I. Introduction: Social (Dis)eases and the Body Horrific

Japanese director Hisayasu Sato’s cinematic vision, particularly as manifested in his 1995 film, *Naked Blood*, is often compared by Western critics to that of Canadian-born director David Cronenberg. Though rarely explored beyond the basic acknowledgment that both filmmakers blend “the visceral, the psychopathological and the metaphysical,”¹ this association helps indicate that Sato, like Cronenberg, is a “literalist of the body.”² Sato posits the body as an indiscrete, transformative, and immanent space that reveals the potential for imagining new economies of identity; his films explore both the abject dread and the “extreme seductiveness” that, as Georges Bataille reminds us, may constitute “the boundary of horror.”³ Indeed, it is my ultimate contention that while Sato’s film engages a multiplicity of territorializing cultural forces, his film revels in intensity until what emerges is a narrative of social and physical corporeality that allows viewers to conceive of an alternative existence that “no longer resembles a neatly defined itinerary from one practical sign to another, but a sickly incandescence, a durable orgasm.”⁴

Even Hisayasu Sato’s most commercially accessible works, if such texts can be said to exist, are exercises in generic and cultural cross-pollenization. Though influenced by Western literary and cinematic traditions, Sato’s films reveal a myriad of social and political anxieties over the “appearance” of the Japanese physical and social body. Emerging

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I want to make a film which has the influence
to drive its audience mad,
to make them commit murder.
—Hisayasu Sato

**JAY MCROY**

“*The Dream Has Not Ended Yet*”

Splattered Bodies and the Durable Orgasm in Hisayasu Sato’s *Naked Blood*
at the intersection of horror, science fiction, and Japanese softcore pornography, Sato’s films present a mélange of motifs from splatterpunk, cyberpunk, and erotic cinema, imagining the body as a liminal construction. Thus, rather than assigning Sato’s films to a single genre, it is most accurate to examine Hisayasu Sato as one of cinema’s most famous (infamous?) practitioners of “body horror”—a hybrid, and thus more inclusive, category that “recombines” multiple “narrative and cinematic conventions of the science fiction, horror, and suspense film in order to stage a spectacle of the human body defamiliarized.”

A comprehensive term like “body horror” is intensely appropriate in discussions of Sato’s films, where the metaphoric implications of the splattered or transfigured body are central to his aesthetic and political agenda. Though frequently exploring the non-human topos of technology’s complex role in the social imaginary of Japan’s late capitalist political and ideological terrain, Sato’s cinema simultaneously turns on foregrounded images of endangered physiognomies and corporeal disintegration. Even throughout the last ten years, as the circulation of capital, information and inter-personal communication has become increasingly invisible and electronic, Sato’s films have continued to turn and return to the physical body, in all its visible, messy, and all-too-vulnerable splendor, as a site of perpetual contestation. The body for Sato provides a flexible and ever-encodable space that again recalls Cronenberg’s cinema, where the body is “at once a target for new biological and communicational technologies, a site of political conflict, and a limit point at which ideological oppositions collapse.”

II. The Seen and the Obscene: Naked Blood and the Japanese Body

*Naked Blood* is one of Hisayasu Sato’s most complex and visually arresting texts. In the film, teenage genius Eiji, inspired by his dead father’s scientific and philosophic aspirations (which included a desire to better the world by helping humanity achieve a form of intensity akin to blinding light) creates the “ultimate painkiller” to “improve the happiness of mankind.” The drug is called Myson, a substance that causes the human brain to feel pain as pleasure. Eiji sneaks his elixir into an intravenous contraceptive that his mother (an established scientist) administers to three unknowing young women in order to test his drug. The test subjects include two unnamed women—a vain woman whose “greatest pleasure[s]” are having an attractive body and wardrobe; a food-obsessed woman whose “greatest joy” is eating—and Mikami, a woman who hasn’t slept since she was in the fifth grade, when the “shock” of the onset of menses “blocked” her “sleep cycle.” Eiji chronicles Myson’s impact by videotaping each woman from a distance, but his anonymity is compromised when Mikami catches him spying on her. In part because Myson allows Mikami to experience her disdain for Eiji as attraction, they become romantically involved, and Mikami brings Eiji into her private world, showing him her “sleeping installation,” a virtual reality unit that allows her to experience a dreamlike state by showing her “the scenery” of her heart.

