlten, “The Role of Genre in Film from Japan,” 182.

¹³ Ogawa, “Pinku Eiga to Seihyogen no Genkai,” 79.

¹⁴ For reasons I have not been able to explain, the figure does appear in scores of news reports from the 1960s about crimes and robberies, some that are peripherally movie related. See for example the *Asahi Shinbun* article, “‘I'll Set a Bomb,' 14 Times; Threats Influenced by Films; Man Demanding 3 Million Yen Apprehended.” “‘Bakudan Shikakeru’ to 14 Kai; Eiga Hinto ni Kyōhaku; Sanbyakumanen Yōkyū Shita Otoko Torawaru,” 15.

¹⁵ Zahlten, “The Role of Genre in Film from Japan,” 77. Zahlten traces the 3 million yen figure to an account by Producer Motogi Sōjirō. *Ibid.*, 118. One version of that account can be found in Suzuki, *Pinku Eiga Suikoden*, 18.

¹⁶ The earliest films shown at Pink specialty theaters are typically from the mid-1980s. The National Film Center in Kyōbashi, Tokyo has a large collection of Pink Film prints that stretches back to the earliest years of the industry. However, many of those prints are unscreenable. In 2010, Alex Zahlten and I went through several rounds of negotiations in trying to plan an academic screening of a number of historical Pink Films in the Film Center's screening room. We requested to see the remaining portion of *Flesh Market* and Seki Kōji's 3D Pink Film *Perverv Demon* (*Hentaima*, 1967). These requests, and more than a dozen others, were rejected on the basis that the prints were too damaged to be projected safely. Ultimately, we were only allowed to watch six Shinto titles, the earliest of which dating from 1985.

¹⁷ Roland Domenig also interrogates Murai's etymology and other uses of the word “Pink” in his detailed historiographical essay, “*Market of Flesh and the Rise of the 'Pink Film,'*” 27-30.

¹⁸ Murai, *Hadaka no Yume Nendaiki*, 20.

¹⁹ Suzuki, *Pinku Eiga Suikoden*, 15.

²⁰ “Monrō ga Pinku Eiga Ni Deteita?,” 9.

²¹ Tsumura, “Pinku Eigarō,” 53.

²² *Nihon Kokugo Daijiten*.

²³ “Momoiro Eiga Kanshōkai,” 2; “Momoiro Eiga no Naishoku,” 2.

²⁴ A 1968 *Asahi Shinbun* article laments the influx of foreign loan words in recent years and the replacement of Japanese terms for color with English words like *pinku* and *gurē*. “Nihongo wa Yureru,” 14.

²⁵ “Otona Muke no Oyasumi Bangumi: 'Pinku Mūdoshō,’” 5.

²⁶ “Sekusupo '70' Urimakuru,” 11.

²⁷ “Pinku TV ni Seisai,” 9.

²⁸ According to data on the *Internet Adult Film Database* (<http://www.iafd.com/>), the 71-minute *Behind the Green Door* (1972) has six sex scenes, while the 62-minute long *Deep Throat* (1972) has eleven.

²⁹ Williams took note of this characteristic in the 1980s. “As in mainstream cinema, these sounds of pleasure augment the realist effect of what in cinema is the hierarchically more important visual register, lending an extra level of sensory perception to the pleasures depicted. But because of increasingly common post-dubbing, these sounds are not invoked with the same realism as sound in the mainstream feature. Many sexual numbers, especially of early hard-core sound features, were, and still are—like the musical numbers of musicals—shot ‘mit out sound.’ Sound is recorded elsewhere and added later in the ‘mix.’” Williams, *Hard Core*, 123.

³⁰ *Los Angeles Times* movie listing, October 27, 1967, C18. An advertisement in the *Los Angeles Times* the following day includes the disclaimer, “special prices in effect in order to defer the tremendous costs involved.” *Los Angeles Times*, October 28, 1967, 19. Wakamatsu’s movie was brought overseas by Olympic International Films, a distribution company that released a number of Pink titles in the U.S. in the late 1960s, including Mukai Kan’s *The Pimp* (*Esa*, 1966) and Watanabe Mamoru’s *Slave Widow* (*Dōrei Mibōjin*, 1967). Both of these titles are now available on DVD in the U.S.

³¹ *The Arizona Republic*, Nov. 17, 1967, 47; *Van Nuys Valley News*, Nov. 7, 1967, 31-A.

³² *Corpus Christi Times*, Nov. 7, 1967, 8; *El Paso Herald Post*, Jul. 11, 1968, C2; *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 2, 1970, B19.

³³ *Press-Telegram*, Nov. 10, 1967, 1.

³⁴ “Portland Theatreman Eyes Court Fight in Film Raid,” W-7; “North Jersey,” E-8.

³⁵ “Two Films Face Investigation,” 12.

³⁶ An earlier English language account can be found in the November 5, 1965 issue of *Time*. Only three years after the appearance of the industry, an anonymous reporter describes the scene of a film shoot and informs readers of the successes of the low-budget, quickly-made eroductions in Japan. “And though it seemed like nothing more than a feature-length, slightly bowdlerized stag movie, such eroductions are turning out to be the Japanese film industry’s most effective weapon in its death struggle with television.” *Time*, “The Rising Sun is Blue,” 93.

³⁷ Richie, “Sex and Sexism in the Erodution,” 12.

³⁸ *Ibid.* Garland Cannon identified eroduction as one of many Japanese language terms incorporated into the English language after World War II. Cannon cites inclusion of the term in the 1969 edition of the unabridged *Random House Dictionary of the English Language*. Cannon, “Recent Japanese Borrowings Into English,” 376.

³⁹ This term, like its more explicit counterpart, is alternately written soft-core, soft-core, or softcore depending on the account. In my own writing I will maintain the hyphen in soft-core and hard-core as a reminder that a material and conceptual in-between space of representation still plays a grounding role in pornography, between the indexical core of cinema and the soft or hard articulation of the referent in the audio-visual text. It is also useful to note that while hard-core (or hardcore) is commonly used to refer to anything that is serious, essential, or extreme (for example, hardcore gamer or hardcore punk music), soft-core, though referring to a form that is non-explicit and perhaps less real, is used primarily to refer to pornography. The online edition of Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary and Thesaurus only includes one definition for soft-core, a term it dates to 1966: “of pornography: containing descriptions or scenes of sex acts that are less explicit than hard-core material.”

⁴⁰ Linda Williams describes the meat shot as “a close-up of penetration that shows hard-core sexual activity is taking place.” She goes on to emphasize that “most current feature-length pornos would not be complete without a great many meat shots in any given sex sequence.” Williams, *Hard Core*, 72. Clearly, this has never been true for feature-length Japanese pornographic film.

⁴¹ Andrews, “What Soft-core Can Do for Porn Studies,” 51.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 56.

⁴³ I am of course referencing Justice Potter Stewart’s statement in the Supreme Court case *Jacobellis v. Ohio*, when Stewart famously exhibited a kind of (extra-)sensory perception for pornography that allowed him to declare that Louis Malle’s 1958 film *The Lovers* (*Les Amants*) was in fact not obscene. “I shall not today attempt further to define the kinds of material I understand to be embraced within that shorthand description, and perhaps I could never succeed in intelligibly doing so. But I know it when I see it, and the motion picture involved in this case is not that.” Quoted in Gerwitz, *On ‘I Know It When I See It’*, 1024.

⁴⁴ Samuel R. Delaney describes a similar atmosphere of spectatorial dis/engagement in now defunct New York adult theaters in his book *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*. See Chapter 4.

Chapter 2

On Location: Pink Photography and the Possibilities of Representation

My practical entry into the peripheries of Pink Film production took a somewhat unconventional path. In 2005, I was invited by Pink director Moriyama Shigeo to appear briefly in his upcoming film, *Baked Cheesecake* (release title: *A Fabulous One-Sided Love* [*Suteki na Kataomoi*]). Moriyama was a relatively new Pink helmer, having screenwritten and directed his first film *Sakurai Fūka: Lecherous Fallen Angel* (*Sakurai Fūka: Inran Datenshi*) in 2002 after working since the mid-1990s as an assistant director for Hamano Sachi, Ikejima Yutaka, and other established Pink filmmakers. Between 2002 and 2011 Moriyama directed a dozen Pink features for Okura Pictures and served as staff on other features while supporting himself through regular work on hard-core adult video productions for companies such as Japan Home Video (JHV) and Tsukamoto Henry's F.A. Pro. The screenplay for *Baked Cheesecake* was, however, written by a regular collaborator of Moriyama's in recent years—veteran Pink director and one of the boundary-pushing *Shitennō* (Four Heavenly Kings,) of 1980s-1980s Pink Film, Sano Kazuhiro.

Sano is an impressive figure in Japanese film and pornography history, and his mentorship was a defining factor in the conception of this project. As such, he deserves an

extended introduction. Although I was familiar with Sano's career and had seen several of his film and video appearances in work by other directors—most memorably in Zeze Takahisa's video-shot *Tokyo Erotica* (2001), which I viewed at the Tokyo Eurospace art cinema—I was not able to gain access to most of Sano's work as a director until I became personally acquainted with him in 2004. At that time, Sano maintained a regular creative output as screenwriter for soft-core Pink Film and hard-core adult video and appeared regularly in prominent roles in Pink, experimental, and student movies, but his own Pink Films were not in regular circulation at Japanese adult cinemas. Sano's most consistent role when I first met him in 2004 was as the manager and Wednesday night bartender at a cramped and crumbling Tokyo bar named Bamboo House, located about six kilometers west of downtown Tokyo in a neighborhood well known to be a home of artists, performers, and anarchists.

I began to frequent Bamboo House on “Sano nights” and was quickly introduced to other Pink-affiliated performers, directors, critics, and fans. Sano once told me that when he was asked to manage Bamboo House, he had hoped to turn it into a sort of communication hub for filmmakers and actors—Pink-affiliated or otherwise—to meet and discuss the art and the history of cinema. Sure enough, on these Wednesday nights at Bamboo House I met many current Pink professionals and filmmakers, including Moriyama, and enjoyed countless debates on the history and the art of narrative filmmaking. These conversations typically lasted until the middle of the night; occasionally they continued until the next afternoon. Certainly, for me, Bamboo House had great educational value. The hours I spent there felt like an extended professional filmmaking seminar; a practical alternative to the university classrooms and film archives I frequented as I lived in Tokyo during the first stages of my academic research in Pink cinema.

When Sano entered the film industry in the late 1970s, he was initially active more in the burgeoning independent film scene than adult film culture. He stepped into the Pink industry as an actor around 1980, appearing in the films of first-generation Pink director Watanabe Mamoru, but spent years experimenting as a director in other formats as well. In that first decade, he appeared consistently in Pink titles while also acting in a number of independent feature films (perhaps most notably Matsui Yoshihiko's infamous *Noisy Requiem* [*Tsuito no Zawameki*, 1988]) and a variety of other video or genre productions. Early in the decade, Sano also completed two feature-length independent productions of his own. His 8mm 80-minute film *An Ode to the Earthworm* (a.k.a. *The Worm Sings* [*Mimizu no Uta*, 1982])—which starred Sano, Matsui, and former Wakamatsu Productions member Komizu Kazuo (a.k.a. Gaira)—screened in competition at the Pia Film Festival in 1983 and was later shown at the 39th Edinburgh International Film Festival in 1985. In the mid-1980s, Sano also founded a hard-core adult video production company named Outgrow Productions and tried to capitalize on the Japanese AV craze of the Bubble Era with his own distinctive style of semi-experimental pornographic video. While that project was ultimately (and unavoidably) unsustainable, Outgrow successfully produced a number of adult video tapes that starred popular adult video actresses like Kobayashi Hitomi and Murakami Rena and were peppered with moments of absurdist humor and surrealism—characteristics that came to be a defining feature of Sano's otherwise predominantly melodramatic Pink scripts.¹

Sano began directing his own Pink Films for the Kokuei production company with *Confinement: Obscene Foreplay* (*Kankin: Waisetsu na Zengi*) in 1989,² entirely skipping the typical in-house training and advancement hierarchy from assistant director to director. In the following years, Sano began to receive wide praise for Pink releases like the subtly political

thriller-melodrama *Pervert Telephone Masturbator (Hentai Terefon Onanie)*³ which, along with a collection of other significant contemporary Pink Films, received a DVD release in the Tokyo-based Uplink company's Nippon Erotics series. This was a rare honor for a Pink Film at a time when most Pink titles had no DVD release. By the late 1990s, Sano began to encounter difficulty securing projects as a director. While he continued to work as a film actor throughout the 1990s and 2000s, Sano's final directorial effort in Pink was the somewhat underwhelming 1997 film *Entrails of the Cougar: Crimson Slit (Jukujo no Harawata: Shinku no Sakeme)*⁴ starring Asō Myū and fellow Pink director Yoshiyuki Yumi. Sano continued to act regularly in film, and despite a battle with throat cancer in 2011 that left him unable to speak, completed a new independent feature in 2015 entitled *But Only Love*.

In 2005, aware of my position as a graduate student in Japanese film studies, and committed to his own role as a facilitator of interpersonal connections between people and films of diverse backgrounds, Sano wrote a role for me in his screenplay for a new Pink feature that Moriyama was scheduled to direct. Commissioned by the Okura Pictures company, *Baked Cheesecake* was a gay-themed film about a handsome young man, Shirō (Toyonaga Shinichirō), who is shot while running from two gangsters (voice and screen actor Ginji and veteran Pink actor Honda Kikujirō) after stealing the cash earnings from a pachinko gambling parlor. Shirō temporarily escapes with the cash but collapses, bleeding, at the entrance to a Tokyo gay bar managed by a middle-aged man named Maggie (Sano). The queer Maggie falls in love with the straight Shirō at first sight (the “one-sided love” of the release title) and drives the younger man back to his apartment. In the car, Maggie calls his American doctor friend Mike (John A. Michaels, a.k.a. yours truly), who rushes to Maggie's apartment and stays up all night performing surgery to remove the bullets from Shirō's belly. Over coffee and sandwiches the

next morning, Mike confesses to Maggie that the previous night's surgery was his first attempt operating on a human. Maggie, confused, learns that Mike was not in fact a doctor, but a veterinarian—a mistake that foreshadows Shirō's fate. In clumsy Japanese, Mike warns Maggie that Shirō needs to be taken to a hospital for proper treatment.⁵

As the film progresses, Maggie alternates between caring for and molesting the immobile Shirō, who feels indebted to his lustful savior but begins to suffer excruciating pain as his poorly-treated wounds worsen. The gangsters eventually track Shirō to Maggie's bar, and then to the apartment, but Shirō narrowly escapes to the countryside in an attempt to deliver the stolen money to its intended destination—Shirō's younger sister Miyuki (Konatsu), who is rapidly going blind but does not have the money to undergo eye surgery. In the film's climactic moments, Shirō collapses mid-dial in a phone booth while attempting to call Miyuki to deliver the cash, and Maggie races to the countryside to stop the gangsters. Maggie spots the gangsters parked on the side of the road, staking out the (now almost certainly dead) Shirō's home as they wait for him to arrive. Maggie then sacrifices himself by ramming his car into the gangsters. As Maggie slowly dies, leaning up against the steering wheel of his demolished car, he begins to fantasize about himself and Shirō making passionate love in an overexposed, bright white dream world.

While I appeared in two short scenes and delivered only a few lines of dialogue, Moriyama and Sano permitted me to attend almost the entire shooting of the film. They graciously allowed me to observe them at work on location several times in the years that followed as well, and during that period I gradually gained an understanding of the mood, the tension, and the techniques of a Pink Film shoot. Looking back on my *Baked Cheesecake* experience today, it would be hard to say that the structure and rhythm of the shoot was in any

way remarkable for a Pink Film.⁶ However, at the time, to a student of film history and theory like myself who had never spent long hours working on film sets, several elements of the experience stood out to me.⁷

I found the filming of my one scene with dialogue to be incredibly disorienting. Exhausted from a late night of preparations and drowsy from the early wake-up time, I arrived at the set (a relatively spacious apartment in Tokyo rented for just two days) with dark bags sagging underneath my eyes. (I tried to rationalize my poor appearance to the crew, saying that it presented a realistic image of someone who had stayed up all night pulling bullets out of a human body.) The camera setups were then decided on the spot. Initially, director Moriyama suggested doing a tracking shot by the couch I was sitting on, but soon abandoned the idea due to the amount of time it would take to lay the tracks. Once the blocking and camera positions were determined, I realized that the most difficult part of the process for me was simply knowing where to *look*. I had memorized my brief lines completely, but the script included sparse information about framing or visual continuity. During the tests, Moriyama had to constantly correct the direction of my gaze. When I accidentally stared toward my out-of-frame conversation partner Sano, or to where I imagined Maggie would be in the imaginary space of the scene, I was abruptly corrected. Raising his fist in front of a blank wall, Moriyama scolded me: “Don’t look over there, look here, where I’m holding my hand.” Until that moment it had never occurred to me that performers on film must be as acutely aware of *where* they are looking as viewers in the cinema are, and that film performers, like spectators, often must ignore the people standing or sitting only feet away and stare into a lonely and empty space where nothing exists. Aside from the scene’s one long take, when Maggie and Mike sit next to each other in the same frame, the eyeline match between actor and actor was completely fabricated. What was

crucial was the imaginary eyeline match between the actor, the camera lens, and the (yet unrealized) audience. In pro-filmic space, the call of the apparatus seemed to address a viewing position that never existed.

One other fascinating element of the shoot for me was the extreme efficiency of the project. Principal photography for this 61-minute feature—carried out at the typical breakneck speed of Pink production—took place over a (relatively generous) period of four days during the Christmas weekend of 2005. I traveled with the minimalist crew and cast as they raced between a small handful of shoot locations: the rented apartment and bar in Tokyo, nondescript roads and alleys in the city, eventually to a small seaside town on the coast of the Chiba peninsula. As is necessary in this kind of ultra-low budget film production, many of the interior shooting locations were arranged through personal connections between the staff and their friends and quickly redecorated for multiple use in separate scenes. The set for Maggie's bar was a drinking establishment run by a musician friend of Sano's, who went on to compose the music for later Moriyama-Sano collaborations. One brief shot was even filmed from the top of the extremely narrow stairwell at Bamboo House.

The number of participants on set was extremely small. The ending credits name nine performers with speaking roles and only twelve other main crew members: screenwriter, cinematographer, editor, soundtrack musician, assistant director, two director's assistants (the second and third assistant directors; the third, the shoot's most prominent female participant, also doubled as script girl), two camera assistants, a hair and makeup artist, two still photographers, and director. There were only two women in the crew—the third assistant director and the hair and makeup artist—and only one in the cast. The gender imbalance in the cast was partially due to the film's status as a gay-themed film. In gay Pink Films, the amount of screen time afforded

to female actors is strictly limited by studio policy. The movie's only female actor, Konatsu, appears in brief seconds of screen time that were filmed entirely at one exterior location near a small rural shrine on the fourth and final day of shooting.

The shoot generally followed the material rules of Pink Film production. All footage was photographed silent on 35mm film using a noisy (but well-maintained and perfectly operational) rented Arriflex camera. Audio recording equipment and personnel were completely absent from the shoot. Rehearsal time was non-existent and multiple takes were avoided whenever possible. Once the lighting and camera position was set, the director would allow one to two tests (*tesuto*) without the film running, one final test (*hon-tesu*), and then call "action" (*honban*, literally a "real" or "live" take) to record the true images in a single, final shot. Thirty-five millimeter film stock was the most expensive part of the film's budget, and it was breathtaking to see how the tension in the room immediately rose when the director called *honban*. While the test runs were occasionally sloppy or unpolished, or peppered with an occasional joke by the cast or crew, the moment the loud Arriflex shutter started clicking, the atmosphere would suddenly change. It is no exaggeration to say that the camera shutter was reminiscent of a ticking time bomb, measuring the film's budget (and the actors' endurance) until the limited amount of film stock ran out. On a Pink Film shoot, labor time and film stock exist in a kind of symbiosis as the two materials that a crew cannot afford to spare. Film stock's role as a recording device for live photographic images becomes combined with its status as a kind of measuring tape for the seconds and minutes of labor performed on location.

I was somewhat astounded to see that essentially all of the footage was shot live in-camera; post-production visual effects were avoided entirely. Aside from the Okura Picture studio logo that opens the print of *Baked Cheesecake*, every image in the film was a shot of pro-

filmic space. Even the short, digitally photographed stop-motion sequence of Shirō escaping the yakuza, the title card, and the ending credits were recorded by pointing the same Arriflex camera at a 12-inch LED desktop computer screen as it sat on a small table inside Bamboo House and displayed the still images and text in a real-time computer image slideshow. While mainstream or higher-budget filmmaking is casually infected by various inconspicuous forms of animation—from character and background animation to basic optical effects such as subtitles and credit rolls—this Pink Film relied almost entirely on footage shot automatically by a camera with a fixed frame rate. Even the animation of the titles and attack scene were played back and recorded to film in real time. In my initial observations on set, this Pink Film appeared to epitomize a kind of live, directly representational filmmaking. However, that impression was quickly challenged as I began to experience the other stages of Pink Film creation.

The one clearly *post*-filmic element of *Baked Cheesecake*'s production was the audio, which, in direct contrast to the seemingly completely live nature of the film's photography, was recorded days later, in a studio, completely de-synchronized from all of the live activities on set. Every second of dialogue, sound effects, and music included on the release print was recorded on tape (or, for the music, re-recorded to tape) at the cramped Cine Cabin recording studio located near the Yotsuya Sanchōme subway station on the east edge of Shinjuku, and later transferred to film via a half century-old RCA optical sound recorder that was nearly as large as a full-sized home refrigerator. The dialogue recording was completed in less than two days, with all cast members present in rotation to record their respective scenes live with the cast mates they shared a framing or scene with.

The production of *Baked Cheesecake* was a fascinating experience for me. Perhaps because of the seemingly rudimentary nature of techniques and materials involved, it tested my

Film Studies inclinations with questions about the nature of quality in narrative filmmaking and the place of realism in adult cinema—a format that, as I noted earlier, is seemingly dependent on creating an aura of indexicality and actuality. The atmosphere of the set, whether pro-filmic or behind the camera, was something that I had not imagined, even after years of reading scholarly accounts of and theories on film texts, the film industry, and film audiences. The experience of being momentarily placed on the reverse side of the cinematic mirror challenged me to consider less theoretical and more practical concepts of how films connected with or addressed (or failed to connect with, failed to address) audiences who watched these films—films that were screened exclusively in adult specialty cinemas in Japan.

As a gay-themed Pink Film, *Baked Cheesecake* faced even more complex restrictions in its production and exhibition. At the time of *Baked Cheesecake*'s release, when there were at least sixty commercial adult theaters active on the Japanese islands, no more than ten percent of them regularly projected gay- or queer-themed Pink Films. While studios such as Okura Pictures would provide directors with a slightly higher budget than typical heterosexual Pink Films—perhaps more than 4 million yen, as opposed to the estimated 3 to 3.5 million yen of a standard Pink feature—there were far fewer venues to screen the films in, and those cinemas often operated on a double-feature schedule instead of a triple-feature schedule. This meant that it took much longer for gay Pink Films to circulate to available screens, and that any single gay Pink Film might be left out of circulation for years at a time. Months later, when *Baked Cheesecake* was finally released, I did hope to see it at the one Tokyo-area cinema that was scheduled to show it, but I was hesitant to go alone, and as my anecdote in the Introduction indicates, fellow cinephiles that I asked to join me dismissed the suggestion with prejudice. My experiences on

location for the filming of *Baked Cheesecake* did, however, inspire me to look into other elements of Pink Film location shooting and the overall production of Pink content.

While I never viewed *Baked Cheesecake* in a commercial screening in any of Japan's active Pink cinemas, I did have an opportunity to see it screened once on film in Tokyo at the Toei post-production laboratory (Toei Labo Tech) in Chōfu City, fifteen kilometers southwest of downtown Tokyo. Toei Labo Tech was the final pre-release destination for Pink Films produced by all of the main Pink production companies. It was a regular rite of passage for Pink crews and cast to watch the final (or near-final) edits of their work in the screening room at Toei before venting their praise, frustrations, and anxiety at a late-night wrap party at a nearby *izakaya* restaurant. It was at the wrap party for *Baked Cheesecake* that I met another figure who would inflect my understanding of Pink realism and my research into this industry in unexpected ways.

That person is set photographer Tsuda Ichirō. A veteran of Pink sets and studios since the 1970s, Tsuda is one member of a small group of photographers who are called on to visit the cast and crew of films in production and shoot the still images of semi-nude actresses (and occasionally semi-nude men) for the highly uniform Pink Film advertisement posters that hang at the entrances to Pink specialty theaters. After briefly seeing Tsuda on location at the *Baked Cheesecake* shoot and then briefly speaking with him at the wrap party, I learned that over 20 years earlier he had published a book that documented his Pink-related photographic work in exquisite detail. It was not until much later, when I had gained more of an understanding about how the films were translated from set, to studio, and then to screen, that I began to realize the value of Tsuda's document as a visual commentary on the discourses of pornography, obscenity, and visibility in Japanese Pink Film history.

