



Article

Soiveillance: Self-Consciousness and the Social Network in Hideaki Anno's *Love & Pop*

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Abstract

This article analyses the surveillance aesthetic of Hideaki Anno's 1998 film *Love & Pop*. It is proposed that the film communicates the concept of "soiveillance"—a watching (*veillance*) that is of one's self (*soi*). What underpins soiveillance is the paranoia associated with social surveillance (Marwick 2012), specifically the self-consciousness involved in the image sharing that constructs the virtual self of the social media user (Willett 2009). With its theme of *enjo kosai*—or "paid-dates" between adult males and female teenagers—*Love & Pop*'s communication of soiveillance further illuminates the impact of one's gender status within the social network, and the manner in which real-world patriarchy and misogyny pass into the virtual construction of selves. The methodology used to argue these points rests on a reconfigured take on the term "scopophilia" within the study of visual media. Scopophilia, rethought as a love of vision itself, aligns with Murakami's (2000) theory of the superflat on three key points: the acknowledgment that emerging technologies have created new image-functions and image-structures that require a broadening of our theoretical vocabulary; an atemporal approach to the reading of images, such that a late-nineties film like Anno's can provide important insights into 21st century concerns; and a recognition of intermedial convergence, which allows us to read the activity of online video sharing as a form of narrative equivalent to the sequencing of shots within a cinematic montage.

Introduction: Situating *Love & Pop*'s Surveillance Narrative

Hideaki Anno's *Love & Pop* (1998) ostensibly deals with the mid-nineties Japanese issue of *enjo kosai*, by which middle-aged business men would pay schoolgirls for dates and engage them in sexual activities of varying degrees—from food fetishes to handjobs to penetrative intercourse. What makes the film remarkable, however, is its unique cinematic aesthetic, which Mark Schilling relates to its director working in live-action for the first time, following a decade of work within the anime industry: "Anno has that rare commodity—a visual and storytelling imagination totally indifferent to received ideas about what can and can't be done with film" (1999: 247).

Shot with a multitude of mini-DV (Digital Video) cameras attached to body parts, placed on toy trains, and filming from ceilings via fish-eye lenses, the aesthetic of Anno's film evokes the networked images of video surveillance. For instance, it is notable that Anno's mini-DV cameras are sometimes hidden, looking out at the action from behind the partially obstructing screens of TVs and microwaves, and that single scenes or locations are often constituted by shots taken from a multitude of camera angles. A short scene in which Hiromi, the protagonist, rides her bicycle, for example, is communicated to us via shots from beneath the front tyre's mudguard, the side of the front wheel, beneath the pedals, and, finally, another

Gazi, Jeeshan. 2018. Soiveillance: Self-Consciousness and the Social Network in Hideaki Anno's *Love & Pop*. *Surveillance & Society* 16(1): 84-111.

<https://ojs.library.queensu.ca/index.php/surveillance-and-society/index> | ISSN: 1477-7487

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moving vehicle (Fig. 1). Here the site of interest is being surveyed without any blind spots, aligning such shot sequencing with what Deitmar Kammerer attributes to Mike Figgis' *Time Code* (2000), whose simultaneous quadruple-split screen is “[j]ust like a monitor wall in a control room, it substitutes temporal for spatial montage” (2004: 466). In Anno’s film, such sequences as the bicycle scene give us this spatial montage across time, one shot after another, the rapidity of the shots suggesting a simulation of the simultaneity found in Figgis’ film, where the image is divided into four distinct shots that play at the same time.



Figure 1. The shot sequence for Hiromi riding her bicycle.

Further, as Catherine Zimmer points out in *Surveillance Cinema* (2015), the use of video itself has come to be “one of the more insistent signifiers of ‘surveillant narration’, even if it is not necessarily the dominant mode of surveillance in actuality” (83). This is partly due to cinema being a visual medium, thus incorporating video surveillance into its narratives rather than the more common audio surveillance, which has nevertheless featured in significant works such as Francis Ford Coppola’s *The Conversation* (1974) and HBO television series *The Wire* (2002-2008), and dataveillance—surveillance that traces electronic footprints, as depicted in USA Network’s *Mr. Robot* (2015–).

Anno’s film is unique in its engagement with visual surveillance, however. For though the composition and sequencing of the video images of *Love & Pop* signify surveillance, this film does not explicitly belong to the category of films that “organize their narratives entirely around surveillance technologies and practices,” whether visual or otherwise (Zimmer 2015: 1). This is to say that none of the characters in the film are strictly engaging with technology for the purpose of surveilling others as part of the plot, at least not in the traditional sense of espionage (as in *Enemy of the State* [1998]), law-enforcement (*The Departed* [2006]), or perversion (*Sliver* [1993]). And, aside from a few brief shots of CCTV monitor screens, neither does Anno’s film “utilize surveillance technologies as a frequent narrative or stylistic device” (Zimmer 2015: 1). This is to say that the surveillance aesthetic of Anno’s film is not one which presupposes that the world of the film is being shot via surveillance technologies that actually exist within the diegesis.

Given its use of micro, and wearable, digital video cameras, one might instead align Anno’s film with the work of Steve Mann, whose *ShootingBack* project similarly engages with an alternative form of video surveillance and also emerged into public consciousness in the late-nineties. However, this project involved using a self-designed “Wearable Wireless Webcam” by which Mann would create what he describes as “personal documentary”; live video streaming that “challenges the ‘editing’ tradition of cinematography by transmitting, in real time, life as it happens, from the perspective of the surveilled” (1998: 96). And aside from the formal difference, it is in regards to the *function* of surveillance in Mann’s

work and Anno's narrative fiction film that an equation between the two is shown to be incorrect yet nevertheless insightful.

Mann's project was conducted under the principles of his philosophical framework of "Reflectionism" which "allows society to confront itself or to see its own absurdity" (1998: 95). Akin to Situationist détournement, in which "artists often appropriate tools of the 'oppressor' and then resituate these tools in a disturbing and disorienting fashion," here it is the citizen with her own recording technology that confronts and undermines the social acceptance of "the right of organizations to capture / record images of an individual, regardless of what promises are given regarding end use" (Mann 94). This is to say that the citizen adopts wearable visual recording devices in order to "shoot back" at the network of surveillance cameras put to use by governmental and private organizations. Such visual recordings on the part of citizens have come to be termed "sousveillance." Given that the French origins of the term "surveillance" means, literally, "to watch from above," "[s]ousveillance means '**watching from below**', and its etymology derives from replacing 'sur' (over) with 'sous', which means 'under' or 'below' or 'from below'" (Mann and Ferenbok 2013: 18-19, emphasis in the original). In contrast, this article proposes that Anno's film communicates a unique form of watching that might instead be termed "soveillance." For in *Love & Pop* we are presented with a watching (*veillance*) that is of one's self (*soi*). In an attempt to express the self-consciousness of a teenage girl in the more lecherous parts of Tokyo, the subjectivity depicted in *Love & Pop* takes the aesthetic form of a self-surveillance that is expressed through an alignment of the film's video imagery and the technologies that Hiromi engages with within the diegesis.

The key technologies here are those of the mobile phone and the camera, Hiromi's usage of which anticipates the smart technology that facilitates social media and provides us with three points of interest in regard to the conception of soveillance that is explored in this article. The first relates to the flow of power that exists within the social network. As will be argued, with reference to the work of Alice E. Marwick (2012), social media functions via a lateral structure of peer-to-peer surveillance. The diffusion of power here underpins the social relations in Anno's film and informs the second point of interest, which relates more directly to the concept of soveillance: that the social media user exhibits a self-conscious paranoia elicited by the structure of social surveillance. Rebekah Willett (2009) finds that the online sharing of images of one's self is determined by the attempt to construct a virtual self, which is modified in accordance with how observers on that social network respond, or are expected to respond, to this visually manifested self. The soveillant images of *Love & Pop* are determined by just such a social paranoia—the thoughts of the protagonist as to how she thinks others perceive her are projected as surveillant images of herself. The third point of interest concerns the role of gender in discussions of soveillance. Anno's visual communication of the gendered power structure of *enjo kosai* through the film's few instances of diegetic surveillance technology is found to further communicate the gender imbalance regarding power and control within the contemporary web-based frameworks with which this late-nineties narrative resonates.

The first part of this article provides an overview of both the context of the film and the methodology employed in my analysis of *Love & Pop*. The film exhibits the tension between male reverie and female subjectivity that is found in an earlier era of Japanese cinema concerning schoolgirls, suggesting a lineage between the *sukeban* films of the nineteen-seventies and the late-twentieth century *kogal* films of which Anno's is an example. An analysis of the function of isolated body parts within an early scene of the film demonstrates the way in which female subjectivity is communicated through images most often associated with male reverie, indicating that the theory of the male gaze is inadequate for accounting for the complex image-structures depicted. As such, I suggest that a rethinking of scopophilia is required to account for shifts in structures of looking wrought by new technologies of the kind employed and reflected in this film. The methodology for this approach follows three principles drawn from Takashi Murakami's theory of the superflat: an embrace of the expansion of structures of seeing in the twenty-first century, the

approach of atemporal analysis in the reading of visual media, and the recognition of the intermedial nature of contemporary visual culture.

Part I. Rethinking Scopophilia

Male Reverie and Female Subjectivity

With their featuring in everything from video games to adverts to Tarantino films, the Japanese schoolgirl is an international icon; a point perhaps encapsulated by “the Japanese government nam[ing] a schoolgirl as a cultural ambassador to the world” as part of their “Cool Japan” branding exercise (Ashcraft and Ueda 2014: 8). *Love & Pop* depicts the “*kogal*” schoolgirl, “a certain type of schoolgirl—one that is sexy, rebellious, and very cool” (Ashcroft and Ueda 26). In their transgressive character, and their cinematic depictions that find the “high school girl—Tokyo’s sacred being” placed within morally questionable scenarios, the *kogal* can be understood as the mid-1990s echo of the “*sukeban*” of the late 60s/early 70s (Murakami 2000: 123).