Inevitably, Eiji’s experiment goes horribly awry. The other two Myson test subjects become grotesquely self-destructive: the woman for whom beauty equals “pleasure” slowly transforms herself into a bloody, albeit orgasmic, human pin-cushion, and the woman for whom eating is “joy” literally consumes herself in what are undeniably some of the film’s most unsettling moments. The narrative’s climax occurs when Mikami, with whom Eiji has forged an uneasy yet intimate relationship, first kills her fellow test-subjects, then slices a gaping vagina-shaped wound into Eiji’s mother’s stomach and, following a cyber-enhanced sexual encounter with Eiji, kills the young genius by first injecting him with Myson and then cutting his throat. In the film’s final scene, set several years after Eiji’s death, we learn that Mikami and her young, camcorder-wielding son—who named Eiji—are traveling about the land, spraying the air with a substance that might be herbicide or
might be Myson. As Mikami drives off on a motorcycle equipped with a canister and spraying tube (“I think I’ll go west today,” she tells her son, “It hasn’t spread there yet.”), the child meets the viewers’ gaze and says, “the dream has not ended yet.”

Controversial both in Japan and in the few Western markets and film festivals in which it was publicly screened, Naked Blood continues to provoke strong (if, at times, bewildered) reactions by film critics, movie reviewers and cinephiles, some of whom have left written responses about the film on various on-line paracinema catalogues and fan-based Internet websites dedicated to the celebration and circulation of “shock” and “gore” cinema. Thomas Weisser and Yuko Mihara Weisser, authors of Japanese Cinema: The Essential Handbook (1998), Japanese Cinema Encyclopedia: Horror, Fantasy, and Sci-Fi Films (1998), and Japanese Cinema Encyclopedia: The Sex Films (1998), label Sato’s filmmaking as “bitter” and composed in a “sledgehammer style,” say Naked Blood rates “high on the gross-out level.” Similarly, an online fan review called the film “an incredibly transgressive horror film,” while a reviewer for the “Sex Gore Mutants” web site, while lauding the film for being “one of the most depressing movies ever,” also characterizes Naked Blood’s plot as “raw, existing to frame a raw emotion, not to tell a story.” This last observation is not surprising, especially given the film’s surreal imagery and complicated story line, as well as the movie’s intentionally disorienting and ambiguous closing scenes that explore the tenuous distinction between what constitutes reality and what represents a part of virtual reality’s “consensual hallucination.”

Manipulating audience understanding of what is real and what is imaginary is an increasingly popular narrative gesture in films that speculate upon the promises and pitfalls of an ever-emerging cyberculture. What separates Naked Blood from many comparable Western films, however, is that Naked Blood, as with many of Sato’s productions, was not backed by large budgets and extensive marketing strategies. Rather, Naked Blood emerges from Sato’s work both within and against the Japanese pinku eiga cinema, a largely uniform and highly regulated tradition of “soft core” films that, especially within the subgenres known as “Best SM Pink” or “Violent Pink,” have become increasingly notorious for emphasizing partial male and female nudity coupled with narratives depicting “the rape and brutalization of young girls.”

In other words, unlike Western films with comparable plots, Hisayasu Sato’s works arise from a largely low budget cinematic tradition with a distinctly formulaic, yet surprisingly flexible visual iconography. Yet, as I will discuss below, pinku eiga’s frequently violent and misogynist tropes, coupled with prohibitions enforced by Eirin (Japan’s censorship body which rules on “decency” in film) against the depiction of pubic hair and genitalia, nevertheless allows for the possibility of a critique of dominant cultural power relations. Hisayasu Sato, however, stands out among his fellow pinku eiga directors in both

Science and technology are figured as both destructive forces and potential solaces in Naked Blood (Hisayasu Sato, 1995)
his detached, almost ambivalent cinematic vision of postmodern alienation (what Paula Felix-Didier calls the “exposition on the existential emptiness of modern life”\textsuperscript{16}), and the extent to which his splattered bodies function as subjects for political/cultural inquiry. In \textit{Naked Blood}, Sato questions not only the politics of censorship in Japan and the cinematic tradition within, and against which, he toils, but also the impact of changing gender roles and the emergence of virtual technologies in late capitalist Japanese society.