Entitled *The Location (Za Rokēshon)*, Tsuda's 1980 book is an illustrated 229-page document about the cameraman's experiences with Pink cast and crew on the sets of several films produced in the late 1970s. The text is comprised of a number of anecdotal essays and reflections of Tsuda's encounters with a dozen different Pink personalities, and concludes with a section of excerpts from the censorship and obscenity regulations maintained by the quasi-independent Japanese film censorship board, Eirin (*Eirin Kanri Iinkai*, or the Film Classification and Rating Committee).⁸ Perhaps most importantly, *The Location* contains over 100 photographs from an early stage in Tsuda's career as a Pink photographer. Instead of his poster and production still work, or the kinds of eroticized, glossy picture books published under his name as he became more popular later in the decade, *The Location* focuses on Tsuda's personal, fly on the wall images of actors, directors, and staff on the set, and of the ephemera, surroundings, and situations common to the site of Pink Film production at the time.⁹

The book arrived at a defining moment in Pink history. Video recording and viewing technology was starting to spread through professional and consumer channels in the late 1970s. September of 1981 saw the release of the *Daydream (Hakujitsumu)* remake, the first Japanese hard-core (*honban*) theatrical porn film, directed by the same Takechi Tetsuji who released the original soft-core, Pink Film version of *Daydream* in 1964 and the notorious and lawsuit-inspiring *Black Snow (Kuroi Yuki)* in 1965.¹⁰ The first commercial adult video tapes also appeared on the market in May of that year, with the releases of *Woman from the Porno Magazine: Peeping at Secrets (Binibon no Onna: Hiō Nozoki)* and *White Paper on the Secretary's Slit: Ripe Secret Garden (OL Wareme Hakusho: Jukushita Hien)*.¹¹ Amidst the formation of numerous adult video production companies, Nikkatsu Studios, still trying to stave off bankruptcy with their high-budget line of Roman Porno films, also began shooting on video

for their *Live Shoot* (or “live-shot”; *nama-dori*) adult series. Ex-Pink director Yoyogi Chū (a.k.a. Yoyogi Tadashi) inaugurated his highly popular *Document: The Masturbation (Dokumento: Za Onanii)* video series in 1982.

Around the same time, a number of prominent 1960s and 1970s Pink auteurs graduated to more mainstream filmmaking projects. Wakamatsu Kōji, whose sex films defined the independence and political charge of Japanese adult film for a generation, released his final non-Pink adult feature *A Pool Without Water (Mizu no Nai Puru)* in 1982 before shifting to mainstream and major studio filmmaking for most of the next two decades. In the transitional decades of the 1980s and 1990s, Pink Filmmakers experimented widely with video. Pink theaters screened occasional film transfers of video-shot material (typically called *kineko* productions, from the Japanese word for kinescope),¹² and Pink narratives often became as much fantasies about inter- or intra-media flirtation and reproduction as they were stories of men and women copulating. Despite the aforementioned claims to Pink’s absolute and unwavering attachment to 35mm celluloid photography and distribution, by the 1980s Pink was consciously and consistently engaging with the new video formats. The challenges presented by home video markets, video camera technology, and the live documentary aesthetics of AV contributed strongly to a discursive restructuring of what Pink Film meant to domestic producers and audiences. The contemporary “Pink Film” was in fact defined by the material and technological changes of the adult moving image industry in the early 1980s.

The increasingly inward-looking discourse of Pink Film history also found new venues for expression and exhibition at that time. A network of Pink specialty theaters had started to solidify around the late 1970s,¹³ providing more opportunities for audiences to see Japanese-made Pink-only programs separate from the major studio adult films and censored “Western

Pink Films” like *Deep Throat* (1972) or *Pussy Talk* (1975) that were common in adult theaters up to that point. The first Zoom-Up adult film festival— forerunner to the yearly Pink Taishō industry awards ceremony—was held in March of 1980. Celebrations of Pink’s specificity flourished in print as well. Director Yamamoto Shinya published books about his experiences in adult film: *A Porno Director’s Battles* (*Poruno Kantoku Funsenki*, 1978) and *I Am a Molester* (*Watashi wa Chikan*, 1979). These were followed in the 1980s by a number of other seminal publications on Pink Film history, including Suzuki Yoshiaki’s *Pink Film Water Margin* (*Pinku Eiga Suikoden*, 1983), Wakamatsu Kōji’s *I Get My Hands Dirty* (*Ore wa Te o Yogosu*, 1982), Murai Minoru’s *Nude Dream Chronicle* (*Hadaka no Yume Nendaiki*, 1989), and actor and director Nogami Masayoshi’s *Requiem: Where Will Pink Film Go?* (*Chinkonka: Pinku Eiga wa Doko e Yuku*, 1985). These works redefined and reiterated the material and cultural peculiarities of Pink Film production against the changing environment of adult home video technology.

A typical commentary on Pink’s specificity can be found in Nogami’s book, in an article reproduced from an October 1983 issue of *Jabu* magazine. The author lamented the imminent changes facing the industry: “The romance of nude films is going to disappear... Just as the five major [film studio]s started to go bankrupt one after another with the appearance of television, the recent video boom is swiftly reducing attendance numbers for Pink Films.”¹⁴ After two decades of ambiguously independent productions mixed with subcontracted and studio-distributed films, of cinema programs that blended Pink with American porn, European porn, and high-budget Japanese studio sex films, Pink industry and insider publications in the 1980s struggled to discursively isolate Pink Film as a unique kind of adult cinema.

It is hard to overstate the importance of the new library of Pink studies that appeared in the 1980s. Yet, even among these conspicuous works, Tsuda’s anecdotal and more visual

narrative of the Pink set deserves close attention. In a world of nearly disposable images and often casually subjective (if sincere) behind-the-scenes stories, *The Location* was a groundbreaking historical and visual record of the Pink Film industry.¹⁵ Published first in May of 1980, by September 1984 the book was already in its ninth printing. In that same month, a fictionalized adaptation of Tsuda's photographic adventures was released as a major motion picture by leading Japanese film studio Shochiku. Entitled simply *Location (Rokēshon)*, the melodramatic story of a Pink crew's tragi-comedic adventures on location was directed by popular filmmaker and Yamada Yōji collaborator Morisaki Azuma and starred Nishida Toshiyuki, a well-known actor who later became famous for his enduring role in Shochiku Studios' 22-part *Free and Easy (Tsuru Baka Nisshi, 1988-2009)* film series, based on a comic book about a fishing-crazy office worker. The bittersweet and highly dramatized narrative of the *Location* film, however, had little connection to the first person history and on-set photographic observations presented by Tsuda's *The Location* book.

In 1980, Tsuda was not some casual photographer who stumbled into the film world, but in fact a successful professional artist. By the time of *The Location*'s original release, he had already headlined three private exhibits at the Nikon Salon gallery in Tokyo, the third containing the source material for the images in this book. He continued his activities as a freelance and art photographer throughout the 1980s, and in 1989 was awarded the eighth Domon Ken Award for his book of black and white snapshot photographs, *The Narrow Road (Oku no Hosomichi)*, named after the classic poetry collection by Japanese poet Matsuo Bashō). Later appointed as president of the Japan Photographer's Association, as of 2013 he was still working and continued to shoot publicity stills for both Pink Films and hard-core adult videos.

The Location marks a focal point between significantly different representational registers in the already complex middles of soft-core adult filmmaking in Japan: the first person anecdotal text, the documentary photograph, and the fictional Pink Film. As a gateway to exploring this industry, particularly within a transitional period marked both by a kind of industrial stability and the evolution of a competing adult video industry, I will use the rest of this chapter to concentrate on the context and content of Tsuda's images and the role they perform in suggesting a historical discourse on Pink Film and its mode of realist photographic representation. I approach the construction of an ontology of Pink pornography and measure the ambiguity or obscenity of photographic representation in Pink Film via Tsuda's images. Aside from *The Location*'s ethnographic and historical value as a detailed document on Pink filmmaking at this crucial point on the cusp of the porn video revolution, Tsuda's pictures imply an interesting dialogue between the competing porno-realisms of the fictional moving picture, the documentary-style adult video, and the documentary still photograph at perhaps the last historical moment in Pink Film before the effects of video production and distribution both diluted and purified the cinematic nature of the industry; not coincidentally, the moment at which Pink began to coalesce into a clearly identifiable product.

By relating, on a representational level, photographic elements of the still image and the moving image, I do not wish to collapse the important material and aesthetic differences between these codependent but very different visual realms. As we know, film reels do not move by themselves, and so-called still photographs capture not a frozen moment but a span of time measured in light and material.¹⁶ And by no means do I consider Tsuda's still images necessarily representative of the pictures contained in Pink Film footage. Behind-the-scenes snapshots are not promotional poster images, nor are they frame enlargements from a theatrical film print.

Nevertheless, Tsuda's work is invaluable for close analysis of the Pink Film and its discursive reformulations in 1980s Japan. Just as Pink Films rely on the suggestion of a social, material, or sexual reality behind the screen (and under the sheets), Tsuda's documentary images depend on creating a productive binary between themselves and the meta-fictional world they presume to explore.

Although it was received for work done in the decade after *The Location*'s publication, Tsuda's endorsement with a Domon Ken Award is a significant indication of the photographic mode he works in. Domon Ken (1909-1990) was a pioneering Japanese photographer who advocated a position of objective photographic reality through his conception of the "absolutely unstaged snapshot." The prize awarded in his name since 1982 is a highly-respected acknowledgement of excellence in contemporary Japanese photography. While Domon worked in several different styles during his career, in a variety of formats,¹⁷ he is perhaps best known for his theories of realism in photography that were inspired by the work of Henri Cartier-Bresson and the concept of the absolutely unstaged snapshot or "decisive moment" (articulated by Domon in Japanese as *ketteiteki shunkan*). The prize awarded in Domon's name since 1982 is a highly-respected recognition of excellence in contemporary Japanese photography. Cartier-Bresson's photographs are powerful because of their unique and uncanny combination of realist and formalist elements, by seemingly freezing moments of action with a fast shutter speed in an unmoving frame, but Domon assimilated the French photographer's phrase on his own terms to emphasize the absolute existence of an indexical world. For Domon, the *ketteiteki shunkan* depended on an experienced and careful gaze that could discern between the staged and the real. He proposed criteria based on the absolute existence of a pro-filmic referent that relied on the ability to discern between the performed or staged and the realistic image.

In essence, realism in photography is a basic method of snapshot photography, the primary requisite of which is that it be ‘absolutely unstaged.’ Unlike the snapshot—again, a term that has come to be used in reference to a specialized ‘genre’—realist photography encompasses landscapes, people, still photography: any theme that can be engaged via this approach. If there is even the slightest hint of pose, artificiality, or performance in the photograph—no matter how well it is composed, or how demonstrative it may be—with time and with repeated viewing, it will not hold up. The very foundation of such a photograph is weak: it will fail to maintain interest. It is only when there is not even the vaguest taint of falseness in the photograph that it may rightly be termed ‘absolutely unstaged.’ Even a photograph that is at first captivating and seems a wonderful masterpiece will, if it has any element of artificiality, eventually lose its impact as one continues to look at it, because there is a defilement that worked its way into the image at the very moment the shutter was released.¹⁸

If we transfer this realist aesthetic to the context of pornography—a privileged, exaggerated, and highly stylized view of bodies, expressions, and acts that presumably *should not* be seen, and in the case of Pink Film are often deliberately obscured to paradoxically create an illusion of indexicality—Domon’s idea of the unnoticed photographer capturing a completely unrehearsed scene is emphasized in the voyeurism of Tsuda’s approach to the Pink set. While Tsuda himself may choose other words to describe his work, the bulk of his black and white photographs in *The Location* seem to capture the tensions that arise between an organic Domon/Cartier-Bressonian ideal of reality and the technologically and formally structured realism of the fictional Pink Film.

Consisting mainly of shots of the Pink Film shooting locations and the staff and cast personnel who occupy them, the pictures in Tsuda’s collection show presumably spontaneous episodes from moments before, during, and after the movie camera started rolling. On the top of page 23, actress Nakahara Miyuki lays on a tatami mat in a small room, with her unnamed co-star fanning himself beside her. Next to them in the upper right of the frame, a focus puller measures the distance from the bed to the camera lens as a lighting staff positions a lamp in the room. The composition captures both the apparatus of filmmaking and the cramped reality of the

Pink set. It was shot in the momentary, in-between space of transition between one take and the next—framing the labor of film production that is typically hidden between the sutured, contiguous takes of a finished print—with the blurred shape of the actor’s fan marking the relatively slow speed of Tsuda’s shutter. This semi-narrative representation envisions the space of the Pink set from the mediating eye of an invisible camera that travels uninterrupted between staged moments of filmed performances and the down time of the unrehearsed activities that play out between takes.

In a small photograph on page 68 from the filming of an unnamed story featuring an “invisible man”—*tōmei ningen*, a popular genre even today in both soft- and hard-core Japanese pornography—an unidentified actress sits alone, facing a mirror on a low wall separating the two gendered sections of a public bath house. On top of the left side of the wall rest several lamps providing light for the scene. On the upper right side of frame, sitting on the wall directly above her, a staff member is starting to pour a bucket of water on the actress’s head. Tsuda’s photograph freezes the decisive moment of the water falling out of the bucket, just as it starts to splash against the actress’s back.

Pages 57, 59, and 65 show pictures of actresses in a different kind of decisive moment: during the act of sexual intercourse before the movie camera. In the full-page image on page 57, the frame is half-observed by a dark barrier, as if the image was shot in hiding while peeping on the protagonists. Other photographs show the cast and staff preparing for a scene with cameras, lights, and scripts (pages 11, 18-19, 26, 28-29, 35, 69, 75, 77, 113), actors rehearsing their love scenes or relaxing after a take (pages 69, 99, 161), or the cluttered *mise en scène* of theatres, shooting locations, and facilities used during production (pages 20-21, 50-53, 71, 73, 79, 81, 105). All of the photos include captions to identify the location or name the significant cast and

crew members within the frame. Several of the book's pages are also devoted to large photographs of actresses in various stages of physical undress or narrative distress, posing in eroticized gestures for Tsuda's Nikon as they would for the gaze of the movie camera (pages 45, 47, 83, 123, 127, 133).¹⁹

Viewed as a somewhat linear series with a loose narrative trajectory, Tsuda's stills create an alluring visual story about the Pink Filmmaking process itself. Tsuda's point of view roams around the sets and locations freely, highlighting angles and moments missed by the more fixed nature of the movie camera. Occasionally, it interrupts unstaged moments with images of nude female bodies in carnal ecstasy that echo the prerequisite style of fictional Pink eroticism, but in balancing the still image with the moving pornographic performance, *The Location* strives to locate a documentary perspective in the pro-filmic reality of the real/imaginary space behind the screen, where men and women *perform* gendered gestures of desire and filmmakers assemble strips of film into commercial fantasies. The paradox of this approach is that both visual realms—the fictional space of the Pink Film (which, with a minority of deliberately posed nude photographs and none of the evidence of the moving picture itself, is only hinted at in the book) and the ethnographic space of Tsuda's report—are remediated primarily through the annotated still photograph.²⁰ Tsuda's history reduces the narrative imagination of pornographic moving images to the documentary realities of the still image.

With these semiotics of representation in mind, two text sections at the core of the book are particularly revealing. Framed by a discussion of his memories of Pink director Seki Kōji on the first pages of chapter three, Tsuda describes his position on theories of realism in filmmaking. Seki was a director and producer of documentary and educational films before shifting to Pink production in the 1960s. In Tsuda's account, Seki's work caused a stir when his

short documentary film *The White Mountain Range* (a.k.a. *The Roof of Japan* [*Shiroi Sanmyaku*], 1957), which earned an endorsement from the Japanese Ministry of Education and was nominated at the 10th Cannes Film Festival, was criticized for allegedly filming its animal subjects in artificial or studio conditions instead of outdoors in the mountain range that the documentary claimed to report on. Tsuda explains that the reaction to accusations of deception in a Ministry of Education documentary caused an uproar.²¹ This prompts the author to remark that the symbiosis between lies and reality in film is a fundamental issue for filmmaking, and he reiterates his own deep interest as a photographer in the topic of realist representation.²²

Tsuda continues his comments on realism by dividing the truth of photography into three levels—a larger truth, a middle truth, and smaller truths—but perhaps unusually for a photographer associated with the Domon Ken tradition of photography, or perhaps as an indication of the perilous representational situation Pink Film and pornographic photography faced at the time, he rests his argument on a position of ambivalence.

There are infinite truths (*jijitsu*). Everything that exists in the world is true. Truth rolls around in everything. Or rather, we all live within truth. Within that greater truth (*dai jijitsu*), all the cameraman is able to capture is a middle truth, which is in itself an arrangement of various smaller truths. Given this, since it is impossible for us to create a single reality (*genjitsu*), our method must always be to layer small and middling truths on top of each other in an attempt to approach a greater truth. This explanation is a bit complicated, but even if we layer small and middle truths infinitely, we can never arrive at a large truth. It is easy to imagine how two works based entirely on the same truths might arrive at completely opposite conclusions.

Filming things that occur entirely in reality (*genjitsu*), or filming things that are all completely man-made—which is the larger truth, the ‘reality’? This is obviously a philosophical problem so big it makes one’s head spin. If you think about things like this too much, you get exhausted and become grim, so I make a point of not trying to think too deeply about it. Do whatever the hell you want. That is my position in a nutshell.²³

Perhaps unusual for a photographer associated with the Domon Ken school of realist photography who works on pornographic film sets, Tsuda rests his statement on a very skeptical

position. However, Tsuda's uncertainty is not a retreat; instead, it emphasizes the indeterminate representational location of Pink images at a time when the industry struggled to discursively reinvent itself against the different pornographic realism of video. Instead of endorsing an indexical approach to pornography that emphasizes the spatial, temporal, or bodily reality of sex images, indeed instead of settling the rich questions of representation bulging at the seams of *The Location*, Tsuda hovers carefully around the main "philosophical problem" that his profession (and Pink Film representation) depended on. In Tsuda's hypothetical viewfinder, perhaps it would be useful to generalize the value of the erotic and the explicit in film in its specific approach to transmitting the aura of *life* through a representational art.²⁴ In mechanically reproducible visual media such as photographs or digital images, illustrated journals or magazines, and especially moving pictures, multiple layers of mediation and the potential for unlimited reproduction may be seen to reduce the immediacy and liveliness of an original image. This appears to reflect what Tsuda is referring to in his discussion of different layers of truth being piled up. (It also foregrounds the complications presented by the forms of remediation and multi-format experimentation—*kinoko* films, video and 8mm shots, etc.—that Pink narratives began to employ regularly in the 1980s.)

On the other hand, we might assume from this commentary that the pornographic image compensates for that lack by reproducing a specific kind of visual content that, for a variety of reasons (legal, industrial, or political, however arbitrary they may or may not be), is often strongly regulated in public spaces. But at least as much as the significance of the visual content, the intense concentration on specific, hidden points of the image (the nipple, the penis, the vagina, the anus) which is carefully constructed by meta-narrative discourses as well as the techniques of the apparatus itself (lighting, lens, angle, focus) might attempt to lure the viewer

away from the distance imposed by mediation and create a prick or “punctum” through the picture. As Roland Barthes mused in *Camera Lucida*, describing the “love” and “pity” he felt of photography while looking at images that “pricked” him through the representational barrier of the visual, “I passed beyond the unreality of the thing represented, I entered crazily into the spectacle, into the image, taking into my arms what is dead, what is going to die...”²⁵—or in other words, what is now, through the image, alive. Barthes’s comments are an excellent description of the *ideal* pornographic film experience. The more obscene (in the eyes of the beholder) a pornographic image is, the better it creates its own “aura” of life, of intimacy, of visual subjectivity.

Postwar French film theorist André Bazin explained the uncanny power of still and moving photographs in relation to their capability to capture or freeze life, mummifying it into a permanent but accessible stasis. In a recently translated 1949 essay about his experience watching a film of a bullfight, he muses about how the ontological properties of photography tend to place film representation on a thin boundary that balances between the animate and the dead.

Death is nothing but one moment after another, but it is the last. Doubtless no moment is like any other, but they can nevertheless be similar as leaves on a tree, which is why their cinematic repetition is more paradoxical in theory than in practice. Despite the ontological contradiction it represents, we quite readily accept it as a sort of objective counterpart to memory. However, two moments in life radically rebel against this concession made by the consciousness: the sexual act and death. Each is in its own way the absolute negation of objective time, the qualitative instant in its purest form. Like death, love must be experienced and cannot be represented (it is not called the little death for nothing) without violating its nature. This violation is called obscenity. The representation of a real death is also an obscenity, no longer a moral one, as in love, but metaphysical. We do not die twice. In this respect, a photograph does not have the power of film; it can only represent someone dying or a corpse, not the elusive passage from one state to another.²⁶

Thus obscenity might not be defined as a representation that simply violates political rules and social mores or material that, in Linda Williams' summary of Walter Kendrick's analysis "exacerbates a dominant group's worry about the availability of these media to persons less 'responsible' than themselves."²⁷ Perhaps it is instead a violation of representation itself, and of photography's presumptions (that is to say, our faith in photography) to become an "objective counterpart to memory."

The most obvious examples of 'the little death' in Japanese adult media come not from the Pink Film, but from the hard-core video. Pink Film cannot address the obscenity of the act of love in the same way as the hard-core porno, which often carefully captures the meat shots and scenes of sexual acts in frame but obscures the central details of that image with post-production digital blurring. The Pink moving image deliberately and conspicuously *avoids* images of intercourse or genital contact, while the hard-core AV erases it on a level that makes the act impossible to verify. Yet, following Bazin, in both Japanese porn formats the image is obscene because of the way it draws attention not only to the representation (simulated or otherwise) of pro-filmic sex, but also to the unrepresentable nature of such an act. The impossibility of capturing that decisive act—the real act of intercourse—is highlighted and even parodied by the Pink Film's prudish angles and lighting and its clumsy practical visual censorship. The viewer's attention is drawn exactly to the one thing the eye cannot comprehend: the obscured prick. The inactive/presumed/imaginary genitals are reduced to a smudge, or blocked by an obscuring object such as a lamp or pillow. They are left just out of frame or out of focus, and when they become 'visible' they are deconstructed into an assortment of flickering or abstract grains or squares that lay not in pro-filmic space, but on the two-dimensional plane of the screen. The problem of this blot in hard-core representation is one that I shall address in the following

chapter. For now, the question remains as to how such a point would be represented in *Pink Film*, which does not necessarily appropriate the same visual limits as adult video. Pink Film does have a kind of equivalent, however, and it is one that Tsuda discusses at length.

The trace of life in Tsuda's images becomes especially apparent at the section at the end of chapter two, "Thoughts on *Maebari/Chinbari*" ("Maebari/Chinbari Kō"). Starting on page 85, in this segment which immediately precedes Tsuda's seeming retreat from ontological analysis, the photographer goes into an extended discussion of *maebari*, a term that refers to a kind of "front cover" that is commonly worn on the bodies of Pink actors while performing (otherwise) fully nude in a love scene. Unnecessary in the early years of Pink, when nude photography was somewhat more conservative (leaving crotches out of the frame completely) and materials like film were somewhat cheaper (making retakes more possible), the *maebari* became a common yet invisible prop on Pink Film sets in the late 1970s and remains so today. As essentially nothing between the legs is allowed to be filmed on the Pink set, participants must take care not to let any obscene item slip into the camera's view. To prevent any mistakes (which would necessitate wasteful cuts or cost- and time-consuming post-production censorship—the method favored in adult video production), actors and actresses generally apply these bandage-like coverings to hide their genitals. *Maebari* are taped onto the crotch and then painfully discarded at the end of a scene's shooting.

On pages 85-95, Tsuda includes ten images showing *maebari* being applied by actors, and then the way that the appendages look after use. In a caption under the photograph on the top of page 94, that shows one such cover lying on the ground between two naked feet, Tsuda identifies the "used *maebari*. It's bizarre to see it like this; you start to feel that the *maebari* has its own soul (*kokoro*)."²⁸ While "soul" is something of a humorous exaggeration, Tsuda's

account does allow us to see this piece of Pink filmmaking ephemera as revealing a privileged ontological trace between representations and the physical and temporal specificity of their adult film actor subjects. The “aura” of explicit filmmaking in this case is not captured on film; it is a tangible, physical object that is left unfilmed and ultimately discarded as trash behind the scenes.

At the outset of the section, Tsuda explains how, at one point in his life, he became a collector of leftover *maebari*.²⁹ While he emphasizes that his collecting does not necessarily indicate a perverted sexual obsession on his part, the idea of actresses just tossing these shields of tape and gauze that protected their important parts into a dirty ashtray (often, as he details, with pieces of pubic hair clinging to their edges) was just too much for him to bear. At the time of writing *The Location*, word of Tsuda’s odd habit had spread so far that actresses would willingly sign their names on their used *maebari* and present them to the photographer as a gift. The trace of this intimate object to a living being was thus reiterated through both a written signature and the physical (visual) *maebari* itself. This trace is completely left out of the Pink Film text, reimagined only through the extra-textual and meta-narrative point of view of Tsuda’s camera.