Sukeban is slang for “girl gang leader,” and the name was allocated to the first generation of Japanese schoolgirls to rebel against the military-inspired *seifuku* (uniforms) that had been employed in the school system since the later Meiji period. “The mere act of standing up to conformity by altering assigned clothing” with the embroidering of kanji characters and the tailoring of sailor tops such that they would expose the teens’ midriffs, “gave the most innocuous suburban rebel the air of danger” (Ashcraft and Ueda 2014: 18). And this air of danger and rebellion would translate into the cinema of the era. The “Pinky Violence” exploitation films of Toei Studio featured a “*Sukeban* series [which] showcased the soon-to-be-legendary Reiko Ike and Miki Sugimoto playing delinquent girls who square off in a seemingly endless series of brawls, with one (or both) ending up topless” (65). Noting that “the original audience was one hundred percent male,” Brian Ashcraft and Shoko Ueda cite film critic Toshio Takasaki’s view that: “Taking something very pure like a schoolgirl and putting them in an impure situation to see what happens is male reverie” (64). However, though characterizing himself as “a merchant of low-brow cinema and a craftsman, free of ideology,” Noribumi Suzuki, the director of many such *sukeban* films, nevertheless situates his artistic intention above mere titillation (67). Rather than merely depicting these women as objects of male desire, Suzuki states that he “wanted to show the beauty and sorrow of these dark, cool, delinquent girls [...] The movies captured the feeling of the times” (67).

The tension that arises from this dual emphasis on the physical attractiveness of young women as well as their psychological states—or the “male reverie” of the viewer and the “beauty and sorrow” of the female protagonists—is also at play in the cinematic depictions of the *kogal*. The *kogal* schoolgirl of the mid-90s was aesthetically defined by their wearing of short skirts and “boot socks—later dubbed ‘loose socks’ for the way they hung” in a manner that “flattered short schoolgirl legs, making them appear long and slender” (Ashcraft and Ueda 2014: 26). Actually an American import, its creator Eric Smith suggests that the fetishization of the socks was a consequence of their being banned at schools: “On trips to Tokyo, I’d visit Shibuya Station at three in the afternoon [...] Schoolgirls would be changing out of school-regulation knee-high socks into loose socks to go meet their friends. I think this caused the loose socks to be fetishized by some businessmen” (28). This mixture of a fetishization of these particular schoolgirls as figures or, perhaps more accurately, as objects of erotica, and the parallel emergence of *enjo kosai*, would be depicted in both Anno’s *Love & Pop* and Masato Harada’s *Baunsu ko gaurusu/Bounce KO Gals* (1997).

The latter opens with a sequence that intercuts floor level shots of loose socked schoolgirls and the bare-ankled, wandering, gait of a girl who, both literally and metaphorically, cannot walk a straight line. She will eventually cross paths with Lisa, a new arrival to the hip area of Shibuya, Tokyo, popular with that city’s youths, and itself an internationally recognized icon of cool. Soon to depart for New York, Lisa finds herself engaging in *enjo kosai* in order to regain the money that was stolen from her during a

pornographic video shoot. Though categorized as “pornographic,” there is no actual performance of sex acts; what is filmed are teen girls frolicking in their loose socks and school uniforms, emphasizing the fetishization that Anne Allison points out is prevalent in Japanese visual culture.

This fetishized construct—I use fetish here in the Freudian ... sense of a fixation on one part of an object and in the Marxian ... sense of reifying a human or social relation by a concrete object—is an image found commonly in both children’s manga and various other media not explicitly child oriented, such as adult pornographic comic books, photos appended to news magazines, and mainstream shows on prime-time TV (Allison 2000: 41).

It is just such a fetishization that Timothy Iles argues is *Love & Pop*’s “visual focus” (2005: n.p.). Iles reads Anno’s multitude of unorthodox camera placements—cameras attached to limbs, to items of clothing as they are put on, hidden beneath tables—as a “thoroughly consistent, objectifying gaze” that

reveals its true fascination with the physicality of the young women whom the camera follows with voyeuristic obsession. In this regard, *Love and Pop* accepts Mary Ann Doane’s proposition ... that the act of filming the female body necessarily reifies that body, stripping it of its subjectivity, and forcing it to perform for the male voyeur. The gaze of *Love and Pop* is strictly male.

In this reading Anno’s visuals are defined by a fetishization by which the female subject depicted is disempowered by the male engendered look of the camera, with which the spectator identifies. That Anno has “accepted” this proposition, and runs with it, is further suggested by Iles’ characterizing of the film as “openly present[ing] the female body as valued only as an object of physical desire” given the (lack of) characterization of the female subjects depicted. Describing Hiromi and her friends as “uniformly shallow” and their secrets as “uniformly not profound,” Iles’ main concern is that their interactions with the male clients “is uniformly filled by listening to them speak, virtually non-stop, about their own problems,” rendering the female protagonists voiceless. Rather than a realistic depiction of adolescents in an awkward situation, or a critique of these odd adults who hire teenagers for dates, Iles suggests that “this social criticism [of *enjo kosai*] becomes in effect a subterfuge, a mechanism whereby Anno may express his own criticism of young Japanese women” as vapid and empty.

I would suggest that Harada’s *Bounce KO Gals* certainly succumbs to these criticisms. By the end of the single day depicted the schoolgirls are robbing clients while under pursuit by the yakuza, these mild thriller elements recalling the *sukeban* exploitation flicks aimed at inducing “male reverie.” Yet it fails to communicate its subjects’ “beauty and sorrow” as their behaviour only functions to communicate parental fears, while their dialogue acts as a mouth piece for the writer-director’s criticisms of *enjo kosai*. At one point, Jonko, the stun-gun wielding *kogal*, tells the film’s sole concerned parent figure, who takes the ironic guise of a culturally conservative yakuza pimp, that: “Adults these days don’t have any sense. They’re like children, so real children have power.” This film thus arguably demonstrates Iles’ concern that a lack of female filmmakers, writers, and producers, in the Japanese film industry, as in others, results in the presentation of female characters that act as “a mouthpiece for a male communication—her function is that of conduit, not interlocutor, not originator of the message” (2005: n.p.).

However, while Iles’ broader point on the importance of achieving equal access to filmmaking opportunities is certainly important, is it not the case that every character is a conduit for the filmmaker’s message and, further, that a female director can just as easily communicate and affirm patriarchal ideology through her text? An exception would be if a film is radically improvised, yet here the character is instead a conduit for the female actor’s unique subjectivity, her imaginings as to how she would respond within the parameters of a set scenario. In short, a character *is* a conduit, an abstract manifestation birthed by

those working on the film and, just as importantly, those who view it. It is the nature of this manifestation that needs to be addressed, the way in which the character—and its fictional subjectivity—emerges within the imagery of the film, regardless of the gender of the director. But this is not to say that gender concerns are irrelevant to such an analysis of *Love & Pop*; given the nature of the shots, specifically those which isolate body parts, we must ask how the characterization of Hiromi figures within the tension between male reverie and female subjectivity—whether the latter is suppressed in the service of the former.

It is through close analysis of the film’s sequencing that we will uncover the extent to which Anno’s video imagery works to produce or diminish the female character’s subjectivity. In the first instance, an examination of the first paid-date of the movie (Fig. 2) establishes why Iles is incorrect to state that *Love and Pop*’s camera solely reflects “a male desire to possess, control, and enjoy the physicality of the female body [...] by first fetishising that body, dehumanising it through the process of segmenting it, separating it into its component parts” (2005: n.p.).



Figure 2. The first paid-date of *Love & Pop*.¹

There are two aspects of this sequence that significantly complicate readings of the film under the theory of the male gaze. One is that the isolation of body parts is shared between both the female and the male figures, with the male failing to provide narcissistic satisfaction for the male viewer, and the other is that such instances of isolation occur within a broader image-structure, or sequence, that attributes these images to the thoughts of the female protagonist. Consider the alternation between the repeated images of isolated body parts beneath the table on which they are eating. One of the shots finds the camera facing the male with the girls’ legs flanking either side of the frame. The central focus of this shot is that of the man’s (clothed) groin, his knees parted wide as he sits across from them. The other is a reverse shot from between the man’s legs, by which the legs of the two girls sat opposite him are rendered the central focus. This shot-reverse-shot beneath the table gains significance in this scene through its alignment with the verbal exchange that occurs between the characters. The camera is centred on the male’s groin when he asks them what grade they are in, suggesting the sexual underpinning of the question, and the camera then faces the girls’ legs when they reply “Oh, juniors in high school,” indicating a critique (on the part of the director) of such a sexualisation of these young females. The camera returns to the table where a medium shot of the man finds him noting: “One year older than my daughter,” and he begins to enthuse about his daughter’s academic abilities. The camera alternates between various angled shots of the man and his companions as they speak, but it is notable that when he says, “On top of that, like me, she’s really good looking,” that the camera returns to its placing between his legs, giving us a shot that focuses on the girls’ legs, and their loose socks, which are emphasized by Chieko lifting her feet up onto the seat. Shot and dialogue combine here to suggest an expression of the male’s sexual desire, given that he conflates his own sense of attractiveness with his daughter, who he in turn has conflated with Hiromi and Chieko.

¹ Clip: <https://youtu.be/Yufc1S-jJXw>.

However, the closing of the sequence communicates a further, alternate, reading of the shot that ultimately determines its function within the overall image-structure.