III. Decontextualized Lips: Censorship and the National Body

To fully comprehend the ways in which Sato’s \textit{Naked Blood} functions as a critique of Japanese censorship policies, though, it is first necessary to explore how these regulations came to be established. In \textit{Permitted and Prohibited Desires: Mothers, Comics, and Censorship in Japan}, Anne Allison locates the origin of contemporary standards regarding what can and cannot be shown on Japanese screens as originating from a nexus of concerns about national identity and the “appearance” and “purity” of the Japanese physical and social body. Much of this national focus on appropriate bodily representations, she argues, stems from a reaction to Western orientalist imaginings of the Japanese biological and social body, particularly as they developed in the 19th century:

It was as a corrective to this western perception of Japanese “primitiveness” that the modern laws against obscenity were first imposed: they were a means of covering the national body from charges that it was obscene...in part, acquiring such an identity meant adopting Western standards of corporeal deportment. In part as well, it meant developing a notion of the public as a terrain that is monitored and administered by the state. Thus, the behavior of the Japanese, as state subjects, in this terrain is regulated and surveilled.\textsuperscript{17}

Of course, policing (and prohibiting) certain modes of behavior and visual representations of the human body and human sexuality, especially in reaction to a perceived “dirtiness,” also functions to “protect what is ‘real’”—that is, “unique to Japanese culture”—from “outside contamination...from being infiltrated and deformed by Western influence.”\textsuperscript{18} Some of the most heated debates about censorship in Japan have arisen in response to the controlled importation and, in several cases, subsequent visual alteration of Western films and other media depicting genitalia and pubic hair.\textsuperscript{19} In this complex history of negotiation over cultural meanings, pubic hair and genitalia have come to resonate beyond their prurient indexical value, signifying a set of privileged discourses embodying questions of cultural authenticity and anxieties about Western contamination.

In \textit{Naked Blood}, Sato operates within and, in some important ways, exceeds the conventions of \textit{pinku eiga} cinema, including the foregrounding of nudity and graphic violence, to illustrate that censorship’s function to territorialize “national and public space according to body zones” is far more important than whether “covered or uncovered sex organs are prohibited”\textsuperscript{20} in Japan. By violently altering bodies in scenes that wed conventional signifiers of sexuality (such as moans of pleasure and ecstatic postures) with violent images of the human form turned horrifically against itself, Sato invests the body with the kind of “radical otherness” that Jean Baudrillard locates at the “epicenter” of “terror;”\textsuperscript{21} the body is dis-/re-figured in a way that at once exposes (makes “naked”) and explodes (splatters) the social codes that inform its socially prescribed shape and meaning.

The oppositional politics behind \textit{Naked Blood}’s scenes of body horror is perhaps best illustrated by a consideration of the scene in which one of the most memorable instances of self-cannibalization in film history is performed by the Myson test-subject who equates joy with eating. Sitting naked upon her kitchen table, her body surrounded by plates and cutlery, she slowly moves a fork and knife into her genitalia, which is carefully concealed by the \textit{mise-en-scène}. As she moans in ecstasy, her arms move in a manner that suggests she is slicing something.
It is at this precise point in the film that the Japanese censors’ prohibition against the depiction of human pubic regions is radically and horrifyingly recontextualized and subverted: she slowly raises the fork and the camera focuses upon the bloody, quivering genital lips pierced on its tines. It is only at this point, when her lips meet lips that the audience fully realizes the extent of her orgasmically self-destructive action. Her self-consumption continues with a nipple and an eye, too, but it is the woman’s consumption of her own vulval lips that most viewers will remember long after the film is over.

This scene offers what is perhaps Sato’s most explicit example of how the violent dismantling of the human body provides a metaphor for the ways that disciplinary power in Japanese culture both grants and restricts personal expression, maintaining a notion of a cohesive national and cultural identity. By blatantly displaying that which cannot be shown (human genitalia) through a removal of the “obscene” object from its traditional context, Sato simultaneously shocks as well as reveals some of the logics at work in late capitalist Japanese culture. The quivering flesh at the end of the fork both is and is not genitalia; Sato is both reveling in the dangers of the body obscene and playing by (or maybe creating new) rules. *Naked Blood* skillfully directs the viewer’s gaze, guiding his/her experience of this film about detached characters caught up in extreme events that within the diegesis unfold almost completely before the lenses of photograph and video equipment—including the meta-lens of Sato’s own camera. As such, the film provides a commentary on bodily experiences, mediated visions and the eroto-politics of the gaze.