Tsuda’s emphasis on the *maebari* is important for a theoretical reading of the book for two complimentary reasons that, again, relate to Pink’s contentious relationship to adult video. The optical censorship applied in Japanese AV is a kind of blocking or pixilation known as mosaic (*mozaiku*) that only covers the image on the screen. Despite endless meat shots in adult video—many of which are, like Pink, partly or completely fabricated—actors do not wear any covering on their bodies. This censorship is added at the post-production stage.³⁰ Nonetheless, this is only a two-dimensional camouflage. Mosaic does not presume to obscure the bodies of the actors and actresses in pro-filmic space, it covers only the image, the representation of those acts

and that space. At the same time, by laying a perceptual barrier at the surface of the viewing screen that is incompatible with the space of the picture's indexical content, it implies the *reality* (or simply the *presence*) of content within the frame. It allows the viewer to believe that sex actually took place, but it also encourages that viewer to perceive that sex was actually photographed and successfully represented before it could be obscured. At the level of spectatorship, the mosaic blot can only hint at its hidden meanings, as a pure signifier with its signified partner left in an abyss, either missing or misarticulated.

While this reading specifies the inherent representational differences in AV pornography and Pink pornography, it also demonstrates an important continuity in both genres' belief in the reality of the set. As Tsuda's work shows, the Pink Film itself contains a similar kind of blot in the *maebari*. Within the Pink Film, this covering is obscured (as part of the impossibility of representing genitalia altogether), but Tsuda's photographs reveal this attempt to compensate for the obscene punctum which is missing but always expected in the image. The covering also implies the desire to represent—to see, or to hopefully reveal—something that is not intentionally filmed to begin with. The *maebari* is a kind of pro-filmic mosaic, one that rests not on the two-dimensional screen but on the actors' bodies at the time of the filming. In the case of Pink Film, however, the *maebari* is never intended to be visible; it makes the obscene invisible, and is then itself obscured. Tsuda's images are in themselves a kind of piercing of the fiction of Pink Film, replacing the obscuring screen with actuality, but are still reliant on a discourse of the physical trace of the visual to satisfy the belief in the realism of the pornographic image.

The blots of *maebari* and mosaic in Japanese adult moving images are material indicators of the limits of sexual representation in Japan. The proof of an indexical reality in Japanese adult film and video production is not in the meat shot or the money shot, but in this obvious and

deliberate marker of *mediation* between the viewer and the (imaginary, constructed, and performed) sex scene. Still, it would be too much to say that the Pink Film should simply do away with its odd bandages. The economic and technical limitations of Pink Film, as fluid as they may be, necessitate a kind of self-censorship that is not possible or necessary in other modes of pornography that are based in more recent video technologies or in different (or distant) business and distribution models. For a cameraman with no an ambiguous investment in realism, however, Tsuda's work reinforces the obscene visual celebration of the devices designed to obscure the disturbing immediacy of pornography—a structuring absence, an immediacy that that these films represent only by their conspicuous denial of it. If anything, the *maebari* is a testament to the larger reality of the photographic image, and a perplexing endorsement of the representability of acts and body parts that are actually never integrated into the Pink Film itself.

In counterpoint to Tsuda's experiences on location, and thanks to the support that Moriyama and Sano offered me, I was able to begin to perform my own amateur behind-the-scenes photography of the Pink Film set, beginning in late 2005 with my experience on the *Baked Cheesecake* set and extending to a handful of other Pink shoots in 2006 and from 2008 to 2013. Tsuda was present to shoot the publicity photos for several of these films as well. Looking back on my images of Pink Film sets in comparison to Tsuda's, with 25 years of separation between the photographer's 'locations' and my own, I was impressed by both the similarities of the settings, actors, and *mise en scène* between the accounts as well as several differences—some which are surely indicative of the changes in photographic technologies and Pink Film production over the years, and some that seemed to reveal the intricacies of Tsuda's well-trained eye and his pragmatic approach to his subject matter.

On the set of *Baked Cheesecake*, the actors all used *maebari* for the sex scenes, but in some of those scenes they also taped plastic dildos on top of their coverings. Those brightly-colored plastic phalli were partly obscured during the filming process by the cameraman holding a magnifying glass-like lens (or an opaque plastic spoon) in front of the bottom edge of the camera lens. A vague trace of that artifice but can still be seen in the finished film, as oddly-shaped blobs of color jiggling behind the practical *bokashi* blurring. In an afternoon scene that immediately follows Shirō's surgery, an unwelcome sex friend of Maggie's (Yūji, played by charismatic actor Yoshioka Mutsuo) arrives at Maggie's apartment unannounced for a quick hook-up. Yūji forces himself on Maggie, Maggie relents, and the two make frenzied love in the kitchen. Sano, with *maebari* taped firmly to his crotch (the top of which was scratched with a black marker to suggest pubic hair), acted with an orange-colored dildo protruding, somewhat limply, from between his legs. As the scene escalates, Yūji shoves Maggie against the kitchen counter and starts to perform fellatio on the older bartender. The camera cuts to a close-up of Yūji's face and Maggie's crotch, and the image revealed on the release print is that of Maggie's waist and hips on the left half of the frame, with Yūji's bobbing head on the right side, and a large round blur in the center of the frame, taking up perhaps one-quarter of the total space of the image, revealing a false meat shot of twitching and nearly abstract orange, blue, and black shapes.

The on-location digital photographs I took before, during, and after this scene provide none of the eroticism and excitement implied, but still not shown, in the finished footage. In a photo that I took while the camera crew adjusted the tripod between takes, Yoshioka, kneeling, practices his blow-job technique on the already-covered Sano, who gazes directly into my lens with a look of acknowledged embarrassment on his face. The *mise en scène* of the kitchen is

barren. A bottle of dishwashing soap, a coffee maker, and a small number of condiments sit on the kitchen counter. A green and white checkered tablecloth rests unevenly on the surface that the two characters would use, minutes later, to reach the climax of the scene. In another shot, I capture the third assistant director barely hiding in the shadows just beyond an adjacent doorway, as she scribbles down adjustments to the script while the two men perform their *honban*. In my final photographs from that set, I hid in the next room and zoomed in to capture the faked money shot—several squirts from a plastic syringe full of a mixture of water, condensed milk, and egg whites, released by the first assistant director (who was hiding, crouched, behind Yoshioka’s buttocks) with such accidental enthusiasm that the fake semen splashed Sano in the face.

Having watched the actual pro-filmic events of *Baked Cheesecake*’s production before my own eyes, when I gaze back at those low-pixel count digital photographs today, they seem to be structured around the same kinds of relations and representational ambiguities that Tsuda’s photos implied—an illusion of reality produced in acts that were unrepresented and perhaps fundamentally unrepresentable, powered by an urge to validate that impression by an examination of a *real* historical and material space behind the screen. My own experiences on the set echoed the impression left by *The Location* and Tsuda’s musings on photographic realism—that this form of pornography, and perhaps that pornography itself, both exceeds and undermines the core tenets of filmic representation in its experimental attempts to locate reality in the missing prick of the filmic image.

Or to put it another way, an absence of images of genitalia or pubic hair does not necessarily make a representation any more or less pornographic, realistic, or obscene. In America, Japan, and elsewhere, obscenity is a term defined in tandem with legal precedent, industrial self-regulation policies, and public response. It has never been as easy as Justice Potter

Stewart's superficially straightforward statement (in which he was discussing a film that did *not* show the mysterious qualities that he needed to see). Likewise, the Pink Film encourages us only to imagine what we *don't* see, and what we do see—a vortex of fake sex and (un)representation, held together with loose and usually banal narratives that often mystify and eroticize the operations of the apparatus more than the actions of the characters—quickly evaporates before our eyes. It is in the spaces between technologies and representational registers that we may locate a certain specificity in Pink Film; not in elements that are included or excluded from the image, not in the culturally or industrially-defined boundaries of budgets and facilities, but in the ways that Pink history and industry constantly draw attention to the tensions and negotiations that arise between competing industrial standards, representational technologies, and media.

In the following chapter, I will travel from the site of production into the screens, to further complicate the presumed boundaries between film and video and to reimagine the kinds of copulation that are illustrated by the inherently limited realisms of hard- and soft-core pornographic images in Japan.

¹ It is not uncommon to find popular mainstream actors appearing in 1980s adult video. One of Sano's productions, a 1986 video release named *Invite Me Into Your Mouth (O-Kuchi ni Sasotte)*, co-starred an uncredited Taguchi Tomorō three years before his breakout role in Tsukamoto Shinya's international cult hit *Tetsuo: The Iron Man (Tetsuo)*, 1989).

² Original script title: *The Final Bullet (Saigo no Dangan)*.

³ Original script title: *Don't Let It Bring You Down*.

⁴ Original script title: *Owl's Summer (Fukurō no Natsu)*.

⁵ The ending of the film is ambiguous and caused some confusion among the participants. After the film was completed, I recall arguments between Sano, Moriyama, and the other cast members about whether or not Maggie and Shirō actually did die at the end.

⁶ For an alternate description of a contemporary Pink Film shoot, see Miryam Sas's contribution in *The Pink Book*. Concluding a multi-faced analysis of the place of feminism in the career of director Hamano Sachi, Sas eloquently describes a day on the set of a Hamano film in 2010. Sas, "Pink Feminism? The Program Pictures of Hamano Sachi," 315-321.

⁷ My approach to Pink Film production aims to chart a route of travel between studies of Japanese adult film creators, their images, and their intended audiences. For a broader overview of contemporary movements in English language studies of film production and reception cultures, see John Thornton Caldwell, *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television*, Vicki Mayer, Miranda Banks, and John Thornton Caldwell, eds., *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries*, and Janet Staiger, *Media Reception Studies*.

⁸ Details about the committee can be found online at <http://www.eirin.jp/english/index.html>.

⁹ *The Pink Book* includes a brief biography of Tsuda and 31 examples of his photographic work. Nornes, ed., *The Pink Book*, 183-214.

¹⁰ Chapter III of Kirsten Cather's book *The Art of Censorship in Postwar Japan* includes a fascinating study of the *Black Snow* obscenity trial that took place in the late 1960s.

¹¹ Fujiki, *Adaruto Bideo Kakumeishi*, 16.

¹² So-called *kineko* films were not necessarily literally kinescope transfers. Most were transferred from video to film via telecine. However both technologies exist in Pink production from the 1980s on. I address that distinction and its meaning for Pink intermediality in more detail in the following chapters.

¹³ While Pink specialty theaters have existed since the 1960s, an increase in these theaters occurred in the late 1970s and early 1980s, after major studios' (such as Nikkatsu and Toei) attempts to emulate Pink's success with their own soft-core films started to die down and mixed bills of Pink and non-Pink adult films became scarce. In the 2000s, most of the remaining specialty Pink theaters operated with triple-features of content that changed every week or ten days. There are still a number of theaters around the country that operate on single-, double-, or quadruple-bills. Most adult theaters exclusively show Pink Films from the last remaining distribution companies; Shintohto, Okura Pictures (OP), and Shin Nihon Eizō (a.k.a. Xces). Some, such as the Cine Roman Ikebukuro, may combine one classic Nikkatsu Roman Porno with two OP or Xces Pink Films on the same bill. The programs are heavily weighted toward recent films though. At specialty theaters, screenings of 1980s films are rare; screenings of pre-1980s films are almost unheard of. See Zahlten (especially pp. 183-188) for historical data about the development of Pink theaters.

¹⁴ Nogami, *Chinkonka*, 18. It is interesting that in this quote Nogami does not relate the spread of television to Pink Film, as the explosion of adult-oriented filmmaking was in part an economic strategy designed to combat those same attendance numbers by luring audiences out of their homes and back into the theaters. The life cycle of the Pink Film industry is not surprisingly bookended by two forms of electronic image distribution, television broadcast and home video.

¹⁵ Tsuda, *Za Rokēshon*.

¹⁶ An excellent summary of theories about the inherent movement of the still photographic image can be found in Chapter 3 of Mary Ann Doane's *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*.

¹⁷ Putzar, "The Reality of Domon Ken," 308.

¹⁸ Domon, "Photographic Realism and the Salon Picture," 23.

¹⁹ Between the publication of *The Location* in 1980 and Tsuda's receipt of the Domon Ken award in 1989, the photographer also published several books of still photographs that fit perhaps more firmly in the tradition of nude magazines, featuring staged erotic photos without any of the documentary elements or theoretical musings.

²⁰ Here I am indebted to Maki Fukuoka, whose graduate seminar on the history of photography in Japan at the University of Michigan inspired many of the issues I considered during the course of my research on Pink Film.

²¹ Tsuda, *Za Rokēshon*, 98.

²² Tsuda's account itself may suffer from some historical inaccuracies. Tsuda identifies *The White Mountain Range* as being directed by Seki. However, most reputable sources credit the film to director Imamura Sadao. Seki and Imamura worked together at Radio Film (Rajio Eiga), a production company they co-founded in 1947 that specialized in animal documentary films. Seki's exact involvement in *The White Mountain Range*, if any, is unclear.

²³ Tsuda, *Za Rokēshon*, 100.

²⁴ Here I am of course invoking the writings of Walter Benjamin.

²⁵ Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 116-117.

²⁶ Bazin, "Death Every Afternoon," 30.

²⁷ Williams, *Hard Core*, 12.

²⁸ Tsuda, *Za Rokēshon*, 94.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 85.

³⁰ Hard-core Japanese adult videos are not always, and have not always been, explicit. When discussing the output of Outgrow Productions with Sano Kazuhiro, I was told that, throughout the 1980s, perhaps half of all adult videos captured scenes of actual pro-filmic intercourse. The sex acts in many early Japanese adult videos were, as in Pink Film, simulated. Video photography technology, synchronized sound, and post-production editing and censorship helped to suture an illusion of reality even in simulated AV sex scenes, but pro-filmic sex between actors was not necessarily a common element of hard-core Japanese adult video until at least the mid-1990s, when the home

video landscape started to slowly abandon video tape and redefine itself around digital recording and playback formats.

Chapter 3

The Pornography of Remediation: Adult Video and Pink Film

Tsuda Ichirō's visual anthropology of the Pink Film set captures the industry on the cusp of transformation as it nears the end of its second decade. Pink cinema reached its adulthood as new moving image technologies—in particular the magnetic videocassette tape, video cameras, and home-use recording and playback decks—brought rapid changes to the ways adult film and media were produced, distributed, and understood in Japan. While the eroductions of the 1960s and 1970s also exhibited the initial signs of a trans-media interaction, frequently including newspapers, books, the theatrical stage, and employing representations of different (still) photographic image formats as narrative and visual tools,¹ the third decade of Pink Films thoughtfully and deliberately engaged a quickly diversifying video landscape in which, in addition to the bodies of performers, the screen itself became a point of reflection, transformation, and reproduction.

What began as a seemingly industrially-determined shotgun wedding of film and video rapidly morphed into a reproductive revisioning of trans-media experiments, populating screens with broad range of narrative and theoretical explorations. Through the 1980s and into the 1990s, Pink Films and cinemas began to address two apparently contradictory moving image realms—

film and video. Publications, festivals, and international screenings reified the more cinematic pornographic form, while Pink films themselves began to freely exploit video technologies to the benefit of its own discursive reinvention. Once Pink Film had seemingly defined its origins and canonized its material limits through publications such as those introduced in the previous chapter, the theoretical boundaries between celluloid and magnetic tape were re-drawn in the practices of adult moving image production to be reimagined and idealized by industry and text. This complex relationship has defined the ambiguity of the Pink Film format ever since.

As detailed in the previous sections, while most contemporary definitions of Pink Film depend on the extratextual or historical details, the content—or rather the visuality—of Pink cinema has rarely been analyzed closely. While the detailed and careful writings of scholars like Alex Zahlten, Roland Domenig, and Jasper Sharp have made great headway in complicating Pink Film history, the legendary status of Pink's stability remains, sustaining the ideal that it has been, for five decades, an essentially celluloid, essentially cinematic film genre that now is on the verge of decay and disappearance. Discourses of the expansion of home and theatrical video production in the 1980s created a similar aura of an industry in crisis, inspiring self-reflection and discursive reconstruction on the part of the Pink industry that allowed generic origin myths and a rhetoric of technological determinism to take hold.

A closer look at the history of the Pink Film since the 1980s, however, shows us that the adult film was not in fact chased away by the threat of home video. As video technologies began to reanimate and redistribute filmic content, Pink assimilated video aesthetics and content as well. The presumed cinematic (that is, celluloid and theatrical) specificity of Pink Film only became an essential and defining characteristic for the industry when it was no longer universally applicable. How can we approach the transforming historical position of Pink Film without the

limitations that accompany generic definition and industrial distinction? One way might be to not isolate Pink and its discursive formations and reformations as having the characteristics of a genre or a style of filmmaking, but to show instead how it moves in patterns that are more similar to what we understand as a medium—a medium that exists not as a singular entity within and against other Japanese and global adult moving image formats, but one that exists in a state of flux in the productive spaces between different realms of production, exhibition, and content.

Contemporary media theory may help us to take a productive turn away from the specificity of the filmic object in moving image studies. In *The Cinema Dreams its Rivals*, a study of how Hollywood films imagine competing representation and communication technologies, Paul Young describes the relationships between cinema history and other recording formats by identifying three prominent scholarly debates about medium specificity. The ontological-evolutionary model he first describes follows in the legacy of film theories such as those by André Bazin, who suggested that film would evolve according to certain internal rules, eventually reaching a state of perfection or completion as a medium.² The box-office answer proposes a Darwinian model of moving image industries, underlining how film is economically or industrially obliged to combat newer technologies in a strategic response to competitors like radio and television that, it was feared, would take business away from the film industry.³ Young's third concept, cannibalism, points to a concept based on the writings of Marshall McLuhan and Lev Manovich, that identifies the inherent urge of unique media to consume other formats.⁴

I am tempted to agree with Young's assessment that the cannibalism hypothesis is the most compelling approach of these three. As the strongest iteration of a cannibalism-type approach, Young cites Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin, who in the late 1990s theorized concepts

of remediation in the context of digital communications and representation technologies. In their analysis, media are not objects that are unique and isolated from one another, but are instead much less clearly defined formations, always tangled in networks of self-reflexive and perhaps self-conscious relationships with(in) each other. Bolter and Grusin's vision of media is one that is eminently contextual and fluid. In their analysis, the concept of contemporary media loses any sense of technological determinism and instead begins to represent a *movement* or process of translation that can transcend both the material and historical specificity of incompatible formats.

It would seem, then, that *all* mediation is remediation. We are not claiming this as an a priori truth, but rather arguing that at this extended historical moment, all current media function as remediators and that remediation offers us a means of interpreting the work of earlier media as well. Our culture conceives of each medium or constellation of media as it responds to, redeploys, competes with, and reforms other media. In the first instance, we may think of something like a historical progression, of newer media remediating older ones and in particular of digital media remediating their predecessors. But ours is a genealogy of affiliations, not a linear history, and in this genealogy, older media can also remediate newer ones. Television can and does refashion itself to resemble the World Wide Web. No medium, it seems, can now function independently and establish its own separate and purified space of cultural meaning.⁵

Grounding his cannibalism argument in Bolter and Grusin's analysis, Young still carefully distances himself from all of these approaches, arguing for the overriding similarity and malleability of different media identities and suggesting that, "each representational, electrical medium that was developed after projected film hit the market between 1894 and 1896 overlaps with film in such conventions as narrative structure, visual framing, sonic spatial cues, or spectatorial address."⁶

While I find Young's own emphasis on medium *similarity* somewhat overgeneral and unsatisfying as well (different media technologies at least work within discursive formations that serve their roles in the moving image market and in critical and scholarly analysis), it may be useful to consider how the history of Pink Film resonates with the ways these different

formations collide and cohabitate in shared media spaces. A linear history of Pink might assume that, over its surprisingly consistent lifetime, Pink passed through these different stages one at a time. We could say that, as a film format/industry formed within technological limits that did not change significantly for decades, Pink in the 1960s and 1970s existed purely as film and eventually reached the end of its evolution to arrive at a state of hyperbolic perfection; to again quote Alexander Zahlten, projecting an “image of petrified stability.”⁷ In the 1980s and 1990s, Pink responded to competition from home video at the box office and held its ground by enunciating its difference and specificity (unlike in the United States, where video presumably wiped out the pornographic cinema market). Pink then cannibalized video by emulating its content, effects, and apparatus, and otherwise trying to show that the limited celluloid format was still a more stable form of pornographic media. As Bolter and Grusin suggest, it may be more enlightening to move away from linear histories such as these and instead see moving image formats such as Pink as existing within a genealogy of hybrid affiliations.

Examinations into the essential characteristics of celluloid cinema have also taken on momentum following the death of film discourses that mushroomed at the turn of the century. Around the time of film’s 100th birthday, on the cusp of digital advances in production, exhibition, and home video distribution, film scholars began to reevaluate the meaning of film’s history as a photographic (celluloid) material and primarily indexical mode of representation. In his writings on the changes to film suggested by the proliferation of video and digital cinema effects in *The Virtual Life of Film*, film theorist David Rodowick engages the supposition that the beginnings of video and digital representation and the apparent diversification of moving visual media formats spells the end of film as spectators and theorists have conventionally known it. Certainly beginning in the 1980s, the leading status of celluloid film stock “as a recording,

distribution, and exhibition medium” began a swift decline into obsolescence.⁸ However, as Rodowick points out, film was already an uncertain and unstable object. Descriptions of film and video on contrasting poles of audio-visual representation (as well as Rodowick’s own inclination to define film as “any image any image recorded and projected according to” the criteria of photochemical photography as “a transformation of substance in which time, light, and density are directly proportional” to propagate “the reproduction of movement and duration in photographing equidistant frames of equal size projected at a uniform rate of speed”) contribute to a productive but essentially restrictive binary.⁹ Rodowick critiques theories of medium specificity to argue that film is inherently a “hybrid medium” that “is comprised of multiple components irreducible, one would think, to a single essence, and thus remains open to a plethora of diverse and even incompatible styles and formal approaches.”¹⁰ He then goes on to suggest a definition for a medium:

A medium, then, is nothing more nor less than a set of potentialities from which creative acts may unfold. These potentialities, the powers of the medium as it were, are conditioned by multiple elements or components that can be material, instrumental, and/or formal. Moreover, these elements may vary, individually and in combination with one another, such that a medium may be defined without a presumption that any integral identity or an essence unites these elements into a whole or resolves them into a unique substance.¹¹

While Pink producers and creators do emphasize the essence of their work as a celluloid film medium, the relationship of Pink Film to other audio-visual media is in reality much more complex. In the 1980s, the focal point of moving image adult media in Japan underwent a shift from film and theaters to home video and television monitors. In the popular and industrial imagination, however, Pink remained first and foremost a celluloid format designed for theatrical exhibition. Nonetheless, Pink Films themselves were translated into new formats for home video release as Pink narratives began to engage the role of alternative adult movie formats. From this

period on, Pink began to integrate and comment on the uneven balance between moving image formats through the grounding medium of 35mm production. What we may observe happening in the 1980s is a kind of primal scene where the genre of Pink Film is conceived through the joining of presumably separate pornographic moving image formats.

Pink has been surrounded by a rhetoric of specificity that was bolstered by the threat of home video. Yet, Pink's relationship to other video and representation technologies cannot be accurately described by teleological metaphors of one subject (or material) devouring another. Pink's approach to video since the 1980s has been an inherently inclusive, reflexive, and reproductive one, where the "mediation of mediation" was imagined in explicit narrative and visual terms that suggested a tangible or even erotic coupling of different moving image technologies. This coupling, which took place at a defining stage of Pink's reinvention for both domestic and foreign audiences, was revealed in adult films and videos that were increasingly abstracted from the conventional notions of media, genre, industry, and even photographic realism in pornography. While the industry strove to discursively locate its independence and specificity, Pink Films increasingly demonstrated a theoretical investment in narrative and visual content that depended on a much less deterministic vision of the moving image.

Pink Film's coming-of-age as *film* in the 1980s is roughly synchronized to that of home video. Although home video formats took on their own specific cultural and industrial resonances in the 1980s, the history of video tape itself stretches back more than sixty years. Video tape technology was originally developed in the United States in the beginning of the 1950s by companies that were searching for an alternate to the kinescope (film photography of television screens) for storage and syndication of television programs. Jeff Martin writes of how several competing corporations—such as Bing Crosby Enterprises, RCA, and Ampex—tested

different kinds of tape and different recording speeds in a race to develop a technology that was most capable of capturing television moving images for reuse.¹² The technology spread quickly through the U.S. television networks. By late 1956, NBC had acquired their first tape recorder, and in 1957 CBS had also started videotaping programs for time-shifting.¹³

These innovations were closely followed in Japan. A 1956 article in the *Asahi Shinbun*, describes some of the excitement surrounding this new, foreign invention, beginning with a history of recording technologies in different countries and working up through the recent race to produce video formats for television in the U.S. A bold subtitle placed in the middle of the article highlighted the expectations surrounding this new technology—“Extremely simple to use: in the future, a revolution for the film world?”¹⁴ The 1959 *TV/Radio Dictionary*, published by Radio Tokyo and the Asahi Newspaper Company, includes an entry on video tape recording that notably describes it as, “The recording of a television image signal as a signal directly onto tape.”¹⁵

While still far removed from the aesthetics of immediacy, portability (of cameras and recorders as well as software), and realism that the format grew into after video’s transformation into an inexpensive commercial product, early video tape was a *medium* in the most reflexive sense. In fact it was inherently *remediating*—facilitating low-grade copying, transportation, and presentation of other live and recorded moving image formats; a fitting example of Bolter and Grusin’s conceptualization of “remediation as the mediation of mediation.” The high cost of early videotape also made it a format ill-suited to preservation, and most content recorded to video was quickly erased so the tape could be recycled for another program.¹⁶ Video was not initially a primary format for the creation or manipulation of moving image material; it was an intermediary format and an industrial vehicle, conceived as a cheap way to mediate television

and film content and facilitate time-shifting and cross-country presentation of regional programming that was otherwise unavailable to audiences far away, especially across the multiple time zones of the United States. Video tape was designed to translate and reimage/reimagine film and broadcast television across time and space. With the development of cheaper, consumer-level technologies however, this conception of video was soon to change.

