Homonormative assimilation or radical failure? : A comparative reading of two queerings of domesticity in Japanese gay cinema

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ホモノーマティブな同一化か、それとも過激な失敗か

——日本のゲイ映画に見るドメスティシティのクィア化に関する比較研究——

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概要

　本論文は、橋口亮輔監督による『ハッシュ！』（2001）と今泉浩一監督による『家族コンプリート』（2010）を対比させながら、当事者が撮影するゲイ映画にみるドメスティシティのクィア化（queering of domesticity）を考察するものである。第一に、本論では、日本におけるドメスティシティ（「家庭」と「家族」）の形態を家族社会学の先行研究（落合　2014, 2015、牟田　2006, 2002）に倣って、定義する。日本の家族は、明治維新以降の近代化において成立したものであり、西洋に見るロマンチック・ラブイデオロギー、ジェンダー二文法と、ヘテロノーマティヴィティに根差している。その背景において、日本の映画史における従来の家族像は、揺らいでも、ドメスティシティのクィアなあり方をほとんど表現してこなかった。第二に、本論は、上記の当事者のゲイ監督の映画における家族の描写に焦点を当て、二つ違うドメスティシティのクィア化の度合いを見出した。『ハッシュ！』では、ホモノーマティブな同一化への試みが強く、「家族」の概念実体が危険性のない形で問い直されている。一方、『家族コンプリート』では、家族にまつわるさまざまな掟を破り、「家族」とは何だろうかを問い直す志が読みとれる。

Keywords

Disclaimers

- All Japanese names respect the writing order in the Japanese language. That is, the surname precedes the first name.

- In this paper, I present all titles first written in the alphabet transcription of Japanese names (romaji), in italics, and then the official English translation, in italics and brackets. For instance: *Hasshu!* (*Hush!*). When no English title is available, I provide one marked with a "*" after the translation—for example, *Soyokaze Chichi to Tomo ni* (*Breeze, together with my Father**).

- Unless specified otherwise, I translated all quotes from non-English sources.

- As a general rule and when no confirmation was possible, I made the default choice of inclusive writing to address my sources. I manifest inclusive writing through the use of they/them pronouns.

- In making the conscious choice of focusing on gay filmmakers' perspectives, my paper inevitably contributes to the erasure of other queer positionalities, thus reproducing systemic logics of cisgender male homonormativity. While there is an urgent need to create and hold space for non-cis-male queer representations, this paper is situated in a broader analysis of the agency of gay Japanese film directors. Such an analysis of their film production tries to demonstrate the plurality and variation of outcomes gathered from a virtually identical socio-sexual positionality.[1]

I Introduction:

In Hollywood cinema, queer experiences and the cinema apparatus have conflicted history. The representations of queer people were discriminatory, and it was not before the 1960s that queer representations, usually made by queer people themselves, were favorably politically invested. From the 1960s on, despite persistent discriminatory tropes and the consequences of the AIDS panic in the media during the 1980s and 1990s, queer representations eventually crawled their way into mainstream positive images. Today, a growing part of mainstream films and TV shows portrays queer characters or demonstrate sensitivity towards diversity. [2]

Japan has a similar history of discrimination in the representation of queer people. For instance, effeminate and comical gay characters in *ninkyô eiga* (action films mostly portraying the world of *yakuza*, the Japanese mob), [3] or dangerous sexual perverts and rapists as in the feature *Reipu 25 Ji Bôkan* (*Rape! 13ᵗʰ Hour*, by Hasebe Yasuharu) [4] [5] constituted the discriminatory tropes of queer representation. However, during the 1990s, queer images (of gay men mostly) became growingly present in mainstream productions. Mark McLelland (2003, pp. 60-64) and Romit Dasgupta (2009,

pp. 13) refer to this period as a 'gay boom'. [6] Like American film production, Japanese queer representations became growingly positive through their incorporation into mainstream productions, addressing it as something "sanitized", [7] an element of everyday life, a member of a family. Therefore, queer characters are imagined in the home and part of a family.

　　The present paper investigates the work of two contemporary Japanese gay filmmakers: *Hasshu!* (*Hush!*, 2001) by Hashiguchi Ryôsuke and *Kazoku Konpurîto* (*Family Complete*, 2010) by Imaizumi Kôichi, and focuses on how they negotiate the ideas of 'home' and 'family' with queer characters.[8] I call such a portrayal of family and home that includes queer characters: 'queer domesticity' or 'queering of domesticity'. The purpose is to analyze what constitutes their approaches to representing 'queer domesticity' and how they differ; I analyze their representation strategies. However, I have yet to define 'queer domesticity'.