**IV. Mothers and Sons; Women and Work**

Sato’s depiction of the splattered body recognizes social anxieties accompanying changes and continuities in gender roles and expectations as they relate to contemporary Japan’s transforming social and economic landscape. Manipulated by the euphoric
effects of Myson, the violence that the vain woman and the gluttonous woman perform against their own bodies can even be understood as a proto-feminist critique of the destructive impact of patriarchal authority and beauty ideals: the women literally self-destruct in a frenzy of body modification taken to near fatal extremes. In addition, *Naked Blood* addresses what Anne Allison recognizes as cultural apprehensions over the steadily emerging presence of women in the workplace and, by extension, the occasional reconfiguration of domestic space: “In Japan in the 1990s...domestic labor is losing its moorings. Women are working in greater numbers, for more years, and with less inclination to quit at the point of marriage and motherhood.”22 This gendered transformation of the social body finds cinematic articulation in the character of Eiji’s mother. It is her position as a legitimately employed scientist, coupled with her son’s familial, social, and professional alienation (her son, after all, is still a teen and, thus, still under intense pressure to succeed in school), which results in the unauthorized delivery of Myson to the unwitting test subjects. This bodily chaos, engendered by the mother’s Myson tests and mapped across explicitly feminine bodies, seems to suggest that women’s participation in what was conventionally a masculine sphere can only result in catastrophe.

This social anxiety over women’s transgressions of traditional feminine roles plays out in the oedipal politics at work in Eiji’s dysfunctional family. Eiji’s desire to become a scientist and develop the aptly named Myson stems from his desire to follow in his deceased (thus, “absent”) father’s footsteps. Like his father before him, Eiji longs to achieve a form of intensity; his desire to create a drug to “improve the happiness of mankind” mirrors his father’s quasi-scientific quest for a form of immortality through intensity—“We’ll break through time and space,” his father wrote prior to his disappearance, “and head for the kingdom of light.” Consequently, it is Eiji’s anger over what he perceives as his mother’s failure to assume the traditional female role and support her husband’s “dream” that Eiji cites as a contributing factor to his emotional distance from his mother. The social implications of her refusal to blindly comply with gender expectations derived from a traditional patriarchal economy are intensified when one considers that Eiji’s mother, as a scientist working towards the development of a more effective method of contraception, is in a position to further usurp conventionally masculine cultural roles by literally controlling biological, and by extension ideological, reproduction.

Additionally, throughout the majority of *Naked Blood*, Eiji, like his father (and like any member of a capitalist society), is denied the satisfaction he seeks: by consistently assuming the role of voyeur, his observations are perpetually mediated by technology, either in the form of cameras or virtual reality equipment. This, too, speaks to changing gender roles in Japanese society, given that, as formulated by Allison, “situating the male subject as viewer and voyeur is not necessarily or unquestionably a practice of scopophilia that empowers him.”23 Consistently removed from the objects of his desire by cameras and other technological devices, Eiji looks but does not actually reach out and touch. Even his act of sexual intercourse towards the film’s conclusion is mediated by virtual reality goggles that project surreal images upon his retinas, resulting in a conflation of generic signifiers that provides the closest thing to a “money shot” in Sato’s film—the image of Eiji’s arterial blood spraying Mikami’s breasts and euphoric expression.