For after Chieko leaps over to the intercom, the male snaps: “You guys!! It’s wrong not to seriously listen when other people are talking!!” Attempting to calm him down, she pours him a drink, the camera placed beneath the male’s arm as he holds up his glass. Chieko’s gesture of servility combines with the placement of the camera to suggest an attempt to affirm the male’s sense of power. It fails, however, and a moment later this camera beneath his arm is returned to as he jabs his chopsticks at them, yelling about their future prospects should they fail to “seriously search for something to make of [their] lives.” Following his rant, the scene ends with flash inserts of Hiromi elsewhere, buying film for her camera—with an emphasis on the cash in her hands, a shot of Hiromi back at the restaurant, resting her face upon her folded hands as she glares at the man in judgement, and a final shot of her camera lain upon her bag at the restaurant. As these shots unfold, Hiromi reflects in voice-over: “What the guy was saying wasn’t completely false. I just thought that I didn’t want to be told that by someone like you.” Narratively, it becomes clear that this “date” is intended by the man to be a simulation of control over his own daughter, just as prostitution involving physical sex may be sought by a male to simulate a position of control within his erotic relations. However, Chieko’s behaviour fractures his simulation, and it is he who becomes the object of Hiromi’s bemused gaze. Aside from the obstruction of narcissistic identification with the male that arises from his characterization as somewhat pathetic, what is significant is that the disruptive force of the female protagonist’s subjectivity is communicated through the very visuals that supposedly suppress it.

As the Kuleshov effect tells us, singular images are innately dynamic in their ability to perform different functions depending on their placement amongst others, and, in this case, it is the closing shots that cause us to rethink the images that preceded them. This is because the closing shots of the sequence provide its focalization: the inserts of Hiromi flashing her cash and buying the camera film indicate that this is the purpose of the date for her, while the alignment of her glare with her last words on the matter directs us towards how we ought to feel about the businessman. And it is through this retroactive framing that we also come to understand that Hiromi’s subjectivity is diffused within the broader image-structure of the sequence—with the effect that new functions are released from the aforementioned shots of body parts. Where the first reading of these shots suggested that the director was communicating a critique of the male’s desire through his choice of shot sequencing, we now recognise that this image-structure is intended to be the communication of Hiromi’s thoughts. We now read the shots featuring his and her own body parts as thoughts evoked by Hiromi’s engagement with this man, hence their appearing at sexually charged moments of the conversation. In this way, images usually associated with the subjugation of the female under the dominating gaze of the male are instead images produced, critically, by the female protagonist herself. The fetishizing shots are understood to reflect the self-consciousness of the protagonist; a self-awareness as to how she and her friend are being perceived by the male. The multiplicity of image-functions contained in this work is such that we find that an image can *simultaneously* represent (a) the subject become object through fetishization *and* (b) the fetishized object as an image of the same subject’s reflection. While such a simultaneity complicates the very notion of “fetish,” and the emphasis placed on Hiromi’s camera in the framing of this sequence might suggest a poetics of sousveillance, it will be seen that the broader point here is less about uncovering techniques for subverting the power-structure that underpins the male gaze than it is about exploring entirely different structures of looking.

Superflat Image-Analysis

Love & Pop is a film that demands a rethinking of scopophilia within the study of visual media: to conceive of scopophilia as a love of vision that reflects the conditions of society and its many, varied, structures of looking. The term “scopophilia” needs to be rethought due to its usage since, and on the basis upon, its confused emergence. The term was introduced into psychoanalytic discourse by James Strachey to translate Freud’s concept of *Schaulust*. Scopophilia here refers to a specifically sexual pleasure derived

from looking: the pleasure arising from the subjugation of the subject-become-object within the looker's gaze (Freud 2000: 23-24). It is this determination of scopophilia that has become entrenched in media studies due to its use by Laura Mulvey in her landmark essay "Visual Pleasure and the Narrative Cinema," originally published in 1975. There the term is used to describe one way in which the male gaze operates upon the women featured in Hollywood film. Yet given the "lust in looking" that Freud is expressing with the term *Schaulust*, the appropriateness of Strachey's translation of the term as "scopophilia" is questionable (Dumenil 2014: 36). Returned to its etymological roots—the Greek "scopo," to look, and "philia," brotherly love—"scopophilia" ought to mean a "love of looking." Mulvey is certainly addressing *Schaulust* in her theory, but not scopophilia in its linguistic sense. And the above rebuttal of Iles' reading of *Love & Pop* demonstrates why a broadening of scopophilia is useful—it allows us to recognise that images, such as those which isolate body parts, are not necessarily best understood under preconceived concepts, such as the male gaze, and that we need to broaden our theoretical vocabulary in order to account for the explosion of image-functions and image-structures wrought by new technologies, such as these new types of shots made possible by small digital cameras. This stance in fact resonates with the broader point that can be drawn from Mulvey's article. The author's weaponizing of psychoanalysis is intended to uncover the patriarchal structures of looking that this tool of analysis itself affirms (Mulvey 2000: 36). However, she points out that psychoanalysis is not the only tool of patriarchy, and that the structures of looking that she then identifies in cinema by using this tool are not intrinsic to the medium (46). Mulvey's broader point, then, is that cinema reflects the structures of seeing found in the society which produces the films, and that cinema also offers us the opportunity to communicate alternative ways of looking that could induce the adoption of such structures by wider society. I believe the complex image-structures of *Love & Pop* communicate the dynamic way in which we perceive and conceive of the world today, and it is by drawing on Takashi Murakami's theory of the superflat that such structures will be explicated.

On Japanese art culture at the turn of the twenty-first century, Murakami writes:

We want to see the newest things. That is because we want to see the future, even if only momentarily. It is the moment in which, even if we don't completely understand what we have glimpsed, we are nonetheless touched by it. This is what we have come to call "art."
(2000: 9)

And I would suggest that his sentiment that "[t]he world of the future might be like Japan is today," i.e. like the Japan reflected in the content and aesthetics of Anno's late-nineties *Love & Pop*, has come to fruition (Murakami 5). One need only look around at the profusion of screen-based technologies—smartphones, tablets, webcams, CCTV, drones—to see how our love of vision dominates all parts of the world that have jacked into the internet. These mobile technologies indicate the biggest shift in our relation to vision since that of television, with the tendency towards image-making perhaps being stronger than even that of image reception. For instance, Willett writes that less than 25% of the videos created by her studied sample of camera phone users would be shared online for a wide audience; we are able to see far less visual media than we tend to collectively produce, and this despite the amount of shared visual media being extraordinarily large in the age of web-based video sharing (2009: 226).

It is in respect to the notion that structures of seeing shift across time and technology that Murakami writes of Anno's film as providing "the first standard for a Tokyo movie since Yasujiro Ozu's 'Tokyo Story'. If Ozu's low camera angle externalized the Japanese point of view and defined a Japanese-style image, then the infinite camera angles created by the thousands of digital camera positions Anno used in 'Love & Pop' have created a new form of perspective for the Tokyo of today" (2000: 123). I suggest that this new form of perspective is that of *soveillance*. In *Love & Pop*, there is an overall surveillance aesthetic that envelops all shots, including those of fetishization. These surveillant shots are then placed within the image-structure of a self-consciousness informed by social surveillance—a surveillance

structure that corresponds to the peer-to-peer nature of contemporary web-based social networking. Thus placed into this broader context, each surveillant shot comes to be rendered soveillaint—a self-surveillance on the part of the protagonist, these are the technologized images of her consciousness. Following the notion that montage is “the whole of the film, the Idea,” soveillance is a term used to characterize the “Idea” of this film (Deleuze 1983: 30). Soveillance thus partakes in both image-function and image-structure, as it is the latter that releases the first—this new function of the images that is revealed during their unfolding across the span of the film.

As suggested by the reference to social surveillance, the reading of the film given in this article draws upon two further principles of image-analysis found in Murakami’s theory of the superflat. The first is that this scopophilia is atemporal: “link[ing] the past with the present and the future” (Murakami 2000: 5). As Leah Shafer writes, “Murakami offers a model of aesthetic sensibility that emphasizes the ways that historical models of Japanese culture determine, link with, and shift contemporary art and culture” (2016: n.p.). This model of temporal convergence is underpinned by Murakami’s opening gambit that the superflat aesthetic is akin to a Photoshop production whereby “you merge a number of distinct layers into one,” each layer of which may be from a different era, as demonstrated by the presence of effects related to Edo period art (1603-1868) in contemporary anime (Murakami 5). By examining how contemporary cat videos share in the complex structure of spectatorship associated with the spectacle films of the silent era, Shafer employs this atemporal approach in a manner that identifies resonances between “the emerging era of the YouTube video [and] the emerging era of cinema.” What is more intriguing to me is the possibility of contextualising works of the past within contemporary terms—after all, if anime shares the visual structure of Edo period art, then Edo period art also shares the visual structure of anime. It is in this way that art allows us to “see the future.” Adopting this approach, Anno’s film from 1998 is analysed in this article under a framing informed by more recent concerns, hence the social networking that was in its infancy at the time of *Love & Pop*’s production being employed as the main context for this reading of the film. The effect of such an approach demonstrates the detachability of image-structures from temporal contexts—their time of release and/or production. Here the self-consciousness involved in the construction of the virtual self within online social networks is communicated through the image-structures that constitute Anno’s film, just as elsewhere an atemporal analysis of the image-structures that constitute Paul Verhoeven’s 1997 film *Starship Troopers* would demonstrate how the text functions as the greatest satire yet produced on the War on Terror that would only emerge following the events of September 11, 2001.

Finally, as with superflat, the image analysis conducted in this article is also intermedial. Building on the example used to demonstrate the atemporal nature of art, Murakami provides an extended analysis of how “the compositional dynamic” of contemporary anime “resembles that of the ‘eccentric’ artists [of the Edo period] to a startling degree,” exchanging “natural phenomena” for “explosions, and strange poses and movements for humans and robots” (2000: 9). The convergence between these different media forms is informed by the overlaying of image-structures—the directing of the eye invoked by the composition of a painting with the directing of the eye invoked by the moving images of anime. I would argue that it is in a similar fashion that *Love & Pop* can be read as a live-action, contemporary, and secular, expression of the technological embodiment of emotion present in Anno’s own animated, futuristic, and theologically-infused, *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (1995-1996).