As American networks and corporations increasingly focused on the development of new video formats, Japanese companies soon followed suit. In the late 1950s, Sony, Toshiba, Matsushita (Panasonic), and Victor beginning development on video tape recorders based on imported Ampex technology. Victor in 1959 and Sony in 1962 succeeded in developing their own video tape recorders. In 1964, Sony released the world's first home-use reel-to-reel video deck, the CV-2000, which ran 1/2-inch open reel tape and was priced at 198,000 yen ("an astonishingly low price for the time").¹⁷ In the U.S., Ampex developed its own home video tape recorder in 1966, which ran one-inch open-reel tape but was prohibitively priced at nearly \$1,800. The Ampex VR-7000's tendency to break down and its low image quality compared to the Sony led to the model's failure in the marketplace. Ampex tried to re-enter the budding home video industry in 1968, but by the 1970s, Japanese companies had begun to dominate the market.

It took nearly two more decades and several more technological innovations before the waves of this televisual revolution started to reach the shores of the film world. Video tape only approached a practical consumer format with videotape *cassette* technology and the arrival of Japan's groundbreaking recording and playback format—Sony's U-Matic. Developed in the late 1960s and released to the public in 1971, the high price of the U-Matic put it beyond the reach of most consumers, but it inspired a wave of new developments that initiated the era of home video.

In the mid-1970s, several companies in Japan successfully experimented with cheaper 1/2-inch videocassette formats that gradually reduced the price point of recording/playback decks and cassette media to a range that was accessible to home consumers. Sony's Betamax technology appeared in 1975, with Victor and Panasonic's (Matsushita) VHS standards following quickly in 1976 and 1977, respectively. Although there were different specifications for the different video tape formats (recording and playback speed, width of the tape, resolution, etc., and also between the interlaced 30 frames per second of NTSC in North America and Japan and the 25fps of PAL and SECAM in Europe), the *cassette* merely added a new container to videotape that provided easier ways to access, record, and deliver sound and video content.

Early experiments in home videocassette technology continued through the late 1960s to mid-1970s—the most prolific period of adult cinema production in Japan and North America. Pink Film reached a peak of production in the late 1960s.¹⁸ Nikkatsu (with their higher-budget Roman Porno brand) and other major Japanese studios began to release scores of soft-core theatrical features in the mold of the independent Pink productions, albeit with much higher budgets, better equipment, and better facilities than Pink Films.

Adult video historian Fujiki TDC [Tadashi]'s 2009 book *History of the Adult Video Revolution (Adaruto Bideo Kakumeishi)* provides a detailed history on the various incarnations and tests video was subjected to between the development of the video cassette in the early 1970s and the first home video releases later in the decade. While Fujiki's detailed history concentrates on adult video production and distribution—and only briefly mentions Pink in its 250 pages—that history nonetheless fills in important details about the innovations in content that AV brought to adult moving image culture(s) as a whole, outlining some of the technological and textual characteristics that were soon adapted by the Pink industry as the latter

engaged the new look and feel of the electronic media age. As an industry, Pink had always referenced and engaged different representational and reproductive formats—whether commenting on text-based political and erotic narratives of the postwar period, or locating different viewing positions for discourses on moving and still image technologies, and in the 1980s and 1990s the Pink Film industry became an active participant in the video “revolution.”

The most ubiquitous example of pornographic film’s adaptation of video in Japan is probably the most obvious—pre-recorded home video releases; or 35mm film prints that were transferred via telecine to VHS or other consumer video formats for home viewing. As Fujiki notes, before commercial pornography was shot on video tape, the earliest video releases of adult movies were transfers of American, European, and Japanese pornographic films. While illegal, video-shot porn tapes were being produced via underground channels in the Kansai region of western Japan by the late 1970s, and duplication of (sometimes explicit) foreign adult films was rampant, as a commercial medium, pre-recorded video tapes were originally a distribution format for filmed material. Again, video was adopted as a storage and transmission format—not initially as a recording device designed to capture light and sound directly on its own. Years before an aesthetics of pornographic video appeared concurrently with the introduction of video-shot titles, professional studios, and AV auteurs, the goal of video tape was to somehow capture, represent, and transfer film prints. The difference of video was, initially, not in its new representational modes—narrative, mobile camera techniques, synchronized sound, and so forth—but in a translation from emulsion to magnetized tape, from dozens of pounds to less than one pound (24fps 35mm film 60 min=5,400 feet; 1,000 feet = about 5 pounds), and from the reflective light of the cinema screen to the projective light of a television monitor. The video tape revolution began with video’s literal reanimation and reproduction of celluloid film footage, but the

relationship between these two presumably competing formats quickly changed into a productive symbiotic relationship, where electronic and celluloid moving images fed off of each other in every level of the creation process, from photography, to story, to distribution, and even to theatrical exhibition.

The term adult video in Japan today typically refers to a certain category of live, video-shot pornographic moving images. The phrase *nama-dori* (live-shot or shot raw), often used in AV titles or taglines at the time, is roughly synonymous with hard-core, but it also refers to a more general documentary-like aesthetic that quickly became one standard for video pornography in the 1980s. These *nama* AV titles were typically shot with prepared scripts and followed feature film-like editing principles, but they also exploited techniques such as extended long takes, extreme close-ups, and optical censorship that lent themselves to video photography and editing.

The appearance of AV in Japan is generally dated to 1981 with the release of *Secretary's Slit White Paper: Ripe Secret Garden (OL Wareme Hakusho: Jukushita Hien)*, and *The Woman from the Vinyl Book: Peeping at Secrets (Binibon no Onna: Hiou Nozoki)*, both released in May of 1981 by the Japan Video Images (Nihon Bideo Eizō) company.¹⁹ Fast-selling illegal *ura bideo* or “underground video” started spreading through the black market in Japan at that time as well, with half-hour or hour-long adult titles such as *A Poem of Stars and Snakes (Hoshi to Hebi no Shi, 1979)* and the infamous *Ken the Laundry Man (Sentakuya Ken-chan, 1982)*. Without an established retail network, these uncensored videos were sold through mail-order or under the counter at video hardware retail stores. In fact, these early adult videos were often given away as gifts as incentive for VHS deck purchases.²⁰

Video-shot pornography had already existed for a decade before underground videos developed their notoriety however. Nikkatsu, the leading major film studio that shifted to all-pornographic production with its Roman Porno product line in 1971, began outsourcing work to independent producers and distributing its own series of 30-minute pornographic videos at the beginning of the 1970s as well. These tapes were not distributed to home consumers (who were very rare at the time, due to the prohibitive cost of playback equipment), but were lent out via rental companies to hotels in western Japan, where patrons could arrange to have the videos shown on their room TV sets.

Several of Nikkatsu's video tapes were a subject of an obscenity case brought on by the Ikeda Police Department in Tokushima Prefecture in 1971. A four-page article in the weekly magazine *Shūkan Shinchō* describes how the case resulted in the confiscation of 51 Nikkatsu videos and the arrest of a 38-year old video distributor and a 31-year old studio employee. Unsurprisingly, the semi-tabloid magazine publication spends paragraphs describing in detail the content of two tapes that were identified in the investigation—*Crazed Pleasure on Tuesday* (*Kayōbi no Kyōraku*) and *Wild Party* (*Wairudo pātii*). Amidst its colorful descriptions of adult video content and brief excerpts of the videos' scripts, the article also challenges the legal charges based on the ambiguity of the term obscenity. It quotes an officer in charge of the investigation as he defensively tries to rationalize his own uncertainty about the charge.

I can't clearly say what falls under (the term) 'obscenity' because that is linked to the secrecy of the investigation. However, each of the tapes is 30 minutes long, and all of them clearly present scenes of sexual intercourse with fully-naked men and women. At any rate, taken as a whole, and from their appearance, they qualify as criminal.²¹

The article later quotes Watanabe Teruo, the screenwriter and director for the two videos in question, who questions the charges because of the essential similarities between the artifice of video and film adult films.

(In the sense that) our technique is to shoot something that isn't a fuck (*fakku*) and make it look like a fuck, there is no difference between what we're doing, between that level of work, and the 35mm films that play in movie theaters. The actresses use *maebari*... but the full shots may have been too long... maybe that was (the problem).²²

Watanabe, who was also a prolific adult film director at the time, later changed his name to Yoyogi Chū (or Yoyogi Tadashi). His role in this history will soon become much clearer.

In addition to Nikkatsu's Pink Videos and *nama-dori* (live-shot) videotaped adult films, Nikkatsu also took part in this strategy by selling its (legal) video-shot titles to be packaged with video deck sales. In a recent documentary video on Yoyogi's career, Japan Home Video managing director Seya Makoto recounts that Panasonic (Matsushita) bought thousands of early *nama-dori* videos featuring adult superstar Aizome Kyoko so that they could be included in the package for new VCR purchases and sold through Panasonic's official retail outlets.²³ (As Seya notes, Sony did not sell adult videos with their beta format video decks.) The coupling of high-tech video hardware and adult software established an early commercial and material standard from which video and hard-core representation came to be associated.

While Nikkatsu's subcontracted *nama-dori* videos were, like Pink Films, shot and edited to create just an illusion of pro-filmic sex on tape, underground videos, like other kinds of secretly produced and distributed blue films and nude magazines from decades before, had a quality that was unique in the field of video moving image entertainment in Japan; they included actual footage of genitalia and intercourse. Although these were technically illegal for sale in Japan, producers could either sell them through underground channels or create them as

ostensibly for-export products that skirted around industrial and legal restrictions for domestic explicit content. Dozens of these releases, including the aforementioned *Ken-chan*, *The Laundry Man*, *Shogun Iemitsu* (*Shōgun Iemitsu*), *The Samurai's Daughter* (*Samurai no Musume*), and *The Kimono* (*Za Kimono*)—these last three being 1983 releases featuring adult video idol Taguchi Yukari, who performed in at least ten underground video titles that year²⁴—were released in North America by Monterey Park-based adult video distributor Orchids International, Ltd. While it was active, Orchids released dozens of hard-core AV titles that had been shot in Japan with Japanese casts and crews.²⁵ The company's success was cut short in 1987, however, when Orchids was charged with possession, distribution, and advertising obscene materials that, according to city attorney James Hahn, included “sickening violent sexual attacks on women.”²⁶

Information about Orchid's titles is scant and VHS copies are nearly impossible to locate on the used market today. Occasionally, low-quality tape-to-digital copies surface on the Internet, uploaded to one of the ubiquitous free streaming adult video sites such as xhamster.com or xvideos.com. Some of these videos, like the part-*Superman* parody *Flying Sex Man* (1985) include poorly-translated and incomplete English subtitles embedded in the original video image. Others, such as *The Samurai's Daughter* or *The Kimono*, include no English language subtitles or dialogue translation whatsoever. Only occasionally can clues toward the localization process of the Orchid titles can be seen in extant digital copies. While the copy of *Samurai's Daughter* that I viewed has no credits or titles whatsoever, *The Kimono's* availability as a U.S. release is clear from the FBI copyright notice at the beginning of the footage and an English-language title and credit sequences.²⁷

For underground tapes that included explicit, hard-core footage of sex acts, and thus could only be distributed illegally or overseas, the production quality of exported early AV could

range from near-professional to sub-amateur. The 46-minute long period drama *Samurai's Daughter* was shot with performers in elaborate costumes at a variety of indoor and outdoor locations, under artificial and natural lighting, with on-location synchronized audio, and included a coherent storyline with multiple scenes and television-quality continuity editing. *Samurai's Daughter* opens with an exterior shot of a seaside cove. The camera slowly pans and zooms in to frame a young lady in a kimono—Sayaka, played by queen of underground video Taguchi Yukari—as she frolics on the water's edge. After a short exchange with her assistant, Sayaka notices an unconscious man washed up on the beach. The two women walk towards him for a closer look and realize that he is a Caucasian male wearing western-style clothing.

The video cuts to another impressive reestablishing shot of the seaside cliffs before panning and zooming out reveal the wooden entrance to a cave (perhaps a shrine) under the cliff edge, and then cuts again to show the women nursing the man in front of a fire. The man, still unconscious, starts to groan uncomfortably, so the lady asks her assistant to help her remove his clothing and starts washing his torso. After removing his shirt, the lady orders her assistant to wait outside. As the assistant peeps through the cracks in the wooden door, Sayaka opens her kimono and starts to caress the man with her leg, hands, and breasts.

The scene changes and cuts to an interior shot of a samurai oiling his sword, in full period costume, sitting in a Japanese-style room. Sayaka's assistant returns alone, and is questioned by the impatient samurai about Sayaka's whereabouts. Cross-cutting between the two performers reveals the set; a detailed interior that looks as if it may have been constructed for a film or television period drama shoot. The video then returns to Sayaka on the beach as she tries to feed the man water mouth-to-mouth. The man regains consciousness from this wet kiss, at which point Sayaka introduces herself and explains to the man that she found him washed up on the

beach. The man, not understanding Sayaka's Japanese, can only manage to state his name, Francis.

That night, Sayaka sneaks Francis back to her immense home, a large structure that, again, appears to be an expensive set made for a professional commercial shoot. Off-camera, Francis is locked in a cell. In the dramatic sequence that follows, the samurai berates his daughter for her behavior, questioning her motives and her purity. "I no longer want to see your face," he yells. A local lord—presumably engaged to Sayaka—then arrives at the house, and suggests that there may be a way to directly examine Sayaka's body and determine if she has "defiled" herself. If he can determine that she is still pure, he suggests, then he will still marry her as promised.

Moments later, the scene cuts to a bed chamber with Sayaka and the samurai in robes. As the samurai forces himself on Sayaka, the servant (again) peeps lustfully from a few meters away. This scene, at 17 minutes into the video's 46-minute run time, is the first sex sequence in the story. With hard-core representations of full nudity, oral sex, and penetration, it is much more explicit than anything that would have been legally allowed in commercial Pink or adult film at the time. While the setting and costuming shows a level of production one might expect in a network television program, the camerawork reveals key characteristics of a budding porn video aesthetic.

After several fixed pan and zoom shots that establish the scene, the camera cuts to a single, free-roaming, handheld long take that lasts nearly two minutes before the first intercut close-up of Sayaka's face. As the sexual action escalates from groping to cunnilingus, fellatio, and then genital penetration, the pace of cutting increases, but the core of the scene is a single (interrupted) handheld master shot that captures all of the explicit sexual action of the sequence.

The scene continues for nearly ten minutes, eventually concluding with a sequence of intercut shots between Sayaka's face and that of her female assistant, who remains in the shadows gazing into the room, masturbating as a somewhat mis-positioned surrogate spectator. Despite multiple close up meat-shots of penetration, the scene avoids the stereotypical ejaculation shot as closure and instead finishes on close-ups of the three performers faces. Throughout the scene, audio drop-outs, visual static, and tracking errors suggest that the magnetic tape sources of this copy were heavily worn before being converted to digital video.

With Sayaka's 'purity' proven (and now lost), the samurai lord and several guards take Francis back to the beach to be beheaded. Sayaka arrives at the last minute and stabs the samurai lord—with his sword raised in the air above Francis's head—in the back, allowing the foreigner to fight off the remaining guards and survive. Sayaka and Francis then escape to an ambiguous location near the beach and initiate the film's second and last scene of hard-core sex. Like the previous explicit scene, this one avoids the fixed and tripod shots of the dialogue sequences and utilizes mostly long, handheld takes. The first take in the scene lasts a full six minutes, only cutting when Taguchi attempts to perform fellatio on her co-star's completely flaccid penis. Cutting increases rapidly for the remainder of the scene—seventeen different shots over the next four minutes, interspersed with several extreme close-up meat shots that raise suspicion over whether Taguchi and her Caucasian co-star actually had pro-filmic genital intercourse at all. Unlike the previous sex scene between Sayaka and her samurai fiancé, full-body framings of the two performers in this second scene are angled to conceal any kind of genital contact. This early example of hard-core Japanese adult video is also one of the first examples of editing taking priority over indexicality in establishing the realism of a sex scene.

As an ostensibly made-for-export, underground, adult video tape, *Samurai's Daughter* is a surprisingly lavish production that recalls filmic images of pre-modern Japan that were popular at the time (namely, the *Shōgun* television series). However, for Japanese-illiterate viewers, the lack of translation erases any sense of narrative coherence from the title and reduces the story to illusion. Non-Japanese speaking viewers could presumably watch the hard-core sex scenes and gaze at the costumes and set design, ignoring any odor of 'story' and pretending that feature was pure spectacle. At the same time, strategic use of handheld long takes and ambiguously intercut meat shots suggests a rhythmical association between the minimum and maximum limits of realism in hard-core AV.

Flying Sex Man, another Orchid-distributed title released to the U.S. two years after *Samurai's Daughter*, is much less impressive as a production but equally intriguing as an AV, emphasizing rudimentary special effects rather than lavish costumes and locations but again eroticizing the characteristic representational limitations of early, low-budget, hard-core video porn production. The video opens with a scene of a man, perhaps in his mid-20s, watching television and wishing out loud that he too had superpowers like Superman. (A television set in the room shows some kind of programming, but due to its small size in frame and the low resolution of the image, it's difficult to tell what the man is actually watching.) The man chooses to imitate the superhero he is presumably watching on screen, and decides to give flying a shot. After putting on his sunglasses and saying a short prayer to God and/or Buddha, he leaps out his apartment window. In a display of rudimentary video special effects, the next few shots show the man from the front, back, and side, obviously lying on the ground with his arms stretched forward as if he's flying over suburban and then urban landscapes. His body is superimposed over moving footage of trees, roads, train tracks, and city skylines, with the edges of his arms

and legs sometimes dissolving into the interlaced image of the landscapes behind him. While he flies in complete silence (aside from the hiss of the magnetic recording medium), magenta-colored titles in Japanese characters and white-colored titles in Roman characters begin to introduce the video's cast and crew. "Mother Goose Laughed..." in Japanese is followed by "Flying Sex Man" in English. The stars' names in magenta (Jun Okamoto and Obe Mikio) do not match their names in white (Tsuyako Hime and Sachio Kijoi). The director's name, rendered only in *kanji*—Watahira Yōji—is an unidentifiable pseudonym.

The bulk of the 48-minute video takes place in one single, barren set. The man flies to the apartment of his former classmate Emi (Amy in the subtitles) and starts to peep through her window, watching her as she naps in a loose-knit hammock strung from her ceiling. A sequence of her waking up reveals some of the artifacts of early video editing. When Emi crawls out of the hammock and stands up, a series of jump-cut like edits shows her repeating (or skipping) actions from three different camera angles, suggesting that the sequence was sloppily shot and edited entirely in camera. (One angle absurdly and probably unintentionally reveals a five second long Ozu-esque pillow shot of a plant vase in a corner of the room, behind the swinging, recently-vacated hammock.) A shot of the back of the man's head as he peers through the cracks of the sliding apartment window screen is rhythmically intercut with two low-shot, extreme close-up angles of a woman's crotch as she urinates. In direct opposition to the near-professional editing of *Samurai's Daughter*, *Flying Sex Man* announces itself with a nearly incoherent mosaic of discontinuous video edits that develop their momentum not from long takes of two performers in frame together, but from poorly edited slivers of scrap footage.

This discontinuity continues throughout the video. Seemingly unmotivated edits and inserts repeat as the man forces Emi—to her eventual and utterly implausible pleasure—to have

sex with him in her hammock. Throughout the video, shadows in the background change suspiciously and crew members' legs appear and disappear from the edges of the frame. Audio switches in and out of synch from one shot to the next. And like the second sex scene in *Samurai's Daughter*, the male performer is ultimately incapable of maintaining an erection. The climactic money shot begins with an attempt by the man (or *a* man, whose identity we are unable to verify because only his hand, penis, and part of his thigh are visible) to masturbate on a woman's belly. This futile attempt is abruptly cut short and replaced by an inserted ejaculation shot, from a different angle, with an optical yellow iris framing that fills most of the screen—again, like *Samurai's Daughter*, hiding the origin of the film footage and identities of the performers that unwittingly provided this crucial proof of pornographic realism. These examples of early trans-Pacific Japanese AV output suggest that the hard-core of explicit adult video is found only within the hardware itself, and that scenes that are shot predominantly in long-takes or in fast cuts can both be disrupted by a single edit. Any illusion of pro-filmic reality is determined by, and then absorbed into, the subjective limits of representational content produced by the apparatus.

Nineteen eighty-five, the year that *Flying Sex Man* was released in North America by Orchids International, was a pivotal year for video-shot adult film production in Japan. In a response to mushrooming adult video production numbers, Nikkatsu released *The Woman inside the Box: Virgin Sacrifice* (*Hako no Naka no Onna: Shojo Ikenie*, dir. Konuma Masaru) and *Taboo X: Perversion* (*Tabū X Tōsaku*, dir. Nasu Hiroyuki), the first two titles in its Roman X line of video-shot theatrical releases.²⁸ Nikkatsu also began distributing video-shot adult films that were subcontracted to production teams such as Million and Yū Production, both of which developed deep connections to Pink Film production and personnel.

Indeed, whether through subcontracted commissions or independent Pink-initiated projects, as video camera and equipment became easily accessible in the 1980s, the pornographic video aesthetic quickly spread into Pink Film production and exhibition. The breakthrough period of Pink video production and distribution arrived when consumer video decks reached a price that allowed a broader consumer base to own what was, until then, prohibitively expensive playback equipment. In April of 1985, the *Asahi Shinbun* announced the upcoming release of a new home video deck manufactured by Matsushita (a.k.a. National or Panasonic). The NV-U1 (also known by the more colloquial name Maclord You in advertisements) included a wireless remote control and was capable of high quality (HQ) playback of VHS cassettes.²⁹ As the first VHS deck to be priced as low as 100,000 yen, the Maclord You allowed home video to leave the expensive realm of serious enthusiasts and collectors and put it within reach of a much broader consumer audience.³⁰

By 1984, video retail had also taken a quick turn from mostly sales-oriented businesses to rental-based business. Following years of police scrutiny of underground video production and sales, and in response to pressure from film studios who objected to the rental and re-use of their products, thirty-two video rental companies worked together to initiate the Japan Video Rental Association (Nihon Bideo Rentaru Kyōkai) in late 1983. The association formed to establish guidelines and policies for legal rental of copyrighted video software and to “drive out businesses that rent illegally dubbed pirate copies and underground videos.”³¹ In addition, with the revision of the Japanese adult entertainment laws in 1984, a majority of video producers quickly shifted to working more regularly with the video censorship board (Viderin or Biderin), signaling the first major shift toward legitimization of adult products since the board’s

establishment in 1972. It was around this time that Pink and pornographic film studios began theatrical distribution of a number of video-shot productions as well.

One way in which Pink adapted to video was in the production of *kineko sakuhin* or kinescope films—video-shot Pink titles that were transferred to film prints via kinescope and then projected as 35mm prints in standard adult theaters. The storylines of these films often played on the presumed immediacy and realism of video footage by exploiting the lightweight cameras, synchronized sound, and capability for long (and repeat) takes.

Industry yearbook *Eiga Nenkan* identifies the first *kineko* film as one of the aforementioned Aizome Kyōko's most well-known releases: *Aizome Kyōko: History of a Magnificent Love* (*Aizome Kyōko: Karei Naru Ai no Henreki*, dir. Yoyogi Chū, 1983).³² In the years following that release, Pink distributors began to experiment in video as well, and a flood of video-shot titles entered Pink cinemas. One such title was Shintocho's *Erotic Clinic: 20-Year Old Miyoko's Hard-Core* (*Seikan Kurinikku: 20-sai Miyoko no Honban*). Filmed by the Gendai Eizō production unit for distribution via Shintocho, the April 30, 1985 release was advertised on posters as a “second-round Shintocho *kineko* work” (*Shintocho kineko sakuhin dai 2-dan*), and introduced on the studio press sheet as a “video *kineko* work” (*bideo kineko sakuhin*). Preceding a detailed synopsis of the plot, two short paragraphs about project intent in the press sheet describe the title as a report on the life of a real sex club worker in the Kabukicho district of Shinjuku that explores the sexual consciousness of its subjects in a “document hard-core” format.

Today's sex industry is prospering spectacularly. A new sex culture has developed in the Kabukicho (district in Shinjuku) as peeping rooms, panty-less cafes, fashion massage parlors, and mansion Turkish (massage) businesses spread. Until now, women in that trade never worked out in the open, but now, as sex culture has become more popular, women can casually enter this world and work as if taking on a part-time job, without any sense of guilt.

This report deals with the sexual consciousness and life views held by modern

women. It is a document(ary) hard-core that explores the conditions of women as they enter the world of the sex industry by depicting the real experience (*jittaiken*) of a Turkish (massage parlor).³³

The two female cast members are listed on the sheet with their ages, occupations, dates and places of birth, a one-sentence quote from each of the women describing their motivations, and presumably their real names (or at least their real stage names) and ages—Kanno Miyoko (20 years old) and Tanaka Miki (23 years old).³⁴ Neither the press sheet nor the industry reference publication *Film Yearbook (Eiga Nenkan)* mention the names of the director or any other crew members.³⁵ (The same two actress's names, however, are listed in both sources.)