**V. Technology, East/West Border Crossing and Cyberpunk**

Like many Western works of speculative fiction, *Naked Blood* engages cultural trepidations surrounding rapid increases in technological development. In its extensive depictions of computers, video equipment, designer drugs, and virtual reality, Sato’s film has many similarities with the tropes that have come to constitute the genre of cyberpunk. As scholars like Joshua La Bare
and Takayuki Tatsumi have illustrated, Japanese science fiction and its Western counterpart have existed in a strange state of symbiosis in which each tradition borrows from the other, with various orientalist and occidentalist consequences. The scope of this ideological cross-fertilization is quite extensive, however even a perfunctory survey of Western and Japanese cyberpunk texts reveals the degree to which these traditions inform one another. William Gibson’s novel, *Neuromancer* (1984), and Ridley Scott’s film, *Blade Runner* (1982), are merely two examples of well-known Western cyberpunk texts that are particularly rich with orientalist imaginings of Japanese culture as simultaneously mysterious, seductive, apocalyptic and technophilic. When these motifs find their way into contemporary Japanese science fiction, a recursive pattern of cultural inflection occurs, in which Japanese works of speculative fiction simultaneously perpetuate and condition operant tropologies. Certain familiar motifs emerge, but they are frequently invested with cultural codings that often confound Western viewers. Thus, while many Western cyberpunk narratives tend to adopt a largely cautionary, if not outright pessimistic view towards the conflation of the “human” and the “technological,” the “extrapolative tendency” in Japanese science fiction “seems more oriented towards enthusiasm for the benefits or potential consequences [of technology] than for any social changes likely to be caused by that technology.”

The cross-cultural transfusion of science fiction tropes extends back at least to post-World War II Japanese importations of “a huge variety of Anglo-American cultural products,” including numerous literary and cinematic works of speculative fiction. In turn, this new and, given Japan’s steady re-emergence as a global economic power, increasingly expansive consumer base impacted how numerous Western and Japanese authors and filmmakers imagined the shaped and content of multiple genres, especially those dealing with the fantastic. Takayuki Tatsumi describes this symbiotic relationship in his overview of Japanese science fiction:

Given that science fiction is a literature reflecting the frontiers of techno-capitalism, it was inevitable that Japanese writers of the 1960s would follow the original literary examples produced by the Pax Americana in the West. In the 80s...a revolutionary paradigm shift took place: Anglo-American writers began appropriating Japanese images as often as the reverse, while Japanese writers came to understand that writing post-cyberpunk science fiction meant locating the radically science fictional within the semiosis of “Japan.” Of course, Anglo-American representations of Japan appeal to readers largely by distorting Japanese culture, much as the Japanese people in the 50s and 60s...unwittingly misread their Occidentalism as genuine internationalism.

To this day, science fiction and horrific texts emerging on both sides of the Pacific frequently reflect complex economic, cultural, and historical tensions. Analyzing representations of human (and posthuman) embodiment within these texts provides a method for
gaining insight into identity politics on the local, national, and trans-national level.

Furthermore, in both Japanese and Western science fiction, the dominant tropology of scientific extrapolation provides compelling insight into larger societal concerns related to technological advancement. If, as Elizabeth Anne Hull and Mark Seigel argue, modern Japanese industrialization occurred “as a defense” against Western “exploitation,” then the cyberpunk aspects of Naked Blood reveal not only cultural concerns over the extent to which technology has impacted and/or may impact how Japanese people view both their own bodies and their relationship to the larger social body, but also a compelling ambivalence towards the infusion of technology in society. As Thomas Weisser and Yuko Mihara Weisser have noted, “electronic tools and media gadgets” are crucial props in many of Sato’s films. “Besides being critical of...'dehumanizing pop culture,’” they argue, “[Sato] is fascinated by it.” The extent to which Naked Blood exemplifies this ambivalence is evidenced when one considers how technological advances constitute both a destructive force (Myson—the ultimately destructive pain killer forced upon unsuspecting human guinea pigs) and a potential solace (the “sleeping installation”—the only way insomniac Mikami can attain the rest she needs). Technology, then, functions paradoxically in Sato’s film. Despite its effects on the various characters, Myson was seemingly created with the best of intentions. In contrast, Mikami’s virtual reality “sleeping installation,” like Eiji’s ever-present video camera, provides yet another barrier to conventional interpersonal contact, thus heightening the film’s theme of postmodern alienation.