Susan J. Napier writes of how the landmark anime disrupted the conventions of the *mecha* genre through a narrative that takes “place within a bleak context of seriously dysfunctional family, work, and sexual relationships,” in a series that is “permeated with a mystical and apocalyptic philosophy and interwoven with surreal graphic imagery” (2005: 96). The *mecha* genre is that which involves a young person fighting within a robotic exoskeleton, often on the battle ground of a futuristic cityscape. That adolescents operate these machines is ostensibly because such anime is targeted towards audiences of the same age group, but here Anno subverts the trope by suggesting that all of the pilots for the EVA program are 14 years old because it is their heated emotional state that powers the technology. Only the most damaged amongst

these adolescents are capable of properly operating, or psychically “synching” with, the giant EVA units they are placed within. Rei Ayanami is a girl with no past, no family, no memory, and, as such, no sense of purpose in life; Asuka Langley found herself replaced by a ragged doll following her mother’s psychological breakdown, the latter’s suicide coming after an attempt to murder her real daughter; main protagonist Shinji Ikari was sent away by his father at the age of four, following the death of his mother, and is continually emotionally abused and manipulated by this man who also heads the EVA programme. It is the expression of the interiority of these adolescent protagonists through the external technology in which they are placed that provides the point of intermedial convergence with *Love & Pop*. In one of the series’ most memorable moments, Shinji’s EVA unit is revealed to be partly bio-organic, a beast that howls at the moon upon its breaking out of the constraints of the machine to which it has been sutured. This furious release is triggered by its pilot’s own desperate emotional state, such that he ends up fusing with the unit for an extended period of time. And just as the bio-mech suits both literally and metaphorically embody the damaged psyches of the characters of *Evangelion*, the technological aesthetic of *Love & Pop*, its surveillant video images, reflect the character’s subjectivity. It is in this way that the psycho-technological tensions found in Anno’s anime are present in the visual communication of his first live-action film, just as the compositional and directional movement of lines in Edo art are present in the moving images of contemporary anime.

In fact, *Love & Pop* has its origins in a live-action segment that was shot for *End of Evangelion* (1997), the expansion of the final episodes of the television series into a full-length anime movie (Fig 3.). This sequence depicts a brief enactment of the life of one of the characters in a mundane reality, just as elsewhere, in the last episode of the series, there is a version of the characters’ lives in the form of “an animated high-school sex comedy that proves to [Shinji] that there are many possible directions his anime life could go on” (Napier 2005: 192). This live-action segment would not make the final cut, yet it is notable that it shares the cinematic aesthetic of *Love & Pop*; specifically the use of mini-DV cameras to shoot from many unorthodox camera angles.



Figure 3. Deleted live-action sequence from *End of Evangelion* (1997).²

Most significantly for the argument put forward in this essay, however, is the further point of convergence that is found between *Love & Pop*’s cinematic image-structures and the construction of virtual selves that occurs on the basis of the images shared through social media. This is to conceive of the activity of online image sharing as partaking within a structure—or sequence—of images, just as the images of a film gain meaning through their placement within a broader structure. The point of convergence here is

² Clip: <https://youtu.be/cwBs3VsNfdY?t=22s>.

characterized by the concept of soveillance; it is self-surveillance that determines both the image-structures of the film and of that which is involved in the construction of the virtual self.

On the basis of the above methodological principles drawn from Murakami's theory of the superflat, then, the following atemporal analysis of *Love & Pop* demonstrates how complex subjectivity can be expressed via filmmaking that embraces a rethought scopophilia that recognizes the expansion of image-functions triggered by the technology of today. Specifically, the complex subjectivity expressed in this film is shown to correspond to the process of the construction of the virtual self that occurs through the sharing of images online. Soveillance is the concept that characterizes the point of convergence between these two types of image-structure.

Part II. Soveillance

Social Surveillance and Self-Consciousness

New media technologies have rendered the power structures involved in surveillance far more dynamic than the "asymmetric gazing" found in the model of panopticism that Foucault drew upon to explain the "internalized discipline" of the twentieth century citizen (Mann and Ferenbok 2013: 23). This is to say that surveillance "is no longer something that can be discussed in the mode of a purely unidirectional or top-down activity in which surveillance is something done by the state, the market, or the voyeuristic predator to the citizen, the consumer, or the victim" (Zimmer 2015: 73). This is because in their online activity consumer-citizens participate in "the surveillance economy with their own surveillant behaviors" (73). By "the surveillance economy," Zimmer is referring to the collection of user data by corporations, and by "surveillant behaviors" she is referring to the surveillance of others that is conducted by users of, for instance, social media. Engagement within online social networks involves peer-to-peer surveillance by which the flows of power are diffused and dynamic (Marwick 2012). And it is this lateral structure of social surveillance that underpins the self-consciousness of Hiromi, *Love & Pop*'s protagonist. It is the use of the (pre-smart) mobile phone by the schoolgirl characters of Anno's film that opens it up to a reading that transposes current web usage onto the recent past depicted. This is because the figure of the mobile phone is of much historical importance in the development of online social networks, with the emergence of photo and video recording technology on such devices, and the leap into smartphone technology that allowed users to share such media online. By taking the superflat approach to image-analysis, with its principles of atemporality and intermedial convergence, the technologized relationship between Hiromi and her friends is found to communicate the structure of power found in the contemporary social network. And it is the dynamism of such flows of power that determines the structure of self-consciousness expressed through the dynamic sequencing of this film.

We begin with an analysis of the scene in which Hiromi holds the mobile phone to her ear and becomes absorbed by the messages she plays back from the dial-up message board on which the girls advertise themselves as available for compensated dating (Fig. 4). The messages are related to the viewer via voice-over as a montage of flashback images rolls on, the images superimposed one upon another to create a hazy and degraded video effect. The superimposed image that persists once the messages of Hiromi and her friends begin to be heard is a tracking shot of telephone wires cutting across the sky. These telephone wires function as a concrete symbol for the abstract miasma of the wireless communication that features in the film. Further, as a visual motif that recurs throughout the first half of *Love & Pop*, before Hiromi goes on paid-dates alone, these wires also work to communicate the ties between the protagonist and her three friends. This is expressed in this montage where the soundtrack of audio messages indirectly communicates their trading of secrets, joys, and sadness amongst themselves; "I'm sixteen years old, but I am flat chested and skinny," says Hiromi, "I'm feeling a bit down," says Chieko, their voices supposedly calling out to otherwise unknown recipients.



Figure 4. The mobile phone montage sequence.³

The technological framing of this scene thus shifts from the relationships between Hiromi and her suitors—the business function of the message-board—and instead to her circle of friends—the telephone exchange as social network. This reflects the real-world development of mobile phone usage in late-nineties Japan, as charted by Ashcraft and Ueda. The authors find that the wider public adoption of the mobile phone demonstrates what cultural anthropologist Mizuko Ito refers to as the “trick up phenomenon,” whereby the interests of Japanese schoolgirls tend to filter through to the rest of Japanese society (Ashcraft and Ueda 2014: 92). It was the popularity of pagers with schoolgirls—“the first viral youth tech” (90)—in order to communicate with friends out of earshot of their parents, and their continued penchant for texting following regulatory changes that enforced inexpensive cellphone network coverage, that led to a shifting of “the mobile phone demographic from a business demographic that needed portable phones in order to be reachable for work [...] to an everyone demographic” (92). It is also this passion for texting by these schoolgirls that further encouraged phone makers to incorporate email and the internet into such devices as early as 1999 (93).

What is most relevant here is how the teenage usage of mobile phones in Japan would lead to the development of features related to photography. “Sharp, for example, released the first keitai [literally “portable phone”] with built-in digital camera to capitalize on the schoolgirl photo craze and sticker picture boom of the late 1990s” (Ashcraft and Ueda 2014: 92). The sticker picture device is featured in *Love & Pop*, but it is the nature of Hiromi’s own analogue photography that best anticipates contemporary camera phone usage. Lisa Gye and Carole Rivière find that camera phone usage relates to the capturing of transient moments, ephemeral images of daily life, while traditional cameras are used for significant life-events and celebrations (Willett 2009: 214). Given the recent emergence of the iPad wedding photographer such a distinction may already be blurred, but it is notable that Hiromi uses her traditional camera in the way attributed to camera phones. She photographs random moments in her daily life, any time a friend might smile, selfies, et al, aligning her photography with what Gye describes as “the transitory nature of camera phone images [which] means that self expression is shifting away from ‘this is what I saw then’ to ‘this is what I see now’” (2007: 285). Such transiency also informs the use of video recording on such devices, which is “about capturing particular moments of life as they happen, for immediate and passing viewing” (Willett 217). And it is from such visual ephemera, whether still or moving, that social media users create their virtual identities.

Invoking Anthony Giddens’ notion of the “project of the self,” Rebekah Willett writes of how “the choice of images [shared online] work to construct a coherent identity, one that may include random images, but

³ Clip: <https://youtu.be/e1RbNTvNxG4>.

one which is nevertheless narrated in a specific way” (2009: 220). To put it another way, as with the construction of meaning within a film, we can consider such images to be placed within a sequence, or structure, by which the virtual self is communicated. What is of further significance here is the paranoia involved in such a construction of the virtual self: “The selection of images for particular audiences can be seen as a way in which the performance of identity is being carefully managed in different social settings” (220). The paranoia that determines the curation of the virtual self is best understood as a self-consciousness whose structure is that of social surveillance. For as Alice E. Marwick points out, social media involves peer-to-peer surveillance by which “people self-monitor their online actions to maintain a desired balance between publicity and seclusion, while readily consuming the profiles and status updates of others” (2012: 379). Though suggesting that the arrangement of power here is not entirely devoid of hierarchies—informed by the presence of those with certain social statuses, bosses or parents, for instance, on one’s social media networks (387)—Marwick relates such social surveillance to Foucault’s “‘capillaries of power’ that flow between network and individuals. In this model, power is ever-present, fluid, and at work in the mundane day-to-day activities that make up human life” (382).