　　There is hardly a more malleable, space and time-dependent idea than the one of 'queer domesticity'. On the one hand, 'queer' is a very flexible and fluid concept that – starting with matters of gender and sexuality – connotes a strong position of opposition against social norms and knowledge production. Therefore, rather than being characterized by a positive definition, as usually induced by modern knowledge-making, 'queer' is best understood in its antagonist position dependent on what is set as the 'natural' norm. On the other hand, 'domesticity' too is not easily explained. As pointed out by Matt Cook, 'domesticity' is a culturally defined idea that will change according to the place, the space, and the people who experience it (2014, p. 8). Additionally, Cook also defines 'domesticity' as the product of the notions of 'home' and 'family', both in their material aspects – the physical home and the actual members of one's family – as well as in their ("coercive") ideological aspects (2014, pp. 8-9).

　　French anthropologist Martine Segalen also suggests that the domestic sphere "offers one of the main stages on which rites operate as vectors to transmit culture, table manners, modes of expression, family folklore (with the same stories narrated over and over)" (1998:2017, p.39). Through their quotation of Erving Goffman, Segalen posits rites as elements of self-regulation that individuals mobilize to constitute societies (in Segalen 1998:2017, p.36; in Goffman 1967, p.44). To rephrase it, domesticity as a social association of individuals possesses a ritualistic nature that emerges from a set of rules and traditions to be observed to ensure the domestic realm its viability and order. While the notion of ritual is usually attached to anthropology, my analysis tries to show representations of rituals to be understood as regulating individuals within the domestic realm. Among such rituals, food and meals are included as they "transmit the family culture" (Segalen 1998:2017, p. 39)

　　Another characteristic about 'domesticity' that I want to mention is —as noted by Cook (2014, p. 8), Frederik Dhaenens (2012, pp. 217-218), or Andrew Gorman-Murray

(2006, pp. 230-231) — the practice of heteronormativity underpinning of the notions of 'home' and 'family' in modern Western society that also allows the conditions of their reproductivity. For example, Dhaenens, drawing from queer theorists such as Judith Butler (1999), Judith Jack Halberstam (2005), Eve Sedgewick (1990), and Michael Warner (1999), defines heteronormativity as:

> *"[T]he discursive power granted to the compulsory heterosexual matrix in Western society. The matrix relies upon fixed notions of sex, gender, and sexual identity and veils its constructedness and anomalies by feigning universality and rendering the heteronormative discourse hegemonic. For that purpose, it relies on discursive practices that validate the heterosexual ideal, consolidate hierarchical gender and sexual identities, and construct compulsory heterosexuality as the unquestioned center and homosexuality and other nonnormative sexualities as its poorer cousins."* (Dhaenens, 2012, pp. 217-218)

The orientation towards heteronormativity makes sense within the modern development of the Nation-State ideology. Indeed, in such an ideology, every member of a Nation is burdened with the responsibility of making it strong and undefeated. It translates through the need for a re/productive population, centralizing human reproduction.

As Cook, Dhaenens, and Gorman-Murray point out through their definition of heteronormativity, the idea of 'queer domesticities' becomes an oxymoron wherein queer elements should oppose the normative aspects of heteronormativity discursively inscribed in the idea of domesticity. However, to say that 'queer' and 'domesticity' are discursively antagonistic does not explain the reality that queer people have, belong to, and make families and homes. The concept of 'queer domesticities', then, despite being shaky because of its heteronormative connotations, points to the results of the negotiations undertaken by queer people to belong to society and its smallest unit. Such negotiating will be referred to as 'queering domesticity' and might deconstruct prior understandings of heteronormative domesticity and navigate a new idea of belonging and family. Therefore, in the following pages, I repeatedly and alternately use the expressions 'queer domesticity' (in plural occasionally) and 'queering domesticity' to address a home or a family composed of queer characters for the former, and the process of making, negotiating ideas of home and family for the latter.

Consequently, to discuss how 'queer domesticities' have been imagined in the film production of Japanese gay filmmakers and how they 'queer domesticity', my paper presents its argument according to the following structure. First, it is necessary to give elements of the normative discourse on family in Japan and how it has been portrayed in films to understand better the transgressions of domesticity operated in *Hush!* and *Family Complete*. Indeed, while Cook, Dhaenens, and Gorman-Murray solely focus on

Western societies, in this section (II), I argue that Japanese society, in its modernization, has inscribed heteronormativity as the cornerstone of its domestic realm. I do so by reviewing ideological, demographic, and legal processes, thus validating queer scholarship in the discussion of Japanese domesticity. My discussion of the heteronormative nature of Japanese domesticity gives key elements brought mainly from Ochiai Emiko (2014, 2015) and Muta Kazue (2006, 2002) to explain the heteronormativity and the gendered division of labor that is symptomatic of the modern idea of 'family'. This first section also provides insight into the place of domesticity in Japanese film representation history. It highlights the heteronormative settings and the gender divide depicted in Japanese films, the use of food and dining scenes as a metaphor of domesticity, and the minor queer (or so it seems) contributions to this film landscape. This part mainly pulls from Iwamoto