VI. Going Too Far: Intensity and the Body Horrific

Hisayasu Sato’s Naked Blood weds horror with science fiction, or, more specifically, splatterpunk with cyberpunk. As such, it is a text that reduces the biological and the mechanical to an infinite set of surfaces upon which it is possible to recognize some of the effects of the circulation of late capitalist disciplinary power within Japanese culture and the oppressive exercise of those systems that endeavor to control how people think and act. While acknowledging the tyrannical and alienating potential of video, pharmacological, and virtual technologies, Naked Blood does not completely disavow the possibility that these technologies may provide alternatives to traditional notions of identity. True, Myson’s side effects have disastrous results, and often what characters see and remember is mediated by screens and lenses, or experienced through filmed or recorded images. Nevertheless, it is also possible to understand the mixture of the physical and mechanical in Naked Blood as revealing a space where holistic, humanist notions of corporeal (and, by extension, social) embodiment collapse. As Michael Ryan and Douglas Kellner suggest, “technology represents the possibility that nature might be reconstructable.” In this sense, then, Sato’s film explores what Scott Bukatman calls “terminal identity,” that “unmistakable double articulation in which we find both the end of the subject and a new subjectivity constructed” through technology and media. Thus, Naked Blood, like that hybrid cinematic genre body horror, challenges the very notion of limits, exposing the borders mobilized to delineate genres, bodies, and nations as not only constructed, but far more permeable than previously imagined.

Consequently, a discourse of intensity informs both the film’s plot and presentation, from Eiji’s father’s quest to achieve immortality through becoming light to the narrative’s collapsing of pain into pleasure and sexuality into violence, from Eiji’s desire to attain “eternal happiness” to Sato’s use of corporeal mutilation as a springboard for political inquiry. The multi-generational, (father-son-grandson(?)) pursuit of eternity through intensity (“Eiji,” we are told, means “eternity’s child”) runs parallel to the violent, orgasmic destruction of the human body, that most basic locus of societal control; images of apparent limitlessness—oceans, static-filled screens, the blinding light of the sun or of...
“THE DREAM HAS NOT ENDED YET”

bulbs burning through celluloid—correspond with gruesome instances of corporeal destruction that, in the quintessential splatterpunk tradition, evoke the notion of “going too far,” of re-imagining physiology as a “field of immanence” that rejects technocratic control over the subject. As Georges Bataille notes in his ruminations upon the power that rests within visual representation of the physical body (in this case the eye) punctured and slashed, horror “alone is brutal enough to break everything that stifles.”

In its exploration of intensity as a discontinuous and non-totalizable phenomenon, Sato’s film advances an oppositional politics wherein the potential to imagine an identity outside of culturally prescribed parameters is articulated, or, at the very least, beginning gestures towards conceptualizing such a space are made. In their quests for eternal happiness, a philosophical (and biological) mission to literally discover “the blinding flashes of lightning that transform the most withering storm into transports of joy,” Eiji and his father demonstrate/embody those “impulses” that Georges Bataille describes in “The Use Value of D. A. F. de Sade” as having “social revolution as their end” in that they “go against the interests of a society in a state of stagnation.”

This is not to suggest that Naked Blood is by any means an exclusively progressive body horror film. Although Naked Blood advances an oppositional politics of identity, the film does not necessarily end on an optimistic note. In the film’s final moments, when little Eiji tells us that “the dream has not ended yet” and raises his camcorder to follow Mikami’s progress as she rides her motorcycle westward, the audience feels a palpable sense of dis-ease well in keeping with the discomforting tone of the film’s prior unfolding. Social theory has long contended that “the growth of civilization requires simultaneously the restraint of the body and the cultivation of character in the interests of social stability,” texts that render human corporeal and social formations indiscrete—displaying, in the process, the various ideological veins and cultural sinews that keep the fragile, and yet alarmingly resilient, physiognomies intact—disturb, if only momentarily, this “stability.” Confronting heterogeneity—that first step towards attaining Bataille’s “durable orgasm”—is a messy business. Sooner or later you’re bound to “get some on you.”

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NOTES

4 Ibid., 82.
6 Shaviro, 133-4.
7 “Paracinema” is Jeffrey Sconce’s term for a set of reading practices clustered around a variety of film texts that lend themselves to ironic and/or counter-hegemonic reading protocols in the hands of viewers who focus their sophisticated reading skills on texts usually ignored by “legitimate” taste cultures. In his words, paracinema is
“less a distinct group of films than a particular reading protocol, a counter-aesthetic turned subcultural sensibility devoted to all manner of cultural detritus...” The explicit manifesto of paracinematic culture is to valorize all forms of cinematic ‘trash,’ whether such films have been either explicitly rejected or simply ignored by legitimate film culture” (“‘Trashy’ the Academy: Taste, Excess and an Emerging Politics of Cinematic Style,” Screen 36:4 [Winter 1995] 372). In her recent book, Cutting Edge: Art Horror and the Horrific Avant Garde (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), Joan Hawkins extrapolated on Sconce’s insights on the taste and cultural politics of paracinema by looking at the video catalogues that sell bootleg versions of paracinematic titles. With its reveling in horrific body spectacles and its exclusion from mainstream distribution outlets, Naked Blood is a decidedly paracinematic text.