This kind of social surveillance is evident in a sequence in which Hiromi determines the closeness of her friendships by the level of access she is given to them with her camera. The first scene is that of Hiromi and Chieko at a café, in which the latter reveals how, in regard to *enjo kosai*, she had “gone all the way on some occasions.” Narrating, Hiromi says: “I had a feeling Chie-Chan hadn’t told the other two about this. So this became a secret between the two of us.” Hiromi then reflects upon the secrecy of her other two friends (Fig. 5). The flashback begins with Hiromi noticing that Nao has a fake tattoo, which she rushes to take a shot of with her camera. Nao reprimands her with the yell of: “Stop!” to which Hiromi lowers her camera, somewhat embarrassed and hurt. Next, in a different location, as Nao continues to discuss her plans to get a tattoo against the wishes of her parents, the two notice Chisa standing alone and afar. “I think Chisa has some secrets too,” the voice-over tells us. As Nao shouts for their friend’s attention, Hiromi gleefully lifts her camera. Upon seeing them, Chisa swiftly covers her face with her hand, turning away from the lens. Hiromi lowers her camera in disappointment, curious of her friend’s reaction. This sequence communicates the power dynamic of social networking, for here Hiromi is posited as the user who wishes to see all the intimacies of the other persons that constitute the network, to know their “secrets,” while her friends Nao and Chisa figure as the users who are aware of their being seen, and who are reluctant to have anything revealed of their selves that they have not actively chosen to proffer.



Figure 5. *The paranoia of the social network.*

This is the entanglement of peer-to-peer surveillance: the attempt to curate one's virtual self depends on a self-management informed by paranoia, the knowledge that someone else may modify the curated identity by way of unwanted contributions to the construction. Such a paranoia certainly evokes Foucault's writing on panopticism, a discipline-mechanism in which "[v]isibility is a trap" (1995: 200). Given that the subject never knows whether she is actually being looked at at any given moment but is sure that this may always be the case, she "inscribes in [her]self the power relation in which [she] simultaneously plays both roles; [she] becomes the principle of [her] own subjection" (201). Yet we find that "the panoptic principle" is radically disrupted in the power structure of social media (216). The whole point of panopticism is to isolate and segment multiplicities into "calculated distributions" of individuals, such that their utility is managed to a greater degree of efficiency through a disciplinary power that is embedded into "the very texture of the multiplicity"⁴ (219-220). Social media, however, conversely privileges and operates by mass formations—shares, up-votes, and likes determine what is most likely to be seen—reversing Foucault's conception of modernity as surveillance and antiquity as spectacle. Online activity works to the same end as the latter: "To render accessible to a multitude of [persons] the inspection of a small number of objects" (216). And, most significantly, the object of inspection, the curator of the virtual self, is not subjugated in the same manner as in the panopticon, whereby "[she] is seen, but [she] does not see; [she] is the object of information, never a subject in communication" (200). As Marwick puts it, in "social network sites, microblogging services, and so forth the information is 'donated' by the sender" (2012: 388). The sender may feel the pressure of being watched by others, but it is she who ultimately determines what kind of self is to be observed.

Communication by the subject and her reception of the responses of others to this communication is at the very basis of the self-management of the virtual self, as demonstrated in the following scene from Anno's film. Having all just partaken in a somewhat twisted paid-date for ¥120,000, the price of the topaz ring that Hiromi so dearly desires, she is reluctant to accept the money from her friends. "I want to split it with everyone, I really appreciate everyone's effort. But . . . I want to be friends forever." Breaking down, her friends comfort her and agree to split the money. This shot takes the form of a squeezed frame bracketed by two borders of black; a visual expression of Hiromi's inner self-consciousness and the tension she feels in this situation (Fig. 6). However, to viewers today the shot is striking because the image perfectly resembles mobile phone footage as it is recorded in portrait framing; the production of an extremely squeezed frame which in the age of YouTube has come to be known as "Vertical Video Syndrome." An atemporal reading of the film, by which the cropped image becomes enveloped by this vertical video aesthetic, releases a further image-function of the shot through its subsequent positioning within the broader technology-infused image-structure of the film. This technologized shot is now understood to express the proactive self-management of a social media video sharer. The point of the self-management of one's virtual self is to determine how one is perceived, or, to put it another way, to determine the result of their being surveilled in a manner that benefits the subject that is being watched. This is the very function of the self-management of the virtual self—self-consciousness as a negative sensation that is utilized by the subject to ensure their security, protecting them from potential attacks and failure. And such a management of the self is what Hiromi is doing in this scene—she is choosing to be the martyr, to make her sacrifice, so that she maintains her friendships. Hiromi does not wish to upset the dynamics of the capillaries of power within that circle of girls, for a change in that dynamic could damage the external image of her self that she wishes to communicate, in this case through the perception that she is selfish for putting her friends through humiliation for a ring. Surveillance here thus operates in a lateral structure whereby power is diffused within every figure, or image, and the self-consciousness of a subject within this network is determined by the fact that she herself can determine the direction of flows within the circuit.

⁴ Social media may be used to these ends by corporations or the state, in their gathering of information on individuals, but Marwick distinguishes these types of "dataveillance" from the peer-to-peer social media usage that constitutes "social surveillance" (2012: 383).



Figure 6. *Vertical Video Syndrome as self-consciousness.*

Self-Consciousness as Soveillance

Zimmer writes of how the “[p]schoanalytic conceptions of voyeurism and Foucault’s account of panopticism have dominated explanations of a variety of disparate surveillance-themed narratives” within film scholarship, “even as discussions of surveillance in other arenas have developed profound engagements between these and other theoretical models” (2015: 3). We have seen how *Love & Pop* has drawn us away from the panoptic model of surveillance, and in explaining the nature of *soveillance* we will examine how this film’s image-structure defuses the traditional association of surveillance with voyeurism.

I suggest that the difference between a surveillant shot and a voyeuristic shot relates to whether the camera is embodied within the scene. Voyeurism in cinema is typically characterized as engendered with the male gaze,⁵ surveillance is the recording of data by a machine. Take the many tracking shots of the girls that feature in the film. At certain points, notably when a horny male enters the scene, the camera is signified as voyeuristic. This is seen in the shot in which the first paid-date is instigated (Fig. 7). The camera tracks forward towards the elevated ramp on which the girls walk, and then tracks right, such that they meet by the time the girls reach ground level. The shot is partly signified as voyeuristic by its handheld aesthetic, whose shakiness, Zimmer notes, “provides a sense of instability, vulnerability, and limited visibility, all contributing to what is intended to be an immersive experience in which the gaze of the video camera offers the spectator a first-person sense of horror,” often as the potential target of violence, but here as the interloper (2015: 81). This is affirmed by the other component that signifies such a shot as voyeuristic: that of attribution. Upon the camera’s tracking to the right, a man appears on the ramp and begins to follow and eventually approach the girls, at the same pace as the camera, ridding this shot of anonymity and aligning its embodied perspective with that of the male client; a point emphasized by the spatial-temporal convergence of the figures with the camera.

⁵ “Like her mid-century counterpart, Hollywood’s contemporary female voyeur has fallen on hard times. Her gaze is still defined by the masculine eye [...] her gaze and her body coded in patriarchal terms” (Denzin 1995: 139).



Figure 7. Voyeurism as the embodied camera.⁶

Yet, in contrast to such voyeuristic images, at other points of the film the camera tracks the girls and then simply continues to track away, on the same trajectory and at the same pace, while the girls depart from the camera's route (Fig. 8). The effect of this is that the camera suggests itself as a device of constant recording whose field of vision the girls just happened to fall into. This sense of cold, constant, recording is what evokes surveillance technology; the technology itself is not embodied, and so neither are the cinematic shots that mimic it.



Figure 8. Surveillance as a detached recording.⁷

As with the voyeuristic shots, however, in *Love & Pop* the coolly detached nature of surveillant imagery is complicated by its placement within the shifting amalgam of visions intended to reflect the complex subjectivity of its protagonist.

Consider the scene in which Hiromi first steps into Shibuya, only to find herself harassed by a businessman for a date as she walks the famous Tokyo crossing (Fig. 9). The handheld camera travels with the two, increasing both the tension and momentum of the scene, which is further exacerbated by flash inserts. The last insert is that of an extreme close up of Hiromi's darting eyes, and then the close up of a bright red hat upon a male's head. The businessman gives up as Hiromi charges away. Various shots of a phone booth are then given, over which Hiromi says: "In my freshman year, after I broke up with my first boyfriend, there was a time when I was interested in telephone dating services." The next shot is from the floor of the booth, focused on Hiromi's legs, her wearing different socks indicating that this is a flashback. This shot, which fetishizes her legs, occurs at the point in which Hiromi asks questions over the

⁶ Clip: <https://youtu.be/Avq570n5OjA>.

⁷ Clip: <https://youtu.be/ye5m6W8A-nA>.

phone about the nature of the dating. The client claims to be a writer who has joined the service to conduct “research,” and there follows quick flashes of various nondescript males, as he says he will meet her wearing a red hat. From a balcony above, the camera then tracks Hiromi and her friend, now in the present, as they walk together, the former recounting: “I got scared and stood him up... I still get a bit jumpy when I see someone wearing a red hat.”



Figure. 9. The Shibuya flashback sequence.⁸

The flashback works to communicate the subjectivity of Hiromi—how she is reminded of her first flirtation with *enjo kosai* by the Shibuya harasser. The final shot gives the sensation of being watched for here the camera is made to feel voyeuristic by its stalking the characters behind visible railings. Yet Hiromi’s explicit verbalization of the sensation determines the shot’s attribution—it informs us that this is a self-consciousness manifesting itself as an external projection that is represented by the camera. The shooting of the phone booth from every angle works to this end also. This total visual surveillance of the booth emphasises not only that *this* is the site of remembrance, as with its initial visual introduction, but also, given that the alternating angles continue as the flashback unfolds, that the memory is one in which Hiromi feels that she is being watched. Yet who is doing the watching? Her dialogue with the recipient of the call, who is of course not physically there, places her in a state of self-consciousness. Hence the fetishizing shots only occur during sexually charged moments in the conversation, including a shot that almost peers up her skirt at the point in which the recipient of the call asks to meet her. Hiromi is projecting an image of how she feels others may see her; the viewer watches the image that is a projection

⁸ Clip: <https://youtu.be/IQT4IjFeVq0>.

of the protagonist's thoughts. It is in this respect that the cinematic images of *Love & Pop* can be described as communicating a *soveillance*—the surveillance of one's self.