The film goes to great lengths to emphasize a sense of pornographic documentary realism. The film opens with establishing shots of the Kabukicho district at night, augmented by a scrolling subtitle on the bottom of the screen that, like the press sheet, introduces the content and suggests the realism of the production. The film then cuts to an interview sequence with the first character, Tanaka Miki. Shot mostly in fixed close-up shots, an off-screen male voice interviews the performer about her life and her work. The scene then shifts to the interior of a room at a 'Turkish' bath, where the new sex worker listens to advice from the filmmaker as she prepares for and then engages a male customer. The sexual play begins with heavy petting and oral sex and then escalates to sexual intercourse, and the sequence ends with another post-coital interview for the camera.

Kineko titles like *Erotic Clinic* typically capitalized on the illusion of immediacy and realism produced by the aesthetics of the video-shot material.³⁶ Clearly drawing on the popularity of hard-core feature adult films such as Takechi Tetsuji's 1982 *Daydream* remake, the ubiquitous Western porno films of the era, and the explosively popular Japanese adult videos of the time, this Pink Film's use of the term *honban* as a marker of a semi-ethnographic exploration

of sexual cultures and industries is conspicuous. Accurately speaking, a *honban* film should contain representations of actual pro-filmic sexual contact and intercourse; the kind that would have been seen (censored) mostly in the American and European *yōpin* that played in Japanese adult theaters at the time.

The sexual actuality of *kineko* films however is, much like the early UV videos mentioned earlier, debatable.³⁷ Shot on video tape, *kineko* films had the option of adding optical video effects in post-production (and often did, sometimes in jarring, nearly psychedelic ways) before distribution to theaters; video mosaic effects could be applied to both reveal and conceal meat shots in the frame, mimicking the censorship aesthetics of video-shot and video-released AVs. In reality, however, *honban* became more a marker of the product lines. While these titles overwhelmingly did not contain footage of pro-filmic intercourse, the constructed video aesthetics of the *kineko* form insisted that it be read as a kind of non-narrative or unscripted documentary realism. *Kineko* and *honban* titles were not real because the image and audio contained a semiotic trace to pro-filmic sex acts; they were real because they looked like video, albeit transformed into a filmic medium for adult theater exhibition.

In 1989, Christian Hansen, Catherine Needham, and documentary film scholar Bill Nichols published an essay “Skin Flicks,” which advanced the controversial claim that there are essential similarities between pornography and ethnography; in fact that “ethnography is a kind of legitimated pornography, a pornography of knowledge, and pornography as a strange, ‘unnatural’ form of ethnography.”³⁸ Without drawing directly on examples of pornographic films made in a documentary mode, the group aligned the processes of the creation and embodiment of knowledge and subjectivity and that they identified in both formats.

Pornography and ethnography serve to produce the body as a site, and to extract respectively pleasure and knowledge from that site, while at the same time taming

and mastering it. It is through the body, and only through the body, that the domestication of the Other can occur. Hence, in pornographic films, the body is made accessible, naked, it is undressed, probed; it is shot in close-up and heavily fragmented... Likewise, in ethnographic practice, the body is often naked (or nearly so), divided, and probed (intellectually).³⁹

Hansen, Needham, and Nichols's analysis raises fascinating questions about the behind-the-screen lives of performers in adult video and film. The body in these films is certainly made accessible and heavily fragmented, but the core of this argument seems to rest, yet again, on a determining principle of indexicality in filmic representation. Documentary-style Pink *kineko* films on the other hand, by exploiting the ambiguities of stylized realism in video pornography, had the potential to recalibrate the presumed ethnography of porn toward an ethnography of narrative video aesthetics. The *kineko* 35mm film print revealed a trace not to the real lives of (at best ambiguous) sex workers, but to the video source material and the real contact between video and film. This repositioning of moving image media themselves as the objects of documentary can be found in other pornographic forms as well.

A similar kind experiment in video can be found in film-shot and film-exhibited Pink titles that imitated the style and content of the document and interview adult films and videos that were popularized in the 1980s. I identify these titles as documentary Pink Films, although it must be noted that these are very different from both the usually documentary-style *kineko* films and the large number of unambiguously narrative Pink Films from the 1970s onward that included the word "document" in the title. Shot and distributed on celluloid film, in terms of production style and initial theatrical distribution routes, these documentary Pinks are only indirectly related to video. They formally refract the stylistic conventions of *kineko* titles and hard-core adult videos, combining the documentary realism of the former (video) format and the video aesthetics of the latter (filmic) format. They often feature interviews shot in long, fixed

takes and conducted by an off-camera director, with direct camera address, (faked) synchronized audio recording, and (fake) amateur performers who are credited under make-believe “real” names.

The appearance of documentary Pinks was overdetermined, coming at a time when realism and authenticity were being developed as representational modes that highlighted the specificity of the burgeoning adult video market. The dominant documentary trend in adult video is often traced to the early video work of the aforementioned Pink director Yoyogi Tadashi (a.k.a. Yoyogu Chū) and his hard-core video series, *Document: The Masturbation (Dokumento: Za Onanii)*. Yoyogi became a pillar of adult video production since the 1980s, and today is regarded as the director who pioneered the genre of documentary-style adult video. By 1986 Yoyogi had a certain amount of international clout, and he was even hired to direct the Japanese segments of *Tracy Takes Tokyo* (a.k.a. *The Eros: Tracy vs. Aizome Breaking the Amateur [Za Erosu: Torēshii bāsasu Aizome: Shirōto Yaburi]*), a 1986 hard-core Japanese-U.S. porn coproduction starring the biggest female adult film performers from each country. Aizome had appeared in Pink Films of the 1970s, but after her performances in Takechi Tetsuji’s 1981 remake of *Daydream* and her work in several of Yoyogi’s early videos, she quickly became the preeminent female performer in the still-developing market of hard-core Japanese adult film and video. Lords, 18 years old at the time of release, was an enterprising American adult video star who soon underwent harsh professional and legal scrutiny for appearing in U.S. adult films as a minor.

Despite his status as a hard-core video auteur however, Yoyogi himself is a complex figure whose professional history challenges any sort of binary polarization in the years of exchanges between film-based Pink and video-based AV styles and technologies. Occasionally

working under alternate professional names Sasaki Tadashi or Watanabe Tadashi, Yoyogi began in the adult film industry and directed at least 50 features in the decade between 1971 and 1981 that were distributed to adult cinemas by Nikkatsu. Although these were scripted, fictional works, the majority of Yoyogi's Pink Films were released under titles that explicitly emphasized a documentary approach. In particular, most of his Nikkatsu films were released as installments in two major documentary-themed series he helmed—the *Document Porno* series (which included 1973's *Document Porno: Molester (Secret) Report* [*Dokyumento Pouno Chikan maruhi Repōto*]) and the *Semi-Document* series (including 1975's *Semi-Document: Mysteries of the Female Body* [*Semidokyumento: Nyotai no Shinpi*]).

Yoyogi's first *Document: The Masturbation* video was released in August of 1982 by Yoyogi's own company, Athena Images (Athena Eizō). The 30-minute video features a 25-year old “amateur housewife” credited as Saitō Kyōko and records an extended interaction between Saitō and Yoyogi as the director asks his subject about her life and sexual interests and then encourages her—to much feigned reticence on her part—to start masturbating in front of the camera. Shot in one small room with synchronized sound and minimal cuts, nothing in *Document: The Masturbation* disrupts the production's veil of actuality. Presumably a true amateur, the performer, Saitō, is not credited for any other adult film or video work under that name. With *The Masturbation*, Yoyogi established a genre of documentary porn video, developing visual and narrative codes of realism that overtook the more narrative or ‘filmic’ approaches of other hard-core AV franchises and have today formed the basis of the majority adult video production in Japan.

Ironically, according to magazine interviews cited by Fujiki, Yoyogi did not shoot his first *Document* series AVs on video. The first *Document: The Masturbation* video was shot on

16mm film with live-recorded synchronized sound. Fujiki, citing interviews from *Video the World* magazine, quotes Yoyogi claiming that he preferred the aesthetics and technological characteristics of film photography, as well as the slightly lower (at the time) production cost.

The idea of using live shooting (video shooting) did come up, but at the time people only thought of shooting videos not with one camera but with multiple, which would require a studio as well. That would cost far too much, so the idea of shooting live never came to fruition.⁴⁰

In addition to the budgetary restrictions involved in the standard method of video shooting at the time, Yoyogi's years of experience in Pink production gave him a better understanding of the technological abilities of film, especially with the 16mm small-format cameras often utilized in Pink. Again according to Fujiki, Yoyogi explained that porno video production had begun at Nikkatsu as early as August 1971, and the company had been ordering four videos a month from two different independent production companies.

Early 'videos' such as Yoyogi's *The Masturbation* were shot on film and produced with techniques and equipment inherited from adult film production. They were also exhibited as adult films alongside more traditional narrative features. On November 19, 1982, an affiliated release entitled, in Roman characters, *The ONANIE*, received a theatrical release at the Chikyūza cinema in the Kabukichō district of Shinjuku, Tokyo.⁴¹ Shot on film and exhibited on film in theaters, this classic of adult *video* was, in the strictest terms of production and technology, no different from any adult *film*. Textually, however, the onanism of the moving image text reflected the contemporary fantasy of a shift from public adult media consumption—viewing pornography in the mixed, indeterminate social space of the theater—to the masturbatory privacy of home viewing; that is, to watching a video tape of an amateur performer masturbate in a private space, in the privacy of one's own room (a mode of viewing that would have been impractical for many potential adult video consumers in the early 1980s).

The *Masturbation* series quickly expanded to more than a dozen releases, and following the initial titles' success, Yoyogi's company developed a vast library of similarly documentary-themed porn videos—including the *Psycho Hypnosis Ecstasy* (*Saikō Suimin Ekusutashii*, 1984-) series, with footage of professional actresses such as Aizome being hypnotized into automatic, autoerotic orgasm, or *Amateur Arousal Zone* (*Shrōto Hatsujō Chitai*), which again featured the bodies of “amateur” women—whose faces were blocked off or left out-of-frame—being encouraged to explore sexual desires and fantasies to their limits.

In recent years Yoyogi has himself become the subject of print and video documentary studies of the 30- year old AV industry, and was even the subject of a 2011 film about his porn career, *Yoyochu: Sex and the World of Yoyogi Chū* (*Yoyochu: Sex to Yoyogi Chū no Sekai*, dir. Ishioka Masato, 2011). Still active as an adult video producer and president of the AV label Athena Images, Yoyogi continues to make documentary-style adult videos today, and his status as the godfather of documentary video porn is reified and celebrated by a discourse that insists on the historical and technological specificity of the sexual *dokumento* as a part of the post-cinematic evolution of adult media in Japan.

The documentary impulse that arose during the transition from film to video production was not limited to the material and industrial practices of video, however; nor was it a concept that flourished first or only in the context of 1980s Japan. In 1983, the U.S. adult video company Arrow Productions released a documentary-style hard-core feature called *Reel People* (dir. Anthony Spinelli, 1983).⁴² Similar to the *Masturbation* series, *Reel People* presumed to capture live, pro-filmic sex acts performed by average citizens. Like many of Yoyogi and Athena's later experiments in docu-porn, it facilitates a series of encounters between supposedly non-professional men and women and professional adult film performers of the opposite sex. The

film begins with director Spinelli—a porn auteur who developed a nearly 30-year career and helmed many prominent narrative features like *Talk Dirty to Me* (1980) and *Nothing to Hide* (1981)—talking over the initial opening title credits as he confirms microphone choices and then tells his crew to roll image. The film cuts to a clapper board which is struck and then quickly pulled out of frame to reveal a wide-angle long shot showing Spinelli seated next to an outdoor pool, holding a notepad, surrounded by lighting equipment, tripods, and one crew member holding a microphone. As the camera slowly zooms in, Spinelli identifies himself as an adult film director and then starts to describe a childhood sexual experience. Although the scene appears to have been shot in an uninterrupted long take, Spinelli’s anecdote is abbreviated by several abrupt cuts that nearly look like accidents. The film is punctuated by several sudden edits (or jump cuts) in what were otherwise single takes during its 82-minute running time, edits that seem to signal an error or interruption that by contrast emphasizes the otherwise natural progression of film-time and pro-filmic action. And yet the opening sequence, timed to capture sounds and images from before the camera was presumably running, betrays the deliberate and careful planning behind this rough-looking and supposedly unscripted feature. Spinelli then goes on to describe the goal of the project:

Now, I’ve interviewed both men and women, all sexually liberated people, for this documentary you’re about to see. Uh, it would mean that they would discuss their sexuality, and (*cut*) some of them told me to fuck off, and others said, uh, if the, uh, energy—that’s what they called it, the energy; I love that word—if the energy were right, they might just do it for the first time with an experienced partner. Well, the energy was right for some of them. It was very nice. And uh, you’re going to see these people, these men and women... uh, lovely women... just as soon as I stop talking! OK.

Framed by seemingly unscripted moments of introductions and pre- (and post-) coital interviews, the film was praised for its authenticity. A review in the February 1984 issue of

Hustler gave the film “our highest rating for being something that 99% of adult films aren’t today: *different*.”⁴³

Reel People is not a perfect film. Production values are low, and many of the ‘real’ people are not all that attractive. But therein lies the *real* charm and significance of this release. With all the pomp and phoniness coursing through the veins of today’s adult film industry, it’s refreshing to see a picture flowing with honest sexual frankness.”⁴⁴

Other publications similarly praised Spinelli’s experiment without effectively challenging the authenticity of the footage or the experience of the performers. Carl Esser in *Boxoffice* highlighted the “passion, naturalness, candor and gusto” of the “non-pro first-timers” in the film, while lamenting the interviews before and after scenes as “drop[ping] the pace back down to a stroll.”⁴⁵ The “Adult Film Buying and Booking Guide” in *The Film Journal* again noted the difference between the “ordinary” or “everyday folk” and the adult film professionals featured, concluding that “the heat generated on screen is genuine” and that the film “should prove to be a real people-pleaser.”⁴⁶ Spinelli’s film received a theatrical release in Japan as well. Retitled *Training Experiment: Amateur Special (Chōkyō Jikken: Amachua Supesharu)*, the film was distributed to theaters by the distribution company New Select, and had its Japanese premiere on August 11, 1984.

The Pink industry as well embarked on an exploration of documentary realities in adult film, albeit from a somewhat different angle; instead of enunciating essential technological and social differences between video watching and cinema spectatorship, Pink’s attempts at a documentary realism capitalize on the ambivalence between these two presumably separate modes of adult media consumption. Here it may be productive to recall Franklin Melendez’s analysis of the self-reflexive materiality of adult video. Melendez addresses the particular kinds of viewing practices and apparatuses associated with video spectatorship that demonstrate “the

formal operation of video pornography: the manner in which mechanical reproduction becomes inextricable from the performing bodies in the moment of display.”⁴⁷ Pink, which by the mid-1980s had formed a symbiotic relationship between film and video materiality, mediates this interaction even further; it presents dramatized (and/or documentarized) reenactments of the tropes of filmic and video medium specificity. I agree that the audio-visual markers of moving image representation and the materiality of production and spectatorship are the basis of the pornography of the Pink image, but this pornography is not created out of the exclusive materiality of the text. The connection between on-screen representation and viewing activity is much more fraught than Melendez’s analysis suggests. As examples like Yoyogi’s 16mm-shot video classic illustrate, stylistic elements of film and video are themselves narrative representations starring characters representing the poles of medium specificity in 1980s adult moving image industries.

One of the most intricate examples of this interaction between film and video is the constant use of video recording and playback motifs in Pink films of the video era. Self-reflexive stories about professional and amateur video pornographers were very common in Pink Films of the 1980s and 1990s. As central narrative tropes, the production of amateur and professional videos and the transfer and remediation between different formats (8mm, 16mm, 35mm celluloid, and video) became defining characteristics for another subgenre of films about film representation and pornography in a large number of releases. Even in stories that were not about video production, the prominent placement of cameras, projectors, and monitors in the *mise en scène* highlighted a textual and material preoccupation with the audio-visual landscape of the Japanese adult film industry that began in the 1980s and continues today.

Several examples of this effect can be seen in the work of Satō Hisayasu, one of the four auteurs who, with Sano Kazuhiro, Zeze Takahisa, and Satō Toshiki, came to be known as the Four Heavenly Kings of Pink (*Pinku Shitennō*) in the late 1980s. In an interview with Pink historiographer Fukuma Kenji, Satō explains how he watched films regularly in his childhood and first started sneaking into adult theaters as a third year junior high school student. As a youth, Satō aspired to become a photographer, but due to the costs of film he would often shoot imaginary pictures with an unloaded camera.⁴⁸ Satō went on to study photography at Tokyo Polytechnic University, where his career interests soon shifted to film and he began to make 8mm movies. A year after graduation, Satō was introduced to director and producer Mukai Kan's Shishi Production company, and was soon invited to work for the group. After serving as an assistant for most of the directors affiliated with Shishi Pro Satō made his debut as a feature film director at the young age of 25 with a film entitled *Extreme Love: Lolita Poaching* (*Gekiai Mitsuryō*, 1985), produced under Mukai's unit and distributed to Pink theaters through Toei Central Film. In the late 1980s, Satō's work—and that of his Shitennō colleagues—became known for combining aggressively political, melodramatic, or violent content with and near-avant-garde formal sensibilities. As reported in mainstream newspapers and magazines, this movement had the effects of both inspiring average viewers and alienating regular adult cinema customers who preferred a more casual distracted viewing environment and were offended by these sex films that demanded attention and contemplation.⁴⁹ Publicity surrounding the Shitennō phenomenon, which peaked in the mid-1990s, emphasized the freedom of expression that accompanied such low-budget filmmaking, and imagined a new (and more easily internationally marketable) auteurist approach to Pink history. As an industrial strategy, the Shitennō marker ostensibly set out yet again to differentiate Pink Film from adult video, but in practice many of

these native 35mm releases experimented across media boundaries with video footage and narratives explicitly about adult and underground video production, distribution, and reception.

Satō's movies commonly feature film and video production as a narrative trope, but the use of these themes is far more complex than a simple cinephilia or nostalgia on the part of the director. Satō's work often envisions the spectacular horror that follows the increasing availability of communications technologies and audio-video recording devices in a hypermediated world, where multilayered images both complicate and facilitate human interaction, identification, and of course sexual intercourse. A feature produced by Kokuei and released by Shintohe in July 1986 with the reductive and typically offensive title *Secretary Rape: Defile (OL Bōkō Yogosu)* presents several clear examples of this preoccupation with moving image remediation. The story centers on a woman (Itō Kiyomi), nostalgic for her film club days in college, and a young couple she meets in Harajuku. The couple runs a small prostitution business where the man drives male clients around in the back of his van as they have sexual intercourse with his partner. The man videotapes the sexual encounters with a camera mounted in the back of the van, presumably to sell later as bootleg underground porno tapes.

Like many of Satō's films, especially those with scripts by Yumeno Shirō—a screenwriter and novelist who often worked on Satō's early films and who shared Satō's interest in mediation and photographic representation—the film presents more than just a story about changing moving image media; it reveals a sense of visual experimentation within the effects of remediation and film-video transfer. In *Secretary's* opening shot, a long take tracks toward the woman sitting at a desk, staring intently at a light that seems to come from an out-of-frame diegetic television monitor. As the shot moves in to a close up, the light from (what is presumably) the white noise of the CRT screen flashes and illuminates her face unevenly. The

film then cuts to a tracking shot in a bedroom that slowly moves toward the woman as she lies on the floor, masturbating, facing another television monitor. Before panning again to position the woman's body completely in frame, the camera lingers on the image of the television set and its flickering white static. The picture from the TV monitor—which, it must be noted, was an active monitor that was turned on and producing an image in pro-filmic space—produces nothing but pure static, but is anything but stable or neutral. The snow in the screen seems to flicker anxiously while the edges of the non-image flex and contort. Cycling vertically through the picture from top to bottom in a repetitive but oddly inconsistent pattern are light and dark bars. These scrolling areas of lightness or darkness inside the TV frame are what are known in moving image industries as shutter bars or roll bars.

The roll bars within the television image reveal one of the persistent problems of reproducing an electronic image with celluloid film. Due to the particular technological characteristics of film and video cameras, film projectors, and video monitors (and different kinds of video monitors), it is impossible to transfer clear frames (or fields) of image from one medium to another without careful adjustment and synchronization. 35mm film, shot in full frames at standard sound speed of 24 (23.976) frames per second, and broadcast television and video tape content, recorded at 30 (29.97) frames per second (60 interlaced fields per second) cannot be directly converted from one medium to the other without resulting in distortion and flickering in the recorded image. After film was standardized to a speed of 24fps (and before the development of video), the spread of television and increasing use of film-broadcast conversions for time-shifting and syndication of TV programming necessitated new techniques to translate one kind of moving image as cleanly as possible to another. A recording of a television image with a film camera is known as a kinescope (the word which formed the name of the somewhat

different *kineko* productions in 1980s Japan). The primary uses of video and the problem of synchronization were mentioned in the 1959 *TV/Radio Dictionary* in its definition of kinescope recording.

The photography of pictures on a kinescope (cathode ray tube) screen with movie film, done in order to record (TV) images. A special kind of camera is used to capture the 30 frames per second of television with 24 frame per second film. For situations such as the rebroadcasting of the same program, time restrictions due to actors' other obligations, and editing, the Kinescope recording has advantages over live broadcasting.⁵⁰

As such, the working CRT monitors in Satō's film produce distinct visual effects that not only call attention to the electronic image and the difference in film and video frame rates, but also create a kind of abstraction or distortion in the picture that only exists as a result of this type of remediation. Even with otherwise excellent cinematography, without exact adjustments, if a 24fps film records footage of an actual working 30 frame per second CRT monitor, these horizontal roll bars appear to cycle through the TV frame from top to bottom, creating an eerie effect that is perhaps even reminiscent of pre-cinema image technologies like the zoetrope.⁵¹

At this point I must make a brief, but crucial, digression: outside of a strictly cinematic (celluloid) context, an analysis of this kind of effect in the Pink image is inherently problematic. In my observation of this scene from *Secretary*, which I viewed on video, the roll bars are anything but consistent, and they flicker in and out of the diegetic TV frame at irregular intervals. Despite my best efforts (and over one hundred visits to Pink theaters) I have not seen *Secretary* on film; in fact it is rare for Pink Films from the 1980s, especially those by representative auteurs such as Satō and the Shitennō, to be screened on film today. My source material for this analysis is a home-made DVD copy, recorded from a commercial VHS tape (a professional telecine transfer) of the film which was released as part of the Heisei Porn Theater Last Theater Series (*Heisei Poruno-kan Rasuto Shiata Shirizu*) and sold by Kasakura Video in

1994. Disappointingly—especially for a film from an industry that prides itself on cinematic specificity—the commercial and long out-of-print VHS tape (or, occasionally, a streaming copy on an adult video website) is probably the most accessible format for watching this and films like it today. In other words, viewing Pink Films in secondary or tertiary incarnations, outside of their native cinematic contexts, produces visual effects that are immediately visible, especially when the film in question features already remediated shots of other screen technologies.

In the video of *Secretary* that I reviewed, from the pro-filmic image of the television set to the film camera, then to interlaced analog VHS, and then to digital DVD, there were at least three layers of transfer or conversion after the original print. If the scene I describe had been projected on 35mm film, it likely would have shown steady roll bars scrolling down the screen in a more regular cycle. Since there have been so many intermediate copies and different frame rates and interlacing or deinterlacing algorithms applied in the copy I viewed, even the roll bar is no longer stable. Each time the film is transferred to a new format or converted to a different frame rate, the motion of the original interlaced television image breaks down further.

In this case, not only does the film-video interaction produce a new image within the TV frame, but further copies and compressions create even more and different images. Of course this is true to an extent for everything in the image, as the entire film frame has been copied into video and the effects of transfer are visibly apparent in everything from the stillness of props in the background to the movements of bodies on screen (it is visible, but much more subtle than remediated roll bars, as human bodies do not move at a frame rate or in such a mechanical, repetitive fashion, and props typically do not move at all). But the frame rate difference at that initial point of interaction between the TV and the film camera sets up a chain reaction of sorts that emphasizes the fruits of that remediating relationship. In a first-generation transfer, in a

stable, fixed shot, the roll bars would highlight and exaggerate the point of connection or remediation between television (/video) and film with a constant, repeating motion. After multiple generations of different kinds of copies, the roll bar approaches something like a technological approximation of one of Linda Williams' defining properties of hard-core imagery in pornography, where the camera "induce[s] and photograph[s] a bodily confession of involuntary spasm."⁵² I have suggested earlier that the body of so-called body genres such as pornography is not human, but mechanical. What, I wonder, is confessed by the involuntary spasm of the *moving image* itself? Also, what is created through this frenzy of mechanical copulation and reproduction?