9 Ibid., 417.
12 William Gibson, Neuromancer (New York: Berkeley, 1984) 51. In keeping with this metaphor of the incoherency of dream logic, Naked Blood, in its narrative ambiguity, fits into the tenets of what Paul Wells calls “incoherent cinema.” Contrary to negative connotations often associated with the term “incoherent,” this kind of “incoherent cinema,” as Wells defines it, “is a mode of cinema which works to challenge the dominant characteristics of classical Hollywood narrative, using the camera or the editing process to draw the audience’s attention to other possibilities in the narrative or in the aesthetic use of the medium. This often leads to quite surreal and arbitrary effects which almost demand that the audience watch ‘cinema’ for its own sake, rather than get down into ‘story telling’ or other kinds of visual orthodoxy which have come to characterize film-making practice” (Paul Wells, The Horror Genre: From Beelzebub to Blair Witch [London: Wallflower Press, 2001] 115).
13 Movies organized around this theme include such high-profile films as Kathryn Bigelow’s Strange Days (1995), Josef Rusnak’s The Thirteenth Floor (1999), Alejandro Amenábar’s Abre Los Ojos (1997) and its 2001 re-make, Cameron Crowe’s Vanilla Sky, the Wachowski Brothers’ Matrix (1999), David Cronenberg’s eXistenZ (1999), and Tarsem Singh’s The Cell (2000). This theme is also refracted through the Gothic horror template of ghost story films like The Others (also by Amenábar, 2001) and The Sixth Sense (M. Night Shyamalan, 1999). The theme of “illusion” / “hallucination” versus “reality,” though more frequently articulated through the metaphor of drug use, also appears in Hisayasu Sato’s Genuine Rape (1987), the film from which many of the concepts behind Naked Blood eventually developed, and The Bedroom, a.k.a. Promiscuous Wife: Disgraceful Torture (1992).
16 Ibid., para. 21. My translation.
18 Ibid., 164. I must add that it would be a mistake to assume that this reactionary internal and external “othering” is limited to visual culture. Identities are, after all, constructed with borders that are often reified/reinforced, sometimes violently so, when exposed as illusory. As such, when cultures come into contact, there are bound to be varying degrees of appropriation, reactionary attitudes and, as Takayumi Tatsumi suggests, “fabulous negotiations between Orientalism and Occidentalism” (“Generations and Controversies: An Overview of Japanese Science Fiction,” Science Fiction Studies #80, 27:1 [March 2000] 113). It is also important to note that certain behavioral prohibitions related to sexuality were already in place long before the 19th century: prohibitions related to sexuality and the human form were long a part of Shinto mythology (Allison, 163).
19 One Western film that sparked such a controversy was Pier Paolo Pasolini’s Salò: 120 Days of Sodom (1975). Allowed into Japan by Japanese Customs and subsequently “rubber stamped” (Weisser and Mihara Weisser, 24) by Eirin, the film’s critique of the abuses of power, as well as its extreme impact upon the Japanese viewing public, had a profound influence upon Sato’s development as a filmmaker. His movie Muscle, a.k.a. Mad Ballroom Gala, a.k.a. Asti: Lunar Eclipse Theater (1988; 1994) is a “loving salute” (467) to Pasolini. For an extensive investigation of some of the more pronounced challenges to Japanese obscenity laws, see Thomas Weiss and Yuko Mihara Weisser, “Fogging, Editing, and Censorship: Japanese Cinema is a Dichotomy of Artistic Freedom and Repression,” in Japanese Cinema Encyclopedia: The Sex Films.
20 Allison, 161.
22 Allison, 174.
23 Ibid, 49.
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25 Tatsumi, 113.

26 Ibid.

27 Hull and Seigel, 245.

28 Weisser and Mihara Weisser, 463.


33 Bataille, 19.

34 Ibid., 69.

35 Ibid., 100.