Given that shots that are embodied signify voyeurism, and shots that merely record signify surveillance, we must consider how we are to understand a self-surveillant image. As a surveillant image itself lacks embodiment, the “self” is extended to these surveillant images through their contextualization within the broader image-structure they appear within. This is to say that the self-surveillant image is *embodied by extension*. Specifically, it is the structure of social surveillance, which characterizes the self-consciousness felt by Hiromi, that provides the context by which the surveillant video images of *Love & Pop* are rendered *soveillant*.

Rosalind Krauss' great essay on the video art that emerged in the late nineteen-sixties and early seventies, “Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism,” is useful here for drawing out the nuances of this notion that the surveillant image is embodied by extension. Krauss argues that it is the psychological condition of narcissism that defines the medium of video, rather than its mechanical aspects, given that “most of the work produced over the very short span of video art's existence has used the human body as its central instrument” (1976: 52). Artists such as Vito Acconci, Bruce Nauman, and Lynda Benglis are found to employ the medium in order to record themselves in moving image self-portraits, so to speak, and it is this treatment of “the video monitor as a mirror” that distinguishes such art from the traditional notion of an artistic medium, such as the canvas or celluloid, which “contains the concept of an object-state, separate from the artist's own being, through which his intentions must pass” (50). Such video artists produce an instantaneous “image of self-regard,” a self-enclosed feedback loop, that demonstrates “a narcissism so endemic to works of video” (50).

In Freud's conception, narcissists cannot enter the analytic situation as their frozen, fixed, projection of self does not allow for change via external forces, i.e. the analyst in dialogue with the subject (Krauss 1976: 57). Lacan similarly highlights the fixity of the narcissistic subject, whose approach to the analytic situation is to voice a monologue into the void of silence she has placed the analyst within (Krauss 58). Krauss points out that in both cases narcissism is informed by an “unchanging condition,” a “fascination with the mirror.” And these points are what inform and typify art that employs video:

Video is capable of recording and transmitting at the same time—producing instant feedback. The body is therefore as it were centered between two machines that are the opening and closing of a parenthesis. The first of these is the camera; the second is the monitor, which re-projects the performer's image with the immediacy of a mirror (52).

The nature of the video medium's instantaneity is such that the bodies depicted are trapped in “the prison of a collapsed present, that is, a present time which is completely severed from its own past” (Krauss 1976: 53). The past from which the video subject is disconnected can also be considered “text,” by which one recognizes that, in all other arts, “performance ties itself to the fact of something that existed before the given moment. [...] Independent of the gesture made within the present, this larger history is the source of meaning for that gesture” (53). However, the instant feedback loop of video divorces the subject from such historicity, and meaning, such that the body is depicted within “a space where, as [the subject] says, ‘I am surrounded by me.’ Self-encapsulation—the body or psyche as its own surround—is everywhere to be found in the corpus of video art” (53). In this respect, the videoed subject turns herself into another object. Divorced from historical anchoring, which is to really say context, all that is left is the self as mirror-reflection, the monitor-image; the self doubled as another object to be observed, rather than as a subjectivity that expresses (55). Thus, “the medium of video art is the psychological condition of the self split and doubled by the mirror-reflection of synchronous feedback” (55). It is the psychological condition of narcissism.

The video art analysed by Krauss depicts artists addressing a video camera such that they also address themselves via the monitor that provides instant feedback of the recorded image. This aligns with the video consciousness that appears in *Love & Pop*—the video images of Hiromi’s body parts, for instance, are projections of Hiromi considering herself. And, as with surveillant images in general, such images are merely recordings, objects rather than embodied, or subjectivized, visions. However, it is because Hiromi is considering herself *as she may be seen by others* that this is a self-consciousness rather than a narcissism. The difference is that where narcissism is informed by utter isolation (as in Freud and Lacan’s conceptions), self-consciousness is informed by a context—this being the paranoid situation of the subject that depends on the existence of others.

Such shots of Hiromi are thus better aligned with the kind of video art that Krauss suggests breaks out of the instantaneous feedback loop described above by leaning towards reflexivity rather than mere reflection. The “consciousness of temporality and of separation between subject and object” are regained from “the suspended space of narcissism” in cases where “the angle of vision we take on the subject does not coincide with the closed circuit of [the subject’s] situation, but looks onto it from outside” (Krauss 1976: 59). Krauss cites here Richard Serra and Nancy Holt’s *Boomerang* (1974), in which the former films the latter attempting to communicate verbally whilst being fed audio of her speech on a less than a second delay (Fig. 10). Here “Serra employs audio rather than visual feedback” (59), and so the suspended temporality experienced by Holt, the subject, works on an audial level, and the event is videoed from outside of that loop. As such, though the audio loop suspends the subject’s bodily temporality, the visual medium of video breaks from the narcissistic enclosure of such reflection by being outside of it.



Figure 10. Richard Serra and Nancy Holt's *Boomerang* (1974).⁹

This is useful for our understanding of the surveillant image as embodied by extension. The surveillant image is cold and detached, a “suspended space” that merely records, giving us an object rather than a subjectivity. But embodiment is extended to such an image by way of its being watched from outside of the suspended space; and this is what it means for Hiromi to be projecting the image of herself as she would be seen by someone else. Here to project the “suspended space” of the image is to place it into a “context”—this being the narrative of the protagonist’s self-conscious subjectivity. It is in this sense that the paranoid structure of social surveillance underpins the self-consciousness presented in the film. The paranoid structure provides the context for the surveillant images of the subject’s self, lending such self-

⁹ Clip: <https://youtu.be/8z32JTnRrHc>.

contained images embodiment by extension. The various video images of *Love & Pop* thus communicate a self-surveillance in their sequencing, producing the Idea, or constructing the concept of, soveillance.

Soveillance and Gender within the Broader Social Network

The second half of *Love & Pop* finds Hiromi borrowing the mobile phone and going it alone into the world of *enjo kosai* in order to obtain the money needed to purchase the desired topaz ring. The sequence in which her friends depart and Hiromi calls up the message exchange site for a second time, and different purpose, is notable for the manner in which it communicates a broadening of the protagonist's social network.

The departure is marked by a POV shot in which Hiromi's three friends stand in a row before her. One after the other, they each step forward and lean into the camera-eye in order to give some advice on safety, before stepping back into the line. Viewed today, the manner in which this staging unfolds reminds of the way new messages are enlarged and singled out in a group conversation on a smart phone, or the way a speaker on a friends list of a social networking site becomes singular in their emergence from the row (more often a column) of faces and names.¹⁰ Yet while this shot emphasizes the individuality and tangibility of each figure of Hiromi's friendship group, they soon dissolve into the abstract. For following a shot that tracks away from a stationary Hiromi as she waves at her departing friends, we are given a wide angle shot taken from above and behind her as she continues to wave, even though her friends are now utterly indiscernible among the mass of bodies traversing the Shibuya crossing. That this communicates the broadening of Hiromi's social network is confirmed by a second montage overlaid by message board voice-overs—this time from the male strangers seeking companionship from the young females (Fig. 11). Replacing Hiromi's visual memories of her friends, here the most visible layer of the various superimpositions that constitute the second montage are the shots of a multitude of anonymous bodies traversing the city streets. Of further note, we find that the visible phone lines that marked both the social network and her ties to her friends in the previous montage (Fig. 4) have been replaced by the superimposition of railway and motor overpasses that blot out the sky, as well as wired fencing that scrolls down the frame in repetition of its 4-point diamond shaped grid. The former implies an extension of her social network through these figures of speed and traversal across space, while the repetition of the points of connection between the wires of the fencing further emphasizes the way social networks extend out into a web of acquaintances, friends of friends, and such; engagement with such extended points of connection are proactively pushed by sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn in order to produce further activity on the part of its users and thus financial benefits for its owners, as is the case with the proto-social network of this dial-up message board. Given its broader structure of the fencing, the diamond shaped wiring is also somewhat menacing in its repetition, pressing the sensation of a closing in upon the protagonist. In this respect, it is notable that her second, and final, solo paid-date of the film will appear to Hiromi on the other side of such fencing upon their first encounter. Following a vicious assault by this man, going under the pseudonym of "Captain EO," he will lay four coins upon her chest, each as points of the same diamond shape. The first solo paid-date also sexually assaults her, and it is notable that both are twenty-something men, in contrast to the middle-aged businessmen that Hiromi had encountered through her physical excursions of the city. This variation in age speaks to both the broadening of Hiromi's social network through the device of the mobile phone and to how such websites and apps are often adopted by younger persons in the first instance.

¹⁰ This is somewhat similar to the way in which characters appear as if on a player select screen of an arcade game just before the first "round" kicks off in Tom Tykwer's *Lola rennt / Run Lola Run* (1998), reflecting "the director's central conceit of life/art/film as a game" (Whalen 2000: 34).