Satō's film includes many more examples that suggest a relationship between the distorting effects of kinescope transfer and the imaginary/unrepresentable meat shot in the Pink Film. Much later in the story of *Secretary*, the young man and his girlfriend pick up a customer and take him for a drive in their video-equipped van. In a three-minute scene composed of mostly long takes, the picture cuts from a handheld (film) shot of the woman and the man having sex in the back of the van, to a close-up of a small monitor screen that the driver is watching while the act is being recorded. It then cuts back to the camera, and then again to the video monitor. Like the previous sequence, the shots of the tiny color video monitor yet again reveal these roll bar artifacts, showing waves of brighter and darker fields sweeping across the image like a video rainbow. In this sequence, the video image being remediated is in itself indexical, capturing not the abyss of television static but the bodies of two people performing a sexual act. Due to the particular indexicality of that kind of image, the roll bars of this monitor which were recorded on the original film negative are filtered through yet another kind of visual distortion—a circular area of non-diegetic post-production pixilation that was added to the image for VHS

release. This optical mosaic creates a kind of continuity over cuts that implies the realism of the (obviously faked, staged) act of sexual intercourse while rendering a large section of the image as near-total abstraction.

Satō Hisayasu was one of many adult filmmakers of the era to experiment with the televisual/video image as a part of the *mise en scène*. Another example can be found in Hiroki Ryuichi's *Hidden Camera Mania: Friday's Woman* (*Tōsatsu Mania: Furaidē no Onna*), a subcontracted production distributed through the Nikkatsu Roman Porno chain and released two months after the Satō film in 1986. Playing on the then-popular rhetoric of an exceedingly aggressive tabloid news industry,⁵³ the story is about an aggressive female TV reporter (Higuchi Miki) who tries to confront celebrities in adulterous relationships in a series of forced (and failed) interviews. In the meantime, the reporter is being stalked and secretly recorded by a peeping tom with a video camera who works a part-time job at a video rental store. The film was subcontracted to Yu (or You) Production, a Pink filmmaking unit formed by veteran Nakamura Genji that featured work by directors like Hiroki and Ishikawa Kin and often explored the boundaries of video and film representation with *kinoko* titles as well as stories about video pornographers.

An early scene in *Hidden Camera* shows the protagonist in bed with her lover, with eight television monitors piled up in two columns by the far end of the bed. The two monitors on the top show only static and white noise. Of the other six monitors, five are displaying broadcast or prerecorded material, and one of them shows a live video signal of the room, from a camera on a tripod to the left of the bed. These monitors (as well as one tiny screen in the background, built into what looks like a video duplication deck) feature prominently in the film's bedroom and sex

scenes, flickering continually in the background and in close-up, alternating between representational images and video static and noise.

The film's climax features a sex scene where the protagonist tries to confront and overcome the trauma of an earlier sexual assault by seducing the video rental store employee who is trapped with her in a broken elevator. As the reporter nears the point of orgasm, close-up shots of her face are intercut with images of four, and then two, and then one of the TV monitors from her apartment. None of the monitors have any signal, displaying only white snow and, of course, roll bars, until the close up of the protagonist's face is superimposed on the image of the single TV monitor. The distorted video image replaces any kind of inserted penetration or meat shot, in the film, showing instead the actress's performance of sexual pleasure and the involuntary spasms of noise that are revealed by the video to film (-to video) transfer.

The simultaneous photography of multiple video monitors in a single shot is perhaps an issue that was unique to this particular Pink Film, but it is not one that is unheard of in film production. A setup similar to the one in *Hidden Camera Mania* was addressed in an article by James A. Mendrala in the February 1979 issue of *American Cinematographer*. Mendrala explained the challenges of filming fourteen video monitors in shots taken inside a television control room for the action film *City of Fire* (dir. Alvin Rankoff, 1979). The article describes the complex process of adjusting and synchronizing the differing frame rates of the television monitors and the Panavision film camera to retain "clear, stable television images with good color quality, and with no shutter bar, roll bar, or visible splice line."⁵⁴ The monitors involved in the scenes utilized different kinds of source footage—3/4-inch U-matic cassettes, 2-inch video tape, and some live broadcasts. Instead of replacing the live TV monitors with post-production optical images (burn-in), which would have required fixed shots and no obstruction of the

monitors during filming, Mendrala developed a technique of adjusting the color temperature of all of the monitors and changing the film camera speed to 23.976 frames per second, exactly 4/5 of the television monitors' 29.97 fps refresh rate, which produced solid and clear images of the TV monitors' content without frame distortion.

Mendrala's case (like Hiroki's) is somewhat unusual. Even without extremely specialized equipment or a professional kinescope suite, it is possible to alleviate the problem of roll bars in the celluloid film frame, but it does require exact adjustment and, sometimes, modifications to the camera shutter. One detailed explanation of the technique for synchronizing television monitor and film camera frame rates was written by Kirk Paulsen and William Nusbaum for the November 1984 issue of *American Cinematographer*, an edited version of which was also included in different editions of the ASC's *American Cinematographer Manual*, a standard industry guidebook for cinema techniques and technologies. Paulsen and Nusbaum explain in detail the different frame rates of different kinds of TV and computer monitors (Apple Macintosh, Atari video games, Commodore, and so on) and the different capabilities of cameras and camera attachments for the correct adjustment and synchronization of frame rates and shutter angles.⁵⁵

The 1984 article also includes details about a number of camera models that have the capability to shoot with a 144-degree opening in the rotating shutter, an adjustment that allows the camera to record an image at 1/60th of a second and nearly remove the roll bar from the monitor image. Some of these cameras—such as the Arri 35 III, a small but rather noisy 35mm camera designed for photography without synchronized sound recording—have been used on Pink Film sets for years.

Steven Ascher and Edward Pincus's *The Filmmaker's Handbook*, another reference guide for film and media professionals, includes further descriptions of the challenges of film and video synchronization and the applications of a 144-degree variable shutter.

The original video-to-film conversion method is the 16mm kinescope, a device mainly consisting of a film camera shooting a video monitor in real time. Modern kinescopes use a high-quality color monitor and a special film camera with a synchronous motor running at 23.976fps (for NTSC) with a 288-degree shutter (1/29.97th of a second) and super-fast pulldown to create a two-field-per-frame, flicker-free film image from the video. This type of kinescope (the color negative that results is also called a kinescope or "kine"; rhymes with "skinny") is the most economical transfer method and produces quite good results.

Some facilities use a homebrew kinescope consisting of a 16mm production camera with a 144-degree shutter (often an Auricon, CP16, or Éclair NPR) that captures only one field of video per film frame. "Suppressed field" kinescopes create acceptable results although they throw away half of the video vertical resolution.

The lowest-tech way to get NTSC video on film, which you can do yourself, is to just point any film camera with a variable shutter that includes a setting for 144-degrees at a monitor. This will often result in poor resolution and uneven screen brightness and is inferior to the methods already mentioned, unless you use a high-quality flat-screen professional monitor and a sharp, well-corrected prime lens.⁵⁶

As we have seen in the above examples, the video image and roll bar are only problematic in cases where an electronic video signal was one part of an otherwise live action film frame—a popular image in Japanese adult films of the 1980s. Although *kineko* Pink Films and direct video-to-film transfers envision another kind of relationship between the two media, professional transfers for those could be made in post-production houses that were equipped with kinescope facilities or specialized equipment. The 1984 Paulsen and Nusbaum article also describes one technique for creating such a (nearly) seamless kinescope transfer by using a device called a field to frame synchronizer.

The Field-To-Frame Synchronizer will automatically "phase" the roll bar off the screen and lock it off. To "phase" the roll bar, the unit will slightly alter the speed of the camera in relation to the desired speed of the video source thus allowing the

bar to drift. Once the bar has drifted off screen the unit will once again duplicate the speed of the source, *locking the bar where it can't be photographed*.⁵⁷

This description almost gives the roll bar a metaphysical status, as a kind of off-screen diegetic presence that still exists in cinematic time and space whether it is visible on the tube or synchronized outside of the TV frame.

Even with a standard 35mm film camera—like the Arriflex 35s that have often been used on Pink sets—it is possible to reduce or eliminate the distortion of the roll bar from the celluloid image. But in films that already gaze so directly at blank screens and the friction and flicker of TV static, it would be disingenuous to blame roll bars and the other avoidable distortion effects of remediation on Pink's presumed perfection or completion as cinema, or on an industrial imperative to make TV and video look bad in comparison to 35mm film. Pink Films in the video era should instead be read as a kind of remediation, one where the erotics of the mediation of mediation can overshadow or obscure the ontology of filmed spaces and shattered indexical images of human bodies.

The abstracted image and unstable frame rates exposed by Pink's attention to video reflects more of an attraction or a compulsion to interact than a cannibalistic desire to devour and destroy. Surely this attention to production and reproduction technologies reflects the cultural resonance and popularity of home video at a time when it was spreading through the consumer market, but the excessive attention to these technologies also typifies the self-reflexive industrial theorization of filmic representation in the Pink industry, one that illustrates more than just the faux behind-the-scenes approach to adult media in Japan.

The final effect of the roll bar is an image embedded in the film frame that marks the point of reproduction between film and video—a *pure* moving image, mimicking both the meat shot of hard-core pornography and the abstraction of pro-filmic and optical visual censorship, a

representational vortex that reveals not the primacy of one medium over another, but the contingency of the moving image itself. As this and other Pink *video* techniques show us, Pink Films made in the competitive era of video do not represent a mummified, petrified, or dying film industry, but one that is transitory, multilayered, and highly reproductive. The multiple crossovers at every level of production, distribution, and exhibition between the cinematic Pink Film and the video-based adult tape make it difficult, if not reductive and inaccurate, to isolate each of these formats in a rhetoric of competing technological and textual movements.

The point at which Pink Films per se were most completely realized was perhaps in the space of the theater where, after the spread of home video and the demise of other studios' and companies' soft-core adult film production, Pink seemed to evolve into a life and an industry of its own, separate from Roman Pornos and other studio-financed porn, and categorized (however artificially) as a filmic alternative to video.. However, as we will see in the next chapter, even that environment is fluid and unstable. After more than five decades of production, controversy, and experimentation, the Pink Film was framed in the physical structures of aging adult cinema buildings where the content, style, and theories imagined by soft-core adult film evaporated into the air before audiences that were fully engaged in the truly *real* experiences of the adult movie theater. While Pink Film reflected its medium *unspecificity* in spectacular ways, envisioning the secret, frenzied relations of moving images that—in the world outside of the frame—were not allowed to know each other, the Pink cinema evolved into a world where viewers typically do not look at the image at all.

¹ Yuriko Furuhashi crafts a detailed analysis of the intermedial experiments of 1960s and 1970s adult and avant-garde Japanese film in her fascinating study, *Cinema of Actuality*.

² Young, *The Cinema Dreams its Rivals*, xiv.

³ *Ibid.*, xvii.

⁴ *Ibid.*, xviii.

⁵ Bolter and Grusin, *Remediation*, 55.

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- ⁶ Young, *The Cinema Dreams its Rivals*, xxii.
- ⁷ Zahlten, "The Role of Genre in film from Japan," 77.
- ⁸ David Rodowick, *The Virtual Life of Film*, 8.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, 32.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 36.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, 85.
- ¹² Martin, "The Dawn of Tape," 50-51.
- ¹³ Fujiki, *Adaruto Bideo Kakumeishi*, 26.
- ¹⁴ "Video Tēpu: Beikoku Terebi Kai no Wadai," 4.
- ¹⁵ *Terebi-Rajjo Jiten*, 178.
- ¹⁶ Martin, "The Dawn of Tape," 56-7.
- ¹⁷ Fujiki, *Adaruto Bideo Kakumeishi*, 26.
- ¹⁸ Zahlten, "The Role of Genre in film from Japan," 228.
- ¹⁹ Taura, *Yoyogi Chū*, 101.
- ²⁰ A report on the spread of adult video and combined sales with "video-corders" can be found in chapter five of the 1979 *National Police Agency White Paper*. The text is available online at <http://www.npa.go.jp/hakusyo/s54/s540500.html>.
- ²¹ "Nikkatsu Bideotēpu no Waisetsudo," 120.
- ²² *Ibid.*, 122. An editor's note in the quotation defines the word "full," which was rendered in katakana as an English loan word. "Apparently it means to photograph the full body."
- ²³ *Yoyochu Sex*.
- ²⁴ Fujiki, *Adaruto Bideo Kakumeishi*, 91.
- ²⁵ The revised edition of Robert Rimmer's *X-Rated Videotape Guide* lists a number of Orchids-distributed titles that feature Japanese settings and cast names, including *Forget Me Not* (1985) starring Chikako Kawataba, *Love Melody* (1983) starring Asami Kobayahi, and *A Winter Story* (1985) starring Hiroko Fujido. I am certain that some of the names and titles listed in Rimmer's book are incorrect. I have not yet been able to find further information about these videos.
- ²⁶ "Porno Film Company, Owner Charged," OC2.
- ²⁷ The entry on *Ken-chan, The Laundry Man* in Rimmer's guide includes a humorous note that points to the lack of dialogue translation in these Orchid titles: "What makes it more interesting than American pornos is the environment and the language. If they dub in English, forget it!" Rimmer, *The X-Rated Videotape Guide*, 376.
- ²⁸ Matsushima, *Nikkatsu Roman Poruno Zenshi*, 331.
- ²⁹ "Jōhō Fairu," 8.
- ³⁰ Fujiki, *Adaruto Bideo Kakumeishi*, 129.
- ³¹ "Bideo Rentaru 32 Gyōsha," 19.
- ³² *Eiga Nenkan* 1984, 188.
- ³³ *Seikan Kurinikku* press sheet.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*
- ³⁵ *Eiga Nenkan* 1986, 176.
- ³⁶ This particular fiction film's aspiration to a deadpan documentary realism could be perceptually overwhelming, as became evident during the private 2010 National Film Center screening I mentioned in the endnotes of chapter one. As our program included work by director Satō Hisayasu, Zahlten invited the director to attend the second day of screenings. In a conversation with the group after our afternoon screening of *Erotic Clinic*, one of the faculty members present asked Satō (who did not direct this particular title) about the logistics of filming and identifying real sex workers in their professional contexts. Satō chuckled at that question, and explained that the women in the film were all professional actresses, informing the group that he had even hired one of them to perform in a film of his own.
- ³⁷ Director and actor Sano Kazuhiro, who, like many Pink cast and staff at the time, worked both in soft-core film and hard-core video productions, insists that *kinoko* Pink Films and the vast majority of early hard-core adult videos (at least until the 1990s) involved no real sexual intercourse on set. A 2012 article series on AV's thirty-year history in *Sunday Mainichi* supports this claim, stating that fake hard-core (*giji honban*) sex was common in the AV industry until about 2005. "Adaruto Bideo 30-nen" part 1, 146.
- ³⁸ Hansen, et al., "Skin Flicks", 67.

³⁹ Ibid., 69.

⁴⁰ Fujiki, *Adaruto Bideo Kakumeishi*, 31. Quoted from “People From the Era of the Birth of Video” (“Bideo Sōseiki no Hitobito”) part 1, *Video the World* (March 1986).

⁴¹ *Eiga Nenkan* 1984, 188. Although the film release is alternately listed in the 1984 *Eiga Nenkan* in katakana simply as *Za Onanii*, without the word “Document,” differences between the two releases—the video *Document: The Masturbation* and the theatrical *The ONANIE* are unclear. The theatrical *The ONANIE* is listed as having a four-reel and 2499-foot length, significantly longer than the 30-minute video release.

⁴² The title is a clever pun in itself, but one that was not unique in the early 1980s. Spinelli's film recalls the titles (and to an extent, the documentary content) of the popular 1979-1984 NBC television program *Real People*, as well as perhaps the Screen Actors' Guild and AFTRA guidebook *Reel People*.

⁴³ Friend, “X-Rated Films: Reel People,” 33. Emphasis in original.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 34. Emphasis in original.

⁴⁵ Esser, “Reel People,” 56.

⁴⁶ B.B., “Reel People,” 48.

⁴⁷ Melendez, “Video Pornography,” 406.

⁴⁸ Fukuma, *Pinku Nūveru Vāgu*, 106.

⁴⁹ A special report in the July 20, 1995 *Nikkei Ryutsū Shinbun* included three pages of reporting on the new Shitennō phenomenon with headlines like “Young Directors Excel [in drawing] Standing Room Only Crowds: 'It Pulled My Heartstrings...' 'It Brought Me to Tears...': Enjoying the Film More than the Eros” (“Wakate kantoku katsuyaku, tachimi kankyaku mo: 'Kokoro ni hibiku' 'Naita': Erosu yori sakuhin o tanoshimu”) and “The Curtain Opens on the Pink Film Revolution: An Individuality More Vigorous Than Mainstream Film; Low Budget but a High Degree of Freedom.” “Makuake: Pinku Eiga Kakumei,” 18-20.

⁵⁰ *TV/Radio Dictionary*, 187.

⁵¹ Su Friedrich's *Damned If You Don't*, released one year after Satō's Pink title, provides an example of how this effect has been used deliberately to artistic effect in other films of the decade.

⁵² Williams, *Hard Core*, 48.

⁵³ See, for example, Pink director Takita Yojirō's first non-adult feature film, 1985's *No More Comics* (*Komikku Zasshi Nanka Iranai*).

⁵⁴ Mendrala, “Filming 14 TV Monitors,” 154.

⁵⁵ Paulsen and Nusbaum, “Filming Practical Monitors.”

⁵⁶ Ascher and Pincus, *The Filmmaker's Handbook*, 669.

⁵⁷ Paulsen and Nusbaum, “Filming Practical Monitors,” 118. Emphasis added.

Chapter 4

“I’m Not Here for the Movie.” Who are Pink Films For?

In the previous two chapters, I have suggested a reevaluation of Pink Film history and theory through an analysis of certain print, film, and video texts that have both defined and challenged the notion of Pink Film as a stable genre and discourse. In this final chapter, I shall return to the semi-ethnographic approach that inspired my first interactions in the Pink industry and travel back to the cinemas. Up to this point, while I have attempted close textual analyses of Pink Films and adult videos as an exercise in establishing certain patterns of reflexivity and (audio-visual) reproduction embedded in Japanese pornographic moving image media, I have only alluded to the complexity of the Pink cinema itself. It is a space that spectacularly disrupts notions of Pink Film as a discreet form and tests the unchallenged view of pornography as an essentially physically engaging body genre. While Pink cinemas were, like redundant or remediated film and video images, absorbed into narrative tropes as one defining element of this medium, in practice they destabilize the value of the text at the exact points of consumption and spectatorship. In the 2000s and 2010s, Pink cinemas across Japan began to close at a rapid pace. We must turn our attention to them before they disappear completely, leaving the mythologies of

pornography to flourish at an intangible distance from viewers, reified in form only and extracted from all their theoretically problematic and socially productive contexts.

In addition to the musings of Bazin and Barthes, there is one other indirect point of reference that has haunted my research: the films of director, poet, and playwright Terayama Shūji. An omnipresent figure in the avant-garde film and performance movements of the 1960s and 1970s in Japan—the decades of Pink’s formation and growth—Terayama’s short and feature film work often exposed and narrativized the operations of cinema itself. Much like Jean-Luc Godard, Alejandro Jodorowsky, and his other contemporaries in the European and American avant-garde, Terayama created films of diegetic instability and representational rupture that incited viewers to look behind the screen and imagine a social reality that was infinitely more complex than stories that could be told in moving images.

In particular, I was often reminded of Terayama’s 1971 semi-documentary, psychedelic, rock-opera art film, *Throw Out Your Books, Let’s Hit the Streets (Sho o Suteyo Machi e Deyō)*. Early in the feature, during a sequence shot live in public in front of the famous Kinokuniya bookstore on Shinjuku Dōri in downtown Tokyo, two actors hang a penis-shaped punching bag from a light post and invite passers-by to strike it to take out their frustrations. A fast-paced non-diegetic punk song drives the scene, with a chorus shouting out a string of rhetorical questions to the viewers:

Who is murder for?
Who is theft for?
Who is rape for?
Who is college for?
Who is the Turkish bath for?
Who is the anti-war movement for?
Who is Pink Film for? ...

Throw Out Your Books, like much of Terayama's work, and like many of the political Pink Films of the 1970s, plays very freely with ideas of excess and obscenity. It is not the strict legal obscenity of government censorship and film ratings boards, but the visual obscenity of moving image nudity and simulated sex, the political obscenity of violent anti-establishment protest, even the narrative obscenity of fractured diegesis and representationally ambiguous moving images, shapes, and colors. The film includes scenes of nudity and simulated sex—indeed, certain scenes almost look like a Pink Film.¹ When I first viewed Terayama's movie years ago, I was just starting to think about the place of sex cinema in Japan. The lyrics from that odd song have echoed in my memory ever since. Pink Film: Who is it for?

The Pink Film industry is guarded in critical discourse with terms that emphasize its national and cinematic identity, and encapsulated in a rhetoric of specificity and exception. Years after David Rodowick, Paolo Cherchi Usai, and other scholars and theorists began to evaluate the life and the death of celluloid film, Pink Film was still thriving on 35mm celluloid in dozens of cinemas scattered throughout the nation of Japan. The industry has suffered a number of setbacks in the last few years—including the deaths of prominent first-generation directors and actors such as Wakamatsu, Watanabe Mamoru, and Nogami Masayoshi, the constant pace of theater closures around the country, and the end of 35mm film stock production in Japan in 2013²—but the fact that studios such as Okura Pictures and Xces continued to produce Pink movies and distribute them to active theaters around the country for so long is somewhat astounding. While we have perhaps moved now from the prolonged, painful death of film into its autopsy, I can understand how it is tempting to exaggerate, even to fetishize, the longevity of Pink Film. Not only did Pink still exist through and after the turmoil of the analogue and digital video revolutions, it thrived during that time.

Considering how much of global scholarship on pornography is focused on the problems and possibilities of the filmic text, and with most English language publications on Japanese pornography still trying to assert the social and historical significance of Pink films and auteurs (perhaps to give the field an air of academic credibility; while also side-stepping hard-core AV and its countless industrial crossovers with Pink), few scholars have spent any time thinking about who Pink Film really or presumably *is* for—specifically, I mean the viewers who even today pay to attend screenings at adult cinemas in Japan. The reception context is dangled before academic analysis as an undeniable truth of the Pink industry, yet it is almost never analyzed directly.³

In scholarly studies of Western pornography, extended published analyses of the adult cinema space are rare. The most prominent example may be Samuel Delany's semi-scholarly book *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*, the first half of which is partly a nostalgic reflection on sex culture in the cinemas (and other public sex spaces) of Times Square in from the 1970s to the late 1990s when many of Delany's familiar cruising locations had closed. Delany peppers his recollections with thoughts about the influence of the growing video market in the 1970s and 1980s. The first chapter is a requiem for adult film spaces during the social-cinematic upheaval instigated by adult video. Describing the moving image landscape of 1986, when 35mm projectors disappeared and prices raised at many of the venues he frequented, Delany notes that "the video industry that had precipitated the change had finally triumphed—practically without a ripple."⁴ The chapter is also conducted in a mostly anecdotal, albeit very thoughtful mode, spiced with erotic interludes and recollections of chance interpersonal encounters; far removed from the dominant mode of scholarly discourse on adult film.

Yet, this lack of personal distance does not foreshadow a lack of critical engagement. Delany's unabashedly personal and ethnographical approach presents a fascinating and detailed image of a New York cinema culture that did not assume a biological link between screen characters and spectator lifestyles and did not emphasize any kind of connection to the filmic text. In Delany's often explicit descriptions of adult cinemas, as in my own observation of contemporary Pink cinemas, the film was never the main feature. In that sense, *Times Square Red*, *Times Square Blue* and its blurring of critical inquiry and personal investment is—despite the many differences between our personal and professional approaches—perhaps the closest parallel I have found to my own attempts to theorize the modes of spectatorship I observed and engaged in at Japan's Pink cinemas.⁵

At the outset of my Pink Film research, many of my university colleagues scoffed at the idea of visiting a porn cinema to watch movies for research. Pink professionals discouraged me from attending Pink cinemas entirely. As my experience slowly grew and I started to see the dangers of adult film viewing falling into navigable stereotypes, I took it upon myself to visit as many theaters as I could, mostly circulating around large urban areas but occasionally taking long train rides across the Japanese countryside to arrive at half-abandoned cinemas late on weekday afternoons, usually entering and leaving alone. During my research, I attended over thirty different Pink theaters in the cities of Tokyo, Yokohama, Osaka, Kyoto, Kobe, Nagoya, and Shizuoka. In total, I estimate that I attended more than half of the Pink cinemas active in Japan at the time. This can only be an estimation; I have not been able to confirm the exact number of adult theaters active at that time.

The physicality of the Pink cinema reflects the elusiveness of the industry's boundaries and the films' representational polarities. During a research trip in the summer of 2013, I

attempted to map all of the remaining adult cinemas in the country and ultimately identified 66 active (or recently active) Pink cinemas on the Japanese islands, from Okinawa to Hokkaido. This number is difficult to verify because of the fact that some of the theaters had no media or advertising presence whatsoever (whether in local newspaper listings, Internet homepages, etc.). Information that I acquired personally from Pink producers and performers, as well as from the two main (privately-produced) information directories on Pink film screenings in Japan—*P.G.* in Tokyo and *Pink Link* in Kyoto—allowed me to map many of the operating theaters at the time, but even this list was insufficient. When I showed my map of Pink cinema locations to Ōta Kōunki, the editor of *Pink Link* and manager of the Honmachi-kan adult cinema in Kyoto, I was told that my meticulously assembled list included perhaps half a dozen defunct locations and was missing at least ten other theaters that were still active. Some of these were theaters that rotated between mainstream, children's, and adult programs, and thus did not fall under the category of adult-only specialty theater. For many, operating hours were inconsistent and phone lines were disconnected or abandoned. Others had recently closed or re-opened, were facing impending closure, or simply had not been in recent contact with Pink distributors for regular print rental and return, rendering even distributors' knowledge of their activity uncertain. My attempts to verify the existence of these theaters from afar proved frustrating. Knowledge of these spaces required direct physical access.

At the (approximately) half of properly documented, active theaters that I was able to attend, I watched over 300 films. As I described earlier, it is easy to generalize the adult cinema in Japan along certain stereotypical technological characteristics, but each cinema I visited had a particular appearance, clientele, and aura. Most of the venues I attended were extremely sparsely attended. In a 150-seat auditorium I would be surprised to see more than ten bodies present;

often attendance numbers were even smaller. When I visited the 165-seat Nan'ei cinema in Nagoya to watch a pristine 35mm print of Ishikawa Kin's delicate Pink classic *Molester Bus: In the Back is All Right* (*Chikan Basu: Bakku mo Ōrurai*, 1987) late on a Tuesday afternoon in May of 2010, there were two other men in the audience. The Nan'ei, like many of the theaters I traveled out of Tokyo to visit, did not last long enough for me to return. It closed exactly one year later.

If I aimed for a larger audience and entered a Pink cinema on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon, or perhaps on an evening when the program changed, the audience might swell to one or two dozen men. Only a fraction of the cinemas I visited—such as the main Okura Pictures theaters in Ueno, the also Okura-owned two-screen Kōonza complex in Yokohama, the intimidating Senbon Nikkatsu in Kyoto, or any of the cinemas in the vibrant Shinsekai district of Osaka—were more than half full when I arrived. Sometimes the best-attended theaters were the dirtiest and most poorly maintained, with malfunctioning projection equipment, broken seats throughout the auditorium, and garbage strewn about on the otherwise plain concrete floor. The most majestic auditoriums with the largest screens (such as the Nan'ei or the 250 seat Tenroku Kokusai Theater in Osaka, which closed in March 2012) were almost empty.

In noting that these spaces were largely empty, however, I do not mean to diminish their importance. On the contrary, I hope to emphasize the necessity of exploring these spaces for film and pornography studies. It would be impossible to evaluate the meaning of these audience numbers—however large or small—without observing first-hand the effects of audience presence and participation (or the lack thereof) in the auditorium.

Film scholars carefully and systematically analyze film prints; we cherish historical and critical print texts; we scrutinize industrial lineages and modes of production. However, the

cinematic space is often left as a site of anecdotal reflection and personal (and paradoxically, private) pleasure instead of professional observation. This condition is particularly puzzling in the context of theories and analyses of pornography, where the presumed indexicality of the subject matter suggests a more efficient and fluid exchange between projected images and viewing bodies, and actual physical responses of presumed spectators—in most cases, bodies *other* than the author's—to the screen are one backbone of pornography's formal and generic definitions. As a field so invested in spectator positions and media effects, pornography studies would benefit from a radical redefinition of the critical distances between screen, scholar, and (theorized) spectator positions.

While there are countless Japanese Internet blogs and discussion boards full of stories of curious film fans visiting Pink theaters to experience their 'bizarre' spectacles first-hand, and an equal number of hook-up sites allowing cinemagoers to arrange semi-anonymous dates with other willing visitors, there are very few critical accounts of the peculiarities of adult cinema spectatorship in the Japanese language. I uncovered one unusually insightful description quite late in my research, in a very short section of film scholar Katō Mikirō's 2006 book, *A Cultural History of Movie Theaters and Spectators (Eigakan to Kankyaku no Bunkashi)*. In less than three pages, Katō attempts to sum up the culture and explain the unusual longevity of porn cinema in Japan.

Today, there is one main reason why porno cinemas have survived in this age of Internet-based porno video distribution. It is in the paradoxical fact that these cinemas are no longer places to watch films. Instead of places to watch porno films (whether they are heterosexual pornos or homosexual pornos), they are directly used as places where homosexual males can meet and interact with each other. Even as movie theaters become less and less places to watch movies, the reality that they continue screening films as movie theaters is fascinating considering the history of multi-purpose uses of cinemas in the metropolis. In contrast to the situation I described earlier—where the multiplex (*shine konpurekkusu*) brings forth an accelerated homogenization of films and

spectators, only producing a one-dimensional relationship between the audio-visual reproduction apparatus and human beings—today’s porno cinemas produce attendees that are more lovers than spectators.⁶

Katō’s undocumented observation records an alternate perspective on a situation that Ōta Kōunki described to me as both a blessing and a threat to the adult cinema business. When I traveled to Osaka in May of 2013 to return to the Pink theaters that I had attended three years earlier, I realized that half of the theaters I had once entered were gone. The aforementioned Tenroku Kokusai Theater (and its two neighboring screens in the massive Cine 5 Building), the Umeda Nikkatsu building (with three small auditoriums, including one gay cinema), and the downtown Theater A&P had all shut. Ōta, whose Honmachi-kan is located only a short train ride away from downtown Osaka, suggested that the development of online forums that allegedly allowed gay customers to arrange hook-ups in ostensibly straight cinemas had tested the patience of cinema managers in the region. In the case of the Theater A&P, a medium-sized venue hidden in an alley behind a McDonalds in a popular Osaka shopping district, the increasing number of customers buying tickets primarily for male-male sexual action in the auditorium seats reportedly convinced the manager of that theater to close the theater and quit the business entirely.

I encountered similar explanations during my one visit to the nearby Ueroku Cinema in Osaka. A bizarre combination of video rental store and adult cinema, with shelves full of mainstream and adult VHS tapes and DVDs lining the lobby and plywood private viewing rooms carved into the right edge of the inside of the 50-seat auditorium, the Ueroku was a physical and spatial representation of the institutionalized exchanges between video and filmic formats, private and public viewing spaces. When I entered this small cinema, if I may call it that, and started browsing video tapes in the lobby before going into the auditorium, a group of six men

sitting and talking in the lobby started to comment on my presence. “This guy looks like trouble. Do you think he’s OK? He looks like one of those Russians. We should keep an eye on him.”

I must have reacted visibly to their observations, because they abruptly stopped talking about me. After a pensive pause in the chatter, one of them asked me, in halting English, if I could speak Japanese. I said that I could and explained, as I always did on these visits, that I was an American graduate student researching adult film. This initiated a very productive conversation about the unique rules at the Ueroku cinema. Some of the men gathered in the lobby were sub-minimum wage employees of the theater who were hired by the management to police the activities in the auditorium. They silently chaperoned couples and singles (like myself) who entered the auditorium to make sure that nobody tried to disturb, harass, or grope the theater’s ideal target demographic—which was, as they imagined it, heterosexual male-female couples. Their work was tiring, they explained, because of the constant risk of gays (they used the typical terms *gei* and *homo*) coming to the theater to cruise and hook up with the majority of supposedly unsuspecting, straight viewers. They held no illusions about any of the customers, whether in the main auditorium or makeshift video viewing rooms, attending the theater to actually watch moving images, but according to them, gays in the region posed an active threat to the pleasures of what was supposed to be a space only for heterosexual physical pleasures. They also repeated the allegation that the owner of the Theater A&P had closed his business exactly because of this problem. When I told them about my own travels and observations, in particular my visits to the International Cinemas of the Shinsekai district (which I planned to return to that evening), they chuckled. “Be careful! Those cinemas are full of gays, too.”

Meanwhile, when I engaged in one-on-one conversation with one or another member of the group, I could hear the others chatting excitedly about the lady (*onēsan*, referring to a male in

female drag) who was in one of the video booths at the time, wondering when they could sneak over to peep at what she was doing in private with her male companions.

The Ueroku Cinema and Theater A&P's reactions to the rumors of a gay threat in Osaka theaters illustrated responses to a shared problem. Ōta did not necessarily endorse this rhetoric, or the Theater A&P's decision to close; in fact he implied that there was a perilous balance between the presumed threat of male-male sexual activities in the theater and the benefits of maintaining a consistent clientele. The Ueroku's bizarre self-regulation of cinematic spaces and the A&P manager's alleged reason to exit the business may have been anomalies, for despite the friction between the declared rules and the unspoken laws about straights and gays in the Pink cinema, and while a certain reappropriation of cinema spaces may have taken place since the spread of Internet services in Japan in the early 2000s, most straight Pink theaters were populated (when they were populated) only by men who were seeking not to watch a film, but to have physical encounters with other men.

None of these accounts addressed the place or value of the adult film text. For these audiences, the movies were, at best, an afterthought. The deliberate ignorance of any conventional notion of spectatorship in these cinemas—indeed, an active refusal or *reversal* of any kind of secondary identification with the moving image—was highlighted throughout my many visits to Pink cinemas. While it may have been possible to ignore the multi-purposing of adult film in the majority of theaters I visited (which were, as I have noted, typically very sparsely attended), at all of the theaters in Tokyo and Osaka I visited, it was absolutely impossible to overlook the blatant disregard for the moving image exhibited by spectators. The rituals of non-spectatorship were infectious, gradually drawing my own attention away from the

at times spectacularly reflexive images on screen and aiming it back into the three-dimensional, social space of the auditorium.

Although I had spent much of my research diligently focused on the production cultures of Pink Film and the internal meanings of the Pink moving image text in its exhibition context, I eventually had to face the contradictions of this approach. My suspicions of the peripheral place of film in the Pink cinema were already confirmed three years earlier, during my first visit to Osaka's Shinsekai neighborhood in 2010. The Shinsekai, a small, aging shopping district full of antiquated entertainment arcades and inexpensive eateries, had six operating movie theaters when I first strolled through it in 2010. Five were adult film venues; the sixth was a second-run international cinema that catered to adult audiences. My primary target on that first visit was the Shinsekai International Underground Theater (*Shinsekai Kokusai Chika Gekijō*), a large triple-feature cinema in the basement of a two-auditorium complex on the edge of the district.

The Shinsekai is notorious as a playground for rowdy, drunk, and uncouth adults. This characterization applied to distracted audiences in theaters like the International as well, especially because it stayed open all night seven days a week and thus served as a kind of low budget hotel for the many day laborers and homeless men who live in the city. Both auditoriums in the building were equipped with 35mm film projectors and only showed film prints at the time, but they were also amazing in their blatant disregard for cinematic etiquette. The main theater, with nearly 300 seats, a large screen and floor, and a balcony that stretched fully around the edges of the room, played double features of second-run mainstream American, Asian, and European films to sleeping and cruising audiences. The entry price was 1,000 yen; slightly more than half the cost of a ticket at most of the theaters in the greater Tokyo region. The ticket

vending machine at the entrance also had several discount ticket options for students, the elderly, the disabled, and—bizarrely—children.⁷

The adult specialty theater in the basement was slightly smaller, screening triple-features of Pink films to a somewhat more active audience. It had roughly 200 seats spread across three aisles (on average, about five seats wide) on the main floor, with smaller raised aisles of single and couple's seats along the edges of the auditorium and a cramped balcony. The tops of all of the auditorium's seats were covered by white vinyl covers with text advertisements for inexpensive short-term apartments printed in red paint on the back. There was one filthy restroom in the back of the auditorium (no urinals, only a tile wall to relieve oneself against with a narrow gutter and drain in the floor) and there were two small, enclosed, brightly lit smoking lounges, both of which had plastic seats, vending machines, and a television monitor broadcasting the news or a local baseball game. As an underground auditorium, the ceiling was relatively low and the screen was small—at most two or three meters tall—and the humid and unventilated air reeked heavily of bodily fluids.

As a first-time visitor to the Shinsekai Underground, I found the atmosphere to be initially somewhat intimidating. As soon as my eyes adjusted to the intense darkness, I was able to see that seated audience members all around me were constantly performing or receiving fellatio. Others paced the floors, quietly looking for a new partner. One man stomped up and down the aisles, drunk, screaming the name of a lost (or imaginary) lover as the seated customers mumbled at him to shut up. Yet other men, some in jogging suits, some in dresses and high heels, scanned the space for entertainment. Many slept. I remained wide awake, writing down observations in my small notebook while politely declining invitations from the slow parade of non-spectators that circulated between the aisles.

I had entered just after 6 p.m., during the final scenes of Hamano Sachi's *Disgraced Lesbian* (*Ryōjoku Rezubian*), a retitled 2010 print of Hamano's 1989 Shinto production *Sayaka vs. Chiyogimi: Abnormal Lez* (*Sayaka Bāsasu Chiyogimi: Abunōmaru Rezu*). The next film in the program—which followed a short recess with the house lights up as an elderly lady swiftly swept garbage up from the floor—was a slightly more recent reissue: *Super-Horny Family: Stepmother and Daughter are Both Sex-Crazed* (*Do-Sukebe Kazoku: Gibo mo Musume mo Shikijōkyō*), the 2007 incarnation Pink artisan Nitta Sakae's 1999 Xces title *Stepmother and Daughter: Shame Contest* (*Gibo to Musume: Shūchi Kurabe*). This second film starred several familiar faces from recent Pink film: the late Hayashi Yumika, Pink veteran Nakamitsu Seiji (performing under the alternate pseudonym Sugimoto Makoto), and a personal acquaintance of mine who had formerly worked as a part-time bartender at Bamboo House, Mizuhara Kanae.

I feverishly scribbled down notes in the darkness, trying to record the action on screen while paying attention to the increasing pace of action on the auditorium floor. Two viewers in drag made their way from seat to seat between the suits, drunks, and homeless men in the audience, occasionally pausing to open their cellular phones and type short messages—likely communicating with friends in the same theater to subtly arrange rendezvous, and perhaps informing the other regulars that there was a Caucasian male sitting behind them, watching, taking notes, all alone. The ladies approached me and attempted to make eye contact, but when I failed to return their gazes they quickly moved on to other options. The constant exchange and refusal of silent addresses between myself and the other viewers in the room made it nearly impossible to maintain focus on the meager narrative and distant spectacle of the movie.

In the final scenes of the 60-minute long Nitta film, I noticed a man standing in the front of the auditorium, at the tip of the raised aisle on the left edge of the floor, receiving a blowjob

from a man who was seated next to him. The other viewers must have noticed as well, and within minutes several men gathered around to watch and participate. At its peak I counted nine men performing in the orgy; three seated men giving oral sex to three standing men, and three spectators sitting directly behind them, watching the action play out in close-up and timidly reaching out to pet the participants with light touches that were alternately allowed and refused. This only lasted for a few short and inconclusive minutes, however, as when the lights suddenly came up for another intermission (strangely, several seconds *before* the final reel had stopped projecting), all of the men clumsily rushed to pull up their pants and then swiftly dispersed as if nothing had happened.

I took advantage of the intermission to visit the right-side smoking lounge and enjoy a short break to process what I had (and had not) just seen. As I corrected minor details in my notes about the cast and crew of the film I had not watched closely enough, a middle aged man with short, dark hair wearing a casual track suit sat next to me and initiated a conversation. We exchanged greetings and he inquired as to my somewhat conspicuous presence in the theater. I responded that I was an American graduate student studying film at the University of Michigan and was visiting Tokyo and Osaka to do research on Pink cinemas. The man seemed very interested. For a short time we discussed the different conditions of theaters in Western and Eastern Japan. He asked if the Cine Roman Ikebukuro in Tokyo was still the hotspot for male-male action that it was years ago. I told him that it no longer compared to the activities happening at that moment in the theater where we were chatting. I asked about the popularity of the Shinsekai theaters, and he explained that this night was particularly busy because the weekly program had just changed (a detail that seemed completely superfluous). This gradually shifted into an enjoyable discussion about different international directors and films. His enthusiasm for

the cinema and for the movies—in particular contemporary Hollywood blockbusters—was evident as we traded opinions about recent action and science fiction movies for perhaps ten minutes. Nonetheless, his interests in movies and in adult cinemas did not seem to intersect.

Near the end of our pleasant exchange, I asked for his opinion about the movie that we had just seen. For a moment he gave me a very puzzled look. He clearly understood what I had said, but he reacted as if he had absolutely no idea what film I was talking about. I repeated my question, reiterating that I was curious about the Pink Film that we had just seen in the cinema that we were both in at that moment, and then his eyes lit up in recognition. Laughing, he exclaimed, “Oh, what, *that* movie? No good! Ha ha! I *hate* this kind of movie. I’m not here for the movie!”

The conversation ended, as always, with a friendly invitation to go back inside to play (*asobu*). I politely declined, and after we said our farewells I re-entered the auditorium, found a new seat, and faced the third and only recent film in the program—director Takehora Tetsuya’s 2010 Okura title *Super-Lewd Inn: Indulgent Sex Paradise* (*Chō-Sukebe Minshuku: Gokuraku Hame Sanmai*, which was reprinted and redistributed three and a half years later as *Paradise Inn: Wet Sex Journal* [*Gokuraku Minshuku: Nure Hame Kikō*]). I remained long enough for this third film to end and the program to restart so that I could watch the first half of the Hamano Sachi title that I had walked in on, and then exited the Shinsekai at 9:30 p.m. to walk back downtown for a much less engaging experience at the Theater A&P.

While the mood inside Pink auditoriums was often difficult to interpret, the Pink spectators who chatted with me in the halls and lobbies of these cinemas were generally very pleasant, open people. I took every opportunity to converse with fellow cinephiles in the theaters of Osaka, Tokyo, and Yokohama, and while there seemed to be a viral cultural panic about

Russians circulating through venues I visited in the early 2010s, once I identified myself I was never confronted with open disdain or aggression. In fact there was a refreshing sense of comradery and social tact in these places; a mutual respect of space and personhood that was completely absent from the world outside, where a Euro-American visitor like myself (not to mention a homeless person, a day laborer, or a male in drag) would be an open target for harassment by the police and the public at large. The only difficulty I faced in these Pink cinema conversations was in understanding the translation between the social rules of the lobby and the activities of the auditorium.

This invisible boundary was apparent during my trips to non-Pink repertory cinemas in Tokyo in 2012 as well. Still considered the birthplace of cinema in Japan, in the early 2010s the 6th District of Asakusa boasted five operating movie theaters; two Pink specialty cinemas (Asakusa Cinema and Asakusa Sekaikan) and three repertory theaters (Asakusa Chuei Gekijō, Asakusa Meigaza, and Asakusa Shin-Gekijō) that played classic Japanese and recent international films. To the disappointment of Japanese film scholars around the globe, all five of the cinemas closed permanently between September and October of 2012, ostensibly due to concerns about the structural integrity of the nearly 100-year old buildings that had been raised after the March 11, 2011 Tōhoku earthquake. While I had visited both of the Pink screens multiple times before, I had not entered any of the repertory cinemas before 2012, so during my research trip in August of that year, I made a point to visit the Shingekijō to interview the management staff and observe the space of the auditorium first-hand. (Ultimately, I missed my opportunity to enter the Chuei Gekijō and the Meigaza.)

I spoke with general manager Murakami Hiroyuki and chief manager Hoshi Kyōko, employees at Chūei, the company that ran the cinemas on this block. Hoshi explained to me that

the Shingekijō, where we met, was originally built in 1927 and operated as a venue for variety stage shows (a kind of circus, as Hoshi described it) for 10 years before becoming a movie theater in 1937. While it originally held 429 seats, the number had shrunk to approximately 350 over the years. The other two theaters were equally impressive, with approximately 250 seats at the Meigaza and nearly 400 at the Chūei Gekijō. After receiving a tour of the three projection booths and taking several photographs inside them (with my camera's flash disabled), I decided to stay and watch the two remaining films that were playing in the Shingekijō that evening.

I sat in one of the air-conditioned upstairs lobbies of this massive cinema to record a few more notes from my conversation with Hoshi and Murakami and cool off before entering the auditorium. It was a hot summer afternoon; I was dressed lightly in shorts and sandals. Within minutes I was approached by a group of regulars who had just arrived with bags full of clothes and wigs and were chatting and joking with each other as they prepared to start their activities for the night. One was a young businessman who recognized the University of Michigan and told me anecdotes from his time as an exchange student in the U.S. Another was a tall and muscular lady in a tight skirt and wide-rimmed black hat who looked like a flamboyant Iggy Pop. A third was a round-bellied drag queen by the name of "Izumi" who flirted with me with a toothless grin throughout my visit.

I asked Izumi about her experiences in the Shingekijō. Her account generally agreed with the details that I later gathered from my conversations with Ōta, my afternoon with the Ueroku employees, and the short passage in Katō's book. Since about 2000, Pink theatergoers started using Internet forums to plan meetings or look for hook-ups at adult theaters. She suggested that the changes in the contemporary cinema experience had more to do with possibilities for interpersonal communication and connection, and wasn't necessarily a result of a shift in consumer

patterns from the public space of adult film to the private spaces of adult video consumption. I asked if she would share more explicit details about the happenings at cinemas like the Shingekijō, and she asked me to join her in the auditorium, on the balcony, in ten minutes.

The interaction that followed was easily the most awkward conversation of my academic career. While I had explained in clear terms that I was not cruising and was visiting the cinema to study the space, watch the films, and if possible converse with other willing patrons, Izumi had different objectives in mind. She sat next to me and asked if she could hold my arm while we talked. I said yes, repeating the caveat that I was not interested in sexual contact. I asked her about the film we were watching—a color, widescreen, late-1950s period film starring Hasegawa Kazuo and Ichikawa Raizō—and she shrugged. “I guess these old movies are nice. The actresses sure wore beautiful kimonos back then. By the way, you have really nice legs...” Within minutes she was attempting to shove her hands in my crotch and up the legs of my shorts because she was curious, she claimed, to know if I was wearing briefs or boxers in the hot summer weather. It required some physical strength to resist her flirtatious advances. She asked me to join her afterwards at a bathhouse down the street; I declined. Eventually she relented, the film ended, and we returned to the lobby to continue our conversation.

One outstanding point about these interactions is that all of the men I spoke with refused any kind of gay or queer identity. Izumi, like her friends, insisted that they were not gay (*homo*) and professed their preference for straight men. In that sense, Katō’s extremely brief description of the repurposing of adult cinema spaces in recent years was somewhat inaccurate in bluntly labeling these individuals and their interactions as homosexual. Throughout my research, the various definitions I gleaned of gay and straight identities seemed inconsistent and inconclusive. Patrons like Izumi and the gentleman at the Shinsekai International Basement Theater explicitly

dismissed any kind of gender identity other than straight, and none of the viewers I spoke to at straight adult or repertory cinemas during my visits admitted to attending any of the country's few gay cinemas (such as the Kōonza 1 in Yokohama, which screened films that exclusively featured scenes of simulated gay male-male sex like the aforementioned *Baked Cheesecake*, in which I made my screen debut).

I do not wish to categorize and I will not attempt to analyze these men's lifestyles or identities; that is far beyond the scope of this project and would seem to be an unproductive exercise in classification. However, the heterogeneity of gazes and behaviors in the Pink Cinema highlights one of the problems of assuming spectatorship to be any kind of direct call-and-response between moving images and ticket holders. Paradoxically, adult (and some repertory) cinemas were primarily places to *not* watch movies. Instead of facilitating an interpellation of spectator positions along gendered or sexualized lines and gazes, they enabled spaces where spectators could explore and perform flexible roles and identities, away from the numbing binary restrictions of social interaction outside the theater doors. There is one subject in the Pink cinema, however, that did and continues to imagine a careful, determinate, and secure gaze between the world of the auditorium and the space of the screen—the Pink Film text itself.

In addition to common visual reflections of the intertwined nature of narrative, form, and image in soft-core film and adult video production, Pink Films after 1980 also often reflected on the space of the theater, framing it as an idealized pornographic viewing environment. In the world embedded in 35mm film Pink prints, the cinema was a place where the film always led the attention, arousal, and action of the spectators and where, in direct contrast to the actual behaviors of audience members today, the address of the image was verifiable and inescapable. One example of the romantic mise en abyme of Pink Film narratives is Academy Award Winner

Takita Yojirō's 1983 film *Serial Violent Rape (Renzoku Bōkan)*, a chilling exploitation film starring former Pink actor and now familiar genre film veteran Ōsugi Ren.

Ōsugi plays as an adult theater projectionist who realizes that a film he is screening includes a dramatized reenactment of a rape and murder he himself committed years before. The story begins with a meta-cinematic scene of brutal assault reminiscent of the American and European slasher horror and rape-revenge B-films of the 1970s. A man of perhaps thirty, in blue jeans and dark sunglasses, chases a young woman, dressed in a school sailor uniform and mini-skirt, through an isolated tunnel and into a forest where he brutally rapes her. As the man lowers his pants, a low angle shot from the point of view of the victim reveals a tattoo of a cobra on his inner right thigh.

Five minutes into this harrowing scene, the film abruptly cuts to a fixed shot of an empty cinema auditorium (identified in the credits as the Kami-Itabashi East Film Theater [Kami-Itabashi Higashi Eigekijō], a now defunct cinema in northwestern Tokyo). The angle is from the position of the auditorium stage or screen, creating a synthetic reflection of the spaces where this film has played in semi-regular Pink cinema rotation since 1983 (and much more regularly since several of Takita's Pink Films were reprinted and rereleased by Shintohe following his Academy Award in 2009). Of course, any sense of recognition in this cinematic mirror image is obscured when viewing the film on home video.