Figure 11. *The second message board montage of Love & Pop.*¹¹

Another way in which the social network is shown to be expanded is the use of split-screen shots in the second half of the film. For while this composition gives us an explicit singular image of Hiromi's self-consciousness, given that shots of herself are placed side-by-side with that of her interlocutor, the division also allows for a splitting of focalization between the two. We note, for instance, that the split-screen shot that appears when she meets her first solo paid-date finds Hiromi's line of sight failing to match up with the POV shot of Uehara (Fig. 12). That Uehara takes up most of the frame suggests that this figure presents an unknown factor that elicits a paranoia in Hiromi's mind that induces an image of self-consciousness squeezed within the frame. Yet given that he is in fact inspecting her within the diegesis, here the squeezed image of Hiromi is also reasonably attributable to Uehara. Similarly, during the cab ride taken to reach Uehara, an earlier sequence of brief split-screen shots presents the squeezed image of Hiromi appearing upon a screen otherwise blacked out (Fig. 14). This is because she is on the mobile talking to an unknown person and the anonymity of this male fails to produce an appropriate image in Hiromi's mind. Hiromi is similarly indiscernible in these images, with at least one such split-screen shot appearing not to be of the protagonist at all (the third image of Fig. 14). This flash insert appears upon the caller's question as to whether she has stolen the phone from his friend. Given that it is the unknown caller who is driving the conversation, it is reasonable to attribute the wildcard insert, as with the other obscured images, to the imaginative component of the caller, who is trying to form an image of Hiromi, as much as it may be attributable to Hiromi's own thoughts as to how the caller conceives of her. The third split-screen image finds Hiromi taking up the majority of the frame as she undresses with her back to the camera, in a bathroom closed off to her date, Captain EO (Fig. 13). At this point in the date the two have established a pleasant rapport, as such it is Hiromi's reflection upon her own body that is the main source of her self-consciousness, hence its taking up most of the frame. Yet this feeling is invoked by EO's directions as to how to bathe and, as will be described later, he is certainly aware that he can be heard but not seen, hence his being squeezed into the margin of the frame. It is this directing by the males of the broader sequences in which these split-screen shots appear that provides the significance of such dual focalization. This splitting of focalization reflects the expansion of Hiromi's social network, her encountering personalities unpredictable in their lack of familiarity to her. Hiromi finds herself placed within the world of these males as much as they have appeared within hers. The subjectivity produced by these image-structures becomes crowded.

¹¹ Clip: <https://youtu.be/CgoOo-aiVzE>.



Figure 12. Split-screen shot upon meeting Uehara.



Figure 13. Split-screen shot during the date with Captain EO.

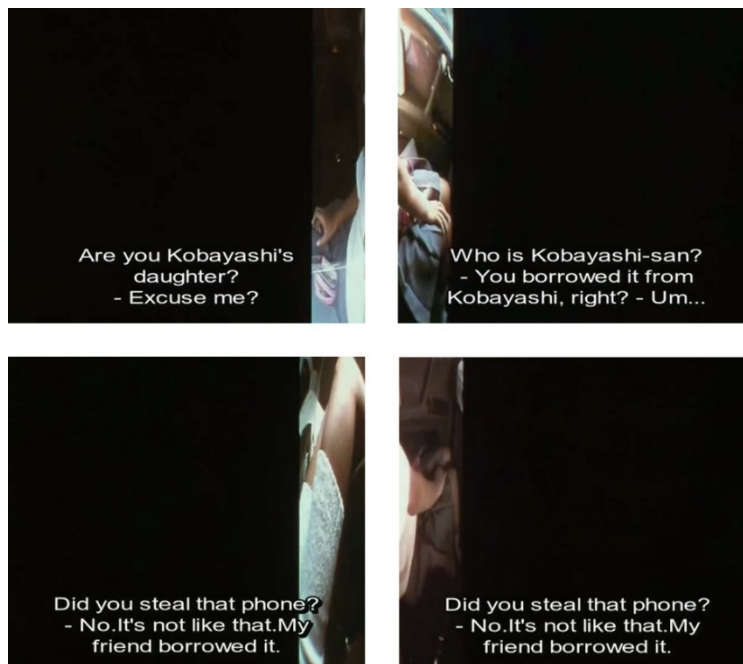


Figure 14. Split-screen shots during the cab ride, note the difference in clothing in the bottom-left image.

It is by way of Uehara's determining the direction of the sequence in which he appears that we are given insight into the gendered power-structure inherent within these relationships between older men and teenage girls. Uehara is presented as a man who has been cast out of mainstream society for his behavior (persistent spitting that he attributes to Tourette's) and hygiene (he is constantly wiping his body of sweat and speaks of not even bothering with showers anymore). After initially declining the date out of a mixture of fear, suspicion, and awkwardness, he then asks Hiromi to join him on a walk. In another instance of disembodied surveillant cinematography, the walk begins with the camera tracking backwards and the two figures eventually falling into its frame and its route. Yet as Uehara begins to speak of revenge against those who mock him, we find the camera being placed at his waist and looking up at him from this position; the kind of canted angle used to create a sense of enlargement, the shot communicates an increasing confidence in his self. The two enter a video store whose clerk Uehara wants to avenge himself against by appearing to be on a date with a young woman. The medium shot of the two as they step into the foyer of the store creates an outlaw aesthetic in their stunted movement and conspiratorial looks, and it is here that Uehara explicitly verbalizes his paranoid state of mind: "He never looks at me when I rent something, but he's always looking at me from somewhere." Immediately after this statement, we are given a high angle shot from the ceiling, positioned as if part of the store's CCTV.

This communication of Uehara's soveillant state of mind is substantiated further when he asks a reluctant Hiromi to link arms with him, maneuvering her into the adult section of this store. Telling her to pick out a porno, we fall into a mesmerizing sequence in which Hiromi's face is superimposed upon a shot that scans the spines of the videos whose titles are recited in voice-over. This sequence is abruptly broken by Uehara's grabbing of Hiromi's hand, which he immediately shoves down into his pants in order to masturbate with it. Hiromi's dizziness of shock and disbelief at the situation is communicated through close-up shots of her disturbed expression, intercut with arc shots spinning around the adult video racks, and the vertical panning across parts of both of their bodies. And the split in focalization is such that the sequence also communicates Uehara's soveillant subjectivity, here through the use of diegetic surveillance technology. The shot of the CCTV monitor (Fig. 15) features the images from four cameras placed at different parts of the store, designated "ANIME / ADULT 1 / ADULT 2 / PACINO."¹² We find that Hiromi is captured in ADULT 1, while Uehara can clearly be seen in ADULT 2, facing the camera as he masturbates himself with the adolescent's hand. After ejaculating, Uehara lurches away and leans upon a rack of videos, under which the surveillance camera of ADULT2 is clearly visible (Fig. 16).

Given the purpose of this paid-date, to counter the clerk who considers him a loser, we can conclude that Uehara led Hiromi to that particular spot in the knowledge that he would be seen being pleased on the store's CCTV. This sequence is soveillant, then, as the CCTV images become embodied by extension. Through their contextualizing within Uehara's sense of social paranoia, the diegetic CCTV images become a component of a self-surveillance intended to construct an image of himself to be received by others within his social network. Yet as Uehara is performing for the camera, while Hiromi features as a participant in this recording without consent, we are directed towards recognizing the manner in which gender may complicate and further shape instances of soveillance.

¹² The latter is of course an ill-advised joke on the part of the director, given that a sexual assault is occurring in the scene, and reflects a lack of sensitivity regarding such subject matter that is perhaps also found in the opening scene of *End of Evangelion*. There Shinji, the protagonist and ostensible hero of the story, masturbates over the comatose body of co-pilot, flatmate, and friend, Asuka. Upon ejaculating, tearfully, he looks at the cum on his hand and reflects: "I'm so fucked up." It is not entirely clear what response Anno is intending to elicit from us, though it does encapsulate the psycho-sexual comic-drama of that film, where *Love & Pop* carries the ethical weight of social realism.



Figure 15. Video store CCTV.



Figure 16. Surveillance camera above Uehara.

This instance of soiveillance evokes contemporary “revenge porn.” Revenge porn is visual media that features sexual activity and that is shared without the consent of one or both of the depicted persons. While both males and females may share sexual images of themselves online as part of their own virtual construction, as with the “amateur” contributors to PornHub’s Community channel,¹³ for instance, it is notable that the act of sharing such media without consent is often intended to humiliate the female and to destroy both her virtual self and her offline work and social life (Laville and Halliday 2016). While this resonates with the paranoia concerning the contribution of others to one’s virtual self, the desire to self-manage such a construction that is radically disrupted by such an instance as revenge porn, what is of further note is that such media may also feature the male’s genitalia and face during the activity featured, often at no detriment to the male. For instance, in a focus group discussion of revenge porn, Emilee Eikren and Mary Ingram-Waters cite a participant, Tyler, who recounts an incident in which “there was a girl who publicly had sex at a party and people took pictures and put it up online and everybody knew who she was . . . and it just went terribly for her and . . . she ended up moving school” (2016: n.p.). It is notable that in both this verbal account and the authors’ own description of the incident—“a video of a female student (the victim) having sexual intercourse with a male student (the perpetrator) at a party was circulated via social media”—the male, who was also visually recorded and had his image shared by others according to Tyler, is not considered a “victim” and is designated as a “perpetrator.” While the full details of this incident are not disclosed (the male may very well have shared images of the incident himself, designating him as a perpetrator), there appears to be the understanding here, as elsewhere in broader discussions of revenge porn, that the male figure featured in the imagery will not suffer the same victimization or sense of shame as the female featured. This speaks to a gendered imbalance whereby supposed moral standards informed by real-world patriarchy and misogyny pass into the virtual construction of selves, contrary to the hopes of “[u]topian cyberfeminists [who] argue that online, women are freed from the rigid norms that traditionally restrict female sexuality” (Magnet 2007: 582). Given this understanding that the internet is not a “gender-neutral and ‘colorblind’ space,” but instead “amplifies existing patterns of racism, ethnocentrism, religious intolerance, sexism, and heteronormativity,” the operation of soiveillance must be understood to vary in complex ways according to how one figures within the “hegemonic masculine space” of the web (Eikren and Ingram-Waters 2016). In the case of the video store assault of *Love & Pop*,

¹³ Given the monetary aspect of video distribution through these sites, one could argue that there is no longer any real distinction between “amateur” and “professional” porn.

the self-conscious construction of Uehara's virtual self is dependent on his controlling and determining Hiromi's "self." We are reminded of the strange businessman who humiliates Hiromi and her friends earlier on in the movie, asking them to spit out half-chewed grapes for placing in sample cases to be labelled under false names of their choice: "Even if it's not your real name, if it's a name you think up, it's your name. Do you understand? That's the name of the other you inside you." As with revenge porn, which functions as "punishment for women who hold power, especially sexual power," these females are paid to perform a role for the male who, in his simulation of control, nevertheless wishes to believe this performance is their real self; "the other you inside you" (Eikren and Ingram-Waters 2016). In turn, the "other," or virtual, self of the male is constructed on the basis of this denigration and determination of the females they encounter.