The image then cuts to a shot of the interior of the projection booth, where Ōsugi's character changes reels on one of the projectors and then gazes through the window to check the image. He notices the cobra tattoo on the actor's thigh as the diegetic Pink Film camera zooms in to the hips and thighs of the actors on the secondary screen, and realizes that the film is about himself. This moment of imaginary, meta-filmic identification à la *Sherlock Jr.* (1924) or *The*

Purple Rose of Cairo (1985) structures the remainder of the plot, as the projectionist meets with production studio staff in an attempt to track down the identity of the fictional Pink Film's screenwriter, all the while murdering those who also recognize the connection between himself and the not-so fictional crime depicted in the film. One of his victims is his girlfriend, an employee at the cinema who has a moment of screen identification herself when she sees peeks through the projection booth window, as Ōsugi's character did at the beginning of the film, and remembers licking a similar cobra tattoo on her boyfriend's thigh when they made love nights before. The film ends in a climactic final girl showdown between the projectionist and the screenwriter, as they struggle in an abandoned warehouse full of mannequins and full-body mirrors. The screenwriter sprays the projectionist in the face with a can of hair spray as he attempts to burn her with a pocket lighter. The flame partially blinds the projectionist, and when he attempts to batter the woman with a limb from one of the mannequins, he mistakes her mirror reflection for her body, slips, and falls out a warehouse window to his death.

Another example of Japanese adult cinema reimagining the cinematic space can be found in *Vibrator* (2003) director Hiroki Ryūichi's 1986 bittersweet drama, *Breaking the Nurse* (as in breaking a horse; Japanese title *Hakui Chōkyō*).⁸ In Hiroki's film another adult cinema projectionist—played by the aforementioned filmmaker Sano Kazuhiro—has an affair with his ex-girlfriend, a former adult video performer who now works as a nurse at a nearby hospital and is engaged to marry one of the doctors there. The diegetic porn theater (this time the Koganei Repertory Cinema [Koganei Meigaza], which closed in 1989) is running one of the nurse's old films. It is supposedly a *honban* hard-core video, which historically would have been one of the semi-documentary or faux-documentary *kineko* productions described in the previous chapter; video-shot but transferred to and projected on 35mm film.

The opening shot of *Breaking the Nurse*, in an appropriation of the realist video aesthetic popularized by Yoyogi Chū's *Document: The Masturbation* VHS series, is an uncut 30-second shot of the nineteen-year old woman, years before she became a nurse. The handheld video camera slowly zooms in to the young woman's face as she naively answers, in direct camera address, questions from an out-of-frame cameraman (i.e. "When was your first sexual experience?" "Just the other day!"). The flicker of alternating light and dark roll bars in the image indicate multiple stages of moving image remediation from the original shot to the final print; in this case from video, to 35mm film, to videotape master, and then to a streaming Windows Media Video on the DMM adult website where I viewed it. After the short interview, the film cuts abruptly to the projectionist in his booth as he smokes a cigarette and removes two 35mm frames of the actress's face from the film print as a kind of keepsake.

In one sex scene set inside the theater after the two former lovers are reunited, the projectionist and the nurse play on stage after hours, with video-shot film footage of the nurse's *kineko* porn movie illuminating them and the screen in what recalls similar shots from Oshima Nagisa's canonical (albeit non-Pink and arguably non-pornographic) 1970 feature *The Man Who Left His Will on Film* (*Tōkyō Sensō Sengo Hiwa*). In the meantime, the doctor, having learned of his fiancée's cheating and having uncovered the hidden evidence of her adult video career, watches the same footage of her at home on videotape alone while playing with a radio-controlled toy. Hiroki's film emphasizes the presumed essential difference between the social nature of cinema viewing and the solitary nature of video viewing. This questionable difference is articulated as affecting only heterosexual male-female partnerships, and again sanitizes the much more heterogeneous world of the Pink cinema.

I have seen many other examples of Pink titles from the 1980s and 1990s with optimistic and fantastic stories about heterosexual men and women whose physical connection (whether violent or romantic) is mediated by the space of the adult cinema, the materiality of the film print, and the essential representational differences between film and video formats—far too many to include representative list here. There is however one more metacinematic Pink Film that I would like to include in this limited introduction: Tomomatsu Naoyuki's 2011 Okura Pictures film *Insatiable Beast in Captivity* (*Toraware no Injū*).

Captivity was filmed partly inside the Ueno Okura cinemas in Ueno—both the original flagship location that closed on August 1, 2010 and the new video-only facility that was erected only a few steps away. Shot on a mix of video and film, and full of flashbacks, jump cuts, fast-forwarding, rewinding, and direct screen address, and filmed in the months following the original Ueno Okura's closing, Tomomatsu's film follows a group of men and women who become magically trapped in the closed cinema and begin to panic as they look for an escape. Throughout their trial, a single stereotypical Pink Film plays in a loop on the screen in the auditorium.

Tomomatsu, a provocateur par excellence who notoriously climbed the stage of the Pink Taishō awards ceremony in May 2010 wearing a military-style camouflage jacket over a t-shirt imprinted with the face of Osama Bin Laden, and proceeded to advertise his films during and after the ceremony with (perhaps intentionally) incoherent and offensive statements about men's rights and "rape rights," took an approach to the Pink cine-film that superficially deconstructed illusions of the adult cinema space but ultimately reified the image of Pink cinemas and Pink Films as a media portal connecting heterosexual male and female audiences.

Captivity opens with a shot of a *Saw* (2004)-like marionette singing a bawdy song and then launching into a monologue where it explicitly derides the common rules of film spectatorship (no cell phones, no bothering other customers, etc.). A subtitle scrolls across the bottom of the screen informing the audience, half-facetiously, that the lines being spoken were not representative of the opinions of the producers, distributors, or theater. The puppet explains that this is a Pink Film, and that the only violation that one could commit in a Pink cinema is to fall asleep. “This prologue has gone on too long,” the puppet eventually concedes. “I know you’re not here to hear me talk, but to look at naked women,” the toy unconvincingly insists. In a flicker of roll bars and digitally-simulated cathode ray tube static, the marionette resumes his dirty song until the screen disintegrates into flashes of scratchy film leader and, ultimately, a stable image of a woman’s naked breasts.

A sex scene follows, filmed partly in first-person point of view, with the actress exclaiming her pleasures directly to the camera while a man, only partially visible in frame, performs soft-core love with her. This meta-diegesis is then ruptured as multiple insert shots of three men and two women, lying unconscious on the floor of the Ueno Okura lobby, slowly penetrate the imaginary (?) film to claim narrative focus. The main thread of the story is then performed in this unstable pro-cinematic space, as the five adults struggle to understand how and why they had been trapped in the Pink cinema.

Tomomatsu stated that the theme of *Captivity* is “Pink Film Banzai!”, and despite its humorous prologue, the movie takes a nearly propagandistic approach to emphasizing the generic specificity of Pink Films and theaters. The trapped characters debate the qualities of Pink Film versus adult video while enacting stereotypical and reductive gender roles in the often violent sex scenes—male as aggressive, female as passive. (Or to emphasize the film’s

technological metaphors—male as film, female as video.) Throughout the fractured story, semi-diegetic subtitles and intertitles reinforce the idealized difference, and dominance, of celluloid film. “Movies are *film*,” one intertitle proclaims.

Eventually, the stress of confinement leads to self-destruction. In a fit of rage, one of the men strangles one of the women. The second woman then hits him over the head, killing him, and in a panic then hangs herself in the now empty projection booth. Ultimately, the two surviving men—Tanaka, a Pink Film nerd in a plaid shirt (Tsuda Atsushi) and Suzuki (Joshun), a sharply dressed player—do find an ‘exit’. The alarm signaling the beginning of the next screening buzzes, and the two men walk into the auditorium. Tanaka notices, in a *Twilight Zone*-like twist, that the heretofore half-invisible actor playing on the screen is actually himself.

“What movie is it this time?”

“Like I said, this is the exit.”

“That doesn’t make any sense.”

“The exit is the screen (*sukuriin*). We’re trapped in a movie theater, after all. So the exit has to be in the movie itself.”

Tanaka walks into the screen and enters the image, joining the actress in the print. Suzuki climbs up on the stage and starts pounding the screen, yelling “take me with you!” He then leaps awake from his seat in the populated auditorium. It all appears to have been Suzuki’s Pink cinema-induced dream, but then Suzuki notices Tanaka lying unconscious on the floor of the surprisingly well-populated auditorium. Other viewers run off to call an ambulance, and Suzuki gazes up at the screen, noticing that Tanaka is in fact the actor having sex in the meta-film. The other characters are revealed to all be in their proper places as customers or employees of the New Ueno Okura cinema, while Tanaka seems to have projected his consciousness back into the filmic image, leaving his empty, catatonic body behind.

The ultimate message of Tomomatsu's film is one of the specialty and specificity of the Pink cinema as a place where identification with the act of viewing and with the sub-physicality of the pro-filmic body are, for men in the audience, a ticket to heterosexual romance and control of the structures of pornographic film representation. Facing the closure of many Pink and repertory theaters in the Tokyo area and elsewhere, as well as the imminent end of 35mm Pink Film production in Japan, *Insatiable Beast in Captivity* attempted to paint a nostalgic yet revitalizing image of the Pink auditorium as a transformative space where the representational and reproductive operations of adult cinema collide to spectacular and pleasurable effect.

I cannot agree with the first tenet of this illusion. Despite the alternately terrifying and romantic boundaries suggested by the narratives of Pink cinema-films, the adult theater—in any of its contemporary iterations, from Tokyo to Osaka and beyond—fails spectacularly in its desperate attempts to reflect and refract the desires and gazes of the viewing audience. Stories about men and women having intercourse in, through, and outside the Pink cinema completely ignore the contemporary realities of public adult film spectatorship in Japan, where the predominant viewing demographic is men (of all genders and positions) who care little of the 'exits' presented by the projected moving image and instead turn away from the screen and into the physical world, in a radical rejection of imaginary film bodies and their stifling codes of behavior and desire. The screen provides little more than a subtle, flickering light that playfully reveals and obscures the bodies of viewers who, again, aren't there for the movie.

My many viewings of Pink films have convinced me of the reproductive potential of film, however the kinds of reproduction displayed in these media is not in the diegetic realm, it is only in the material and technological realms of the films (and videos) themselves. While the address of the apparatus in pornographic cinema is a grand exaggeration, if we are to hypothesize

that these pornographic films recognize their viewers in some way, it is merely in a childish mimicry of the people that they externally, inconsistently, and unsteadily illuminate. The conspicuous translations and exchanges between different recording formats in Pink Film create a visible spark or flash at the point of contact; they are capable of animating new forms of moving image ‘life’. However they are ultimately unable to reach out from the screen and touch the bodies of the spectators.

If we trace the mythological lineages insisted by Pink Film in its imagination of its own primal scene, if we follow the commandments of these films from the point of their remediated conception into the adult cinemas where they are finally conceived, we must realize that the ‘bodies’ of Pink Film—and pornography, and perhaps film itself—are not the physical, human bodies of consumers, but the self-reproduced and imaginary offspring of the moving image itself.

Pornography is a self-reproductive medium that appropriates illusions of the human body to conceal the technology of its own (re)creation. The physical targets (consumers) of these body genres are ultimately absent, empty, or asleep. Even if only the last of these possibilities is true—that there are physical human bodies sleeping in tandem with the moving image—then we must ask, what do they dream? Do they dream of flickering lights on a flat screen, or do they dream of other human bodies? The lived, human experience of the adult cinema insists that it must be the latter.

As such, the question of Pink Film is one of pornography. That is to say, it is a question of representation; cinematic representation and the representation of cinema. If the crumbling walls, mangled seats, and cruising customers of Pink theaters have anything to tell us, it is that Pink Film’s gaze—that *film’s* gaze—has never been as secure as we imagine. In popular and scholarly imagination, Pink is a cinematic mummification of film history, national

representation, and heteronormative sexual fantasy. In image, it becomes the myth of cinema itself.

¹ Terayama later directed a hard-core art-porn film entitled *The Fruits of Passion (Shanghai Ijin Shōkan: Chaina Dōru, 1981)* which featured unstimulated shots of sexual intercourse. The film starred Klaus Kinski and was co-produced by Anatole Dauman, who also produced Oshima Nagisa's *In the Realm of the Senses (Ai no Koriida, 1976)*.

² "Discontinuation of Motion Picture Film Production."

³ One notable exception is independent researcher Kimata Kimihiko, who devotes the second half of his contribution to *The Pink Book* describing his recollections of visiting Japanese adult cinemas in the late 1970s. While Kimata does identify a handful of cinemas (straight and gay) where he watched adult films, his personal account focuses mainly on the Pink auteurs and stars of the period and does not elaborate on the activities or behaviors of other viewers he saw those shows with. Nonetheless, it is an extremely valuable first-person history of adult theater exhibition. Kimata, "Thoughts on the Extremely Private Pink Film of the 1970s," 49-90.

⁴ Delany, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*, 18.

⁵ Two other detailed, albeit much shorter, accounts of public pornography spectatorship can be found in John Champagne's "Stop Reading Films!: Film Studies, Close Analysis, and Gay Pornography" (1997) and Scott MacDonald's "Confessions of a Feminist Porn Watcher" (1983). Both authors concentrate on the smaller spaces of adult video *arcades* and arrive at conclusions that are somewhat distant from my own. While I sympathize strongly with Champagne's critique of textual analysis, in the Pink context I cannot read viewers' dismissal of the text in such strictly gendered terms. I am perplexed by MacDonald's essay and its implication that the adult video arcade is a space where the heterosexual male desire to view pornography is paramount. Clearly, these two studies were conducted in spaces very different from the larger arenas of Pink cinema auditoriums.

⁶ Katō, *Eigakan to Kankyaku no Bunkashi*, 280.

⁷ When I returned to the Shinsekai in 2013, I watched one scratchy film print in the International's upstairs repertory cinema—*The Hunter* (dir. Daniel Nettheim, 2011) starring Willem Dafoe. The story was about a bounty hunter hired by a pharmaceutical corporation to hunt down the last remaining Tasmanian tiger and harvest its body for chemicals to be used in drug manufacturing. In the film, the tiger is represented in two filmic modes; archival celluloid footage from the early 20th Century and, when Dafoe's character finally locates the endangered creature, a digitally animated figure that walked through the pro-filmic Tasmanian landscape. The story resonated uncannily with the materiality of the damaged 35mm film print it was projected from.

⁸ While produced semi-independently by the Yū Production group (sometimes spelled as "U Production"), the film was subcontracted and distributed to adult theaters by Nikkatsu and thus in the strictest sense might not be considered a proper Pink title. However it is also not a Nikkatsu Roman Porno film per se. As 'specialty' Pink theaters after 1980 often screened a potpourri of Pink, Nikkatsu studio porn, and even adult video, I believe this title deserves a place in this history.

Conclusion

Upon Leaving the Pink Movie Theater

In the previous four chapters I have attempted to formulate a scholarly approach to the study of Pink Film and other adult moving images in contemporary Japan that approaches text and context directly and challenges the routines and recycled narratives about Pink Film's (and pornography's) specificity, stability, and uniqueness as industries and as genres. My intention in this process was to test underutilized ways in which to experience and interact with these films, their creators, and their audiences. I would suggest that not only does this multi-faceted approach allow us to understand the different forms and possibilities of Pink Film as a medium, but it also allows us to critique the power of pornography—and film, and of the moving image in general—and its supposedly mesmerizing and undeniable control over human bodies. This project is an exercise in semi-ethnographic fieldwork and direct involvement in film production and reception. It is also an extended stress test of the limits of objective and superficial—that is to say, perceptual, sensual, strictly audio-visual—textual analysis. It was my intent to highlight a clear discontinuity between historiographical, production studies, and textual analysis approaches toward Pink Film and their objects in order to break this relatively new topic of study out of the potentially reductive terms of its presence in scholarly inquiry.

One of my goals has simply been to recognize the Pink Film industry; to acknowledge its place in film history and to face the diverse forms of its existence today. I have aspired to complicate research approaches to this area of Japanese film, but also to highlight specific challenging (perhaps even unsurpassable) and productive contradictions in the study and the theorization of this regional pornographic film industry. Writing on ‘difficult’ cinemas such as pornography is too often content in its own self-restrictions. The history of Pink Film is far too diverse to be explained by rote memorization and repetition of generic rules or material boundaries, and far too broad to be trapped by approaches that curate only the most respectable or idiosyncratic examples of the form. Many of these films are so thin, so pale, so drowned in practical cinematic artifice that, outside of theatrical contexts, it would be difficult to imagine Pink Film—as an industry, or a genre, or a form of pornography—as having any significant impact on regional or global film culture. At the same time, other films provoke fascinating meditations on the nature of film and video. Yet despite their individual merits or demerits, these movies are systematically ignored in cinemas. Film Studies must be prepared to engage with these films that do not, on the surface, warrant study. Indeed, we must look at them for exactly that reason. If we dare to look closer into the actual frames and spaces of Pink Film, it becomes apparent that even the most pedestrian, unwatched, and unwatchable titles still have a role—sometimes very small, sometimes nearly invisible, but always meaningful—in the machinery of the cinema.

I imagined this project as a journey between three different imaginary dimensions of recent Pink Film: the pro-filmic world behind the screen with cameras, actors and producers; the different modes of visual representation and mediation in the text; and finally the physical and social spaces of the cinema. I hope that my explorations here clearly reflect that process and

demonstrate that no matter how contradictory these different elements and my observations about them may seem, it is impossible to formulate a basic understanding of the Pink Film industry without viewing it on all sides, internal and external. In order to pierce the blurred spots that both conceal and capture Pink's representative illusions, we must be willing to look around and behind the camera and the screen, and challenge the different materials and spaces of these films on both their *and* our own terms.

It is not impossible to study film and media directly in this sense; it is not even particularly difficult. It does however require a willingness to face uncertainty and challenges to one's own position—indeed, one's own identity—as a scholar and as a viewer. While my work still leaves many questions unanswered and many details unexplored, I hope that it has revealed some possibilities in research approaches to cinema in Japan and elsewhere that remain connected to the nuances of the text and the practical realities of production and exhibition.

Pink Film was never as secure or as stable as it was imagined to be. Somehow, as one fruitful yet overlooked example of the insecurities of moving image creation, presentation, and reproduction in the post-video era, it seems to have instead become designated as a martyr for an impossible fantasy of medium specificity. Nothing could be further from the truth. This meta-industrial melody must be recomposed.

As I reach the end of this stage of my research, I can sense that there is still one major question looming, addressed but still unresolved, on the boundaries of my work. That is the question of space, or perhaps more accurately, distance. I have encountered many different kinds of distance in the various spaces I have explored for this project. Indeed, narrative film production is already in many ways a form of spatial measurement itself. Focus measures the distance between the lens and the pro-filmic object; the film frame captures limited horizontal

and vertical dimensions; film itself measures time through the length, or distance, of footage traveled. Prints move from city to city, cinema to cinema, ultimately playing in front of uncooperative spectators, all the while trying to recover some of the distance created through the process of representation by connecting to viewers in visual, narrative, or other imaginary ways. Throughout that journey, films slowly decay while dreaming of an afterlife where they might have been desired and loved. Their mortality is in question, but that is not something that we must defend. Pink Film was never a stable or fixed object; it thrives in its instability, its transience, and its mortality.

The eroticism of pornography is coded around illusions of the growing and shrinking distances between pro-filmic bodies, media technologies, and viewers. In the case of Pink Film, the image's many forms of play with space seem abstract and intangible to viewers who are typically more concerned about the distances between each other, or from one seat to the next, or the distances from the seat, to the lobby, to the restroom. Proximity to the screen in a cinema auditorium is practical instead of intellectual, determining the amount of light reflected off spectators' bodies as they observe other bodies or present their own for display. Interpellation in this process can only work when the unspoken terms of exchange are silently agreed upon by both parties, but the call of the Pink Film is left unanswered.

Distance is also a central concern in Western studies of Japanese, Asian, or other regional film cultures. The study of Pink Film is a new and, hopefully, growing field of academic inquiry that is producing an increasing number of uniquely detailed and insightful meditations on the nature of film and pornography. But as such, it carries a dual burden as the offspring two of the prominent Others of Euro-American academic film studies. Research on pornography often relies on an untested assumption of uncanny proximity between the screen and the spectator—so

close that the image seems to touch or caress viewers' physical bodies—while studies of Japanese film, from Noël Burch to the present, tend to presume the opposite; a safe buffer of time and space between the distant observer and the filmic text, like the arm's length that allows the beholder to see an image of himself rather than the surface texture of the mirror he is holding. As Pink Film edges its way further into international markets (and away from its cinematic homes), prints and production staff alike increasingly circulate beyond the flows of domestic distribution routes. Scholarly writing on Pink Film should continue to grapple with this aura, and this paradox, of historical, spatial, and representational distance. That, I believe, is where Pink Film *lives*.

The presumption and the *value* of distance are things that I have tried, perhaps naively, and like many before me, to overcome. Throughout this project, I keenly felt the changing distances that stretched and pulled between myself and my research subject. While I have had a strong interest in Pink Film for decades—beginning as a distant observer who had never stood in front of a rolling Arriflex or entered a Pink cinema—the impulse to travel into and through the dimensions of Pink Film grew more out of affiliations and friendships with people who create these movies than out of my fascination with the moving image itself. I never would have chosen the Pink Film as a topic for an extended research project without the support of close personal relationships with individuals like Sano Kazuhiro and Moriyama Shigeo and their extended cinephilic families.

I do not presume to speak for the people who supported (and tolerated) my presence during this work, and I have no interest in promoting reductive auteurist analyses of a large library of films that take so many diverse and contradictory forms in different contexts. I am firmly convinced that Pink Films, from the most artistic to the most ambient, are worthy of

careful observation. Even if the audience ignores them, and *because* the audience ignores them, they deserve close analysis. Yet in a way, I still do believe that this project is more about people—producers, directors, performers, viewers, non-viewers, dreamers—than it is about films. In order to see the moving image for what it is, we must first be willing to question the assumption that moving images and human bodies have ever been able to communicate with each other. We communicate with people, not media.

To that extent, and at the risk of arrogantly reasserting my subjectivity at this moment, I should acknowledge that this project is also about my position as a scholar of Japanese cinema. This work has placed me in an odd and often uncomfortable relationship with my topics of study, a relationship that has involved everything from sharing intimate details of my life with Pink professionals, to watching friends emotionally disintegrate in the pursuit of their art, and even to being (for the lack of a less ambiguous term) assaulted myself while performing my role as a researcher. Surely, the movies have always been there to comfort me—to comfort all of us. But there is perhaps no stranger feeling in film analysis than looking up at a projected image and realizing that the mirror of cinema can be much more than a metaphor. It is chilling to recognize that a body that is somehow temporarily trapped in the purely imaginary space of the film frame, is indeed, undoubtedly, my own. As an aftereffect of my studies, for perhaps several hundred feet of 35mm film footage, my images and my movements are trapped in movies that continue to travel and screen throughout Japan. That is a distance that I cannot yet comprehend, much less measure in any objective way. Nonetheless, it remains as a kind of historical marker between two spaces that, from a distance, and certainly from the seats of a Pink cinema, seem completely incongruous. In the most significant (and maybe the most troubling) ways, it reminds me of a person, and other people, that I believe—that I hope—I know.

While I have alternately emphasized and deconstructed the incredible longevity of this pornographic film industry, I have also always been aware that my research had a built-in time limit. On the set of Satō Osamu's 2008 Shinto film *The Wife Who Became a Beast*, during a day of shooting that began with a long drive out of the city with Tsuda Ichirō and lasted nearly 24 hours straight, I asked director Satō why—with all the financial strain and physical stress that faced him and his colleagues—people chose to shoot Pink Films. He explained that it is because Pink Films still used 35mm film. "Film lasts," he said. "It's different from video. Film becomes a part of history."

Today, in 2015, one chapter of that history has ended. Most Pink cinemas have upgraded to digital projection, and many others have closed or begun to flicker in and out of indefinite hiatus. New Pink Films continue to be produced and released—there were over 40 new releases in 2014 alone—but the vast majority are from only one company (Okura) and those are all recorded and projected in video. The rhetoric of medium and narrative specificity that so boldly defined Pink Film's existence for decades is slowly eroding.

Of course, this is not the end. The conditions of Pink Film's demise seem eerily similar to those of its inception. When adult cinema started to explode in Japan in the early 1960s, television was spreading throughout the nation. Film attendance was dropping, and Tokyo was preparing to host the 1964 Summer Olympics. Pink Film responded to the changing moving image market then, and again in the 1980s, by presenting a product that was inherently unstable and thematically and technologically nearly borderless.

In 2015, with adult theater numbers shrinking and 35mm film no longer practical (in both senses of the word), with physical video formats yet to reach their zenith in Japan and streaming video slowly sneaking over the horizon, Tokyo is again warming up to host the Olympics. It

remains to be seen whether any Pink cinemas can survive until 2020, or if they will all be cleaned up and removed from view (or hidden behind some kind of *bokashi*). Whatever form the Pink Film industry takes in five years, I hope that it continues to inhabit spaces where it is still possible for participants to ignore the call of the screen, to find sleep, and to interact with the world and the real people around us.

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