The gender imbalanced use of traditional surveillance technology appears in the next date also, in which Hiromi suffers a second assault, this time by the disturbed young man going by the name of Captain EO. As described earlier, in the split-screen featuring EO that precedes the sexual assault (Fig. 13), the emphasis is placed on how Hiromi feels about her body, as invoked by EO's directions. This opens up a dual focalization of the scene which comes to fruition when we intercut between Hiromi showering in the bathroom and a POV shot from the perspective of EO who pours out the contents of her bag and rips the film from out of her camera. Given that Hiromi had earlier taken selfies with the man and his stuffed toy, in the soveillant poetics of this movie the destruction of these images suggests an aggressive intervention within the power dynamic of the social network and the determination of the selves involved. Next, EO charges into the bathroom. Anticipating the technique used by Gaspar Noe to film the extended rape scene of *Irreversible* (2003), in which the violence of the sequence is viscerally communicated through the camera movement—a nine-minute fixed shot following a previous thirty minutes of continuous, swirling, camera movement, Anno similarly entraps the viewer by exchanging his multitude of quick, variously angled, shots for an unbroken and relatively fixed shot that finds the viewer sharing in the terrifying claustrophobia of the situation in which Hiromi has found herself. Lasting around 4 minutes, the extended shot takes the form of Hiromi's POV as she is restrained, naked, on the bathroom floor, shaking with EO's grabbing of her hair, jerking with the slap to the face she receives at her initial attempt to fight back, and then staring frozen in shock as her assaulter continues to restrain her and lets rip with a deranged monologue. It is only with his direct address to her that an image of Hiromi, cornered and helpless, emerges in a superimposition—simultaneously EO's perspective and Hiromi's envisioning of herself, the image fades in and out at various levels of visibility depending on the questions and provocations being put to her. The split focalization here thus works to communicate EO's grip upon Hiromi's consciousness.

Following this assault, we are given the stark image of Hiromi curled up upon the floor of the bathroom, small within the high-angled surveillance-style image shot from the opposite corner of the ceiling. This image of Hiromi communicates a recognition that traditional surveillance technology largely fails to protect women. As Hille Koskela has pointed out, "most of the people 'behind' the cameras are men and most of the people 'under' surveillance are women" (2000: 255), given the latter's use of public transport and time spent in "*publicly accessible urban spaces*, such as shopping malls" (245). Yet along with the fact that "a camera mainly operates backwards: it is designed to solve crime rather than to prevent it" (249), the transposition of patriarchal forms of policing into the technological sphere, and the possible use of surveillance cameras as a means of harassment, women cannot rely on surveillance technology as a way of reducing violence and achieving safety since "video-surveillance usually reduces everything to the visual [and] is unable to identify situations" such as that of sexual harassment "where more sensitive interpretation is needed" (255). This sequence, which takes place at a Love Hotel, certainly corresponds to several of these factors. As opposed to a disreputable flophouse, these pay-per-hour Love Hotels are "an essential part of any relationship in Japan, where many young lovers or couples still live with their parents until they are married, or even after marriage" (Galbraith 2009: 130). Further, such hotels are "automated to limit awkward interaction with the staff" (130) explaining the extensive technology depicted in the reception area of the one featured in *Love & Pop*. Before Hiromi enters the suite of this Love Hotel, she is

briefly seen walking down a corridor with Captain EO on a CCTV monitor, and we are also given images of a massive electronic console whose blinking lights correspond to the entering of the rooms and other such customer usage. When Hiromi is curled up in the bathroom following the assault, the bathtub automatically drains and the lighting shuts off in exchange for the stark red bulb that marks a vacant room, both mechanisms presumably initiated by EO's leaving of the suite and the blinking of lights upon that console. Despite the general risk of sexual and gendered violence that ought to be considered very much heightened at such establishments, these surveillance mechanisms function for the purpose of commerce and customer satisfaction—both factors that are exclusively gendered male in the case of its usage by the paying customer of *enjo kosai*. Given the role of traditional surveillance technology in both of these solo paid-dates, we can see that it is characterized in this film as functioning solely in the service of males, which broadly reflects its status in wider society, given its implementation by the patriarchal state authorities, in the first instance, and majority male business owners in the second.

Reading the text under the approach of feminist technological studies offers us some interesting insights into the gendered use of technology discussed here. Maria Logan and Wendy Faulkner are among feminist scholars who adopt the “sociotechnical” approach of technology studies that recognizes that “[t]echnology is shaped as a result of complex social processes in which, typically, diverse groups do battle over what the artifact should do, look like, and so forth” (2004: 322). This approach of feminist technology studies considers how “gender and technology are seen as mutually shaping or, in a more poststructuralist trope, co-produced,” such that “specific technological artifacts may be gender shaped and may have gender consequences” in a “process [that] can be charted in the design and use of technologies” (322). I would suggest that the broadening of the social network in the second half of *Love & Pop*, and its consequences of gendered violence upon the protagonist, offers us a way of charting the complex social processes that have shaped current new media technology.

As stated earlier, the mass adoption of mobile phone usage, and that technology's incorporation of functions such as email and photography, were both historically driven by Japanese schoolgirls seeking privacy from their parents by creating their own networks of communication. It began with the coded messages delivered by pagers, which “soon filtered through the rest of society” and resulted in the popularity of mobile phones, “a private device, especially in Japan where people use it more for texting than talking,” before evolving into early smartphone technology in 1999 with NTT DoCoMo's “iMode, which brought the internet and email to the mobile phone” (Ashcraft and Ueda 2014: 91-93). What is notable is the gendered adoption and usage of this technology so important to social networking: “schoolgirls, of course, were the first to respond” to these developments and “men were originally hesitant to use text messaging because it had such a schoolgirl connotation” (93). As demonstrated, both the use of the mobile phone by young females and Hiromi's ephemeral approach to photography are depicted in this film in a manner that converges with the contemporary activity of social networking, while this section has covered Anno's incorporation of the traditional surveillant technology of CCTV in a manner that aligns it with masculinity. In this film, these two technologies of social networking (initially gendered female) and traditional surveillance (long gendered male) are brought together in the technologized depiction of *enjo kosai*: the exploitation of private communication technologies by older males to abuse younger females, an encroachment of a private female space that is emphasized by the depiction of public surveillance technologies as only functioning in the service of these males. In this transposing of the imbalanced power-relations of *enjo kosai* onto the social network we are thus given an insight into both the gender complexities of soveillance and the way in which the expanded adoption of new media technologies has found women prevented from “enjoying full access to the opportunities, increasingly linked to their online reputations, necessary to live productive lives” (Eikren and Ingram-Waters 2016). The film speaks to how the sense of self-consciousness communicated by online image sharing varies according to one's gendered status within the social network, a network that was initially driven by females but later adopted, and co-opted, by males in a manner that transposes the masculine hegemony of offline society onto the virtual environment.

Conclusion

It is by reading *Love & Pop*'s multitude of camera shots in their dynamic relation to one another that we are able to identify the communication of Hiromi's complex subjectivity. And by engaging in a rethought scopophilia that takes an atemporal approach to the reading of such image-structures, this article has demonstrated how we can uncover structures of seeing relevant to the twenty-first century. Here it is the structure of self-surveillance, termed soveillance, which further demonstrates a convergence between the cinematic representation of thought and the activity of self-construction through social media. This is to say that a knowledge of power relations and conceptions of self within social media usage has helped us to read the film in a new light, and this reading of the film has, in turn, helped us to further explore the structures of power and construction of self within social media. I would further suggest that, given the superflat principle of convergence, by which the image-structures of this film align with online activity in reality, beyond Anno's film any such videos and images shared of one's self through social media may be considered instances of soveillance, depending on the level of the user's commitment to the curation of a virtual self. For in the curation of the virtual self, the dynamic play between image-making and image-reception, the act of sharing the images—the choice to do so, and with whom—is the context in which the image is read. Selfies, for instance, are not merely narcissistic, the self-conscious act of sharing such images within this context of social surveillance renders these images soveillant.

One way to develop and explore the concept of soveillance further would be to undertake a practical experiment in which one would track both the videos/images created by camera phone users that are then shared on social media (as with Willett's research) *and* the videos/images that are *not* shared. Cross-referencing these unshared videos and images with those that are will give insight into the self-consciousness of video/image sharing and a real-time account of the construction of the virtual self. This research would be a radical form of visual ethnography that may be seen as somewhat invasive of privacy—an act of surveillance on the part of the researcher, which it certainly is, given it would involve installing Spyware or its equivalent upon the phones of the consenting participants. However, the recruitment of consenting participants that cover a range of gender identifications and age groups would produce great insight into the nature of soveillance. For instance, this article has looked at gender complexities of soveillance on the basis of the extreme instance of sexual violation, but a research project of the kind described would allow us to see whether the soveillant construction of one's virtual self is impacted upon by the gendered identity of the user across a period of their regular, everyday, online activity. Such insight would function as useful self-knowledge for the average social media user, and as useful information for those wishing to help youngsters develop healthy approaches to their online activities, given that such web activity very much impacts upon offline identity formation, behaviour, and psychological well-being, as this reading of *Love & Pop* as an expression of soveillance indicates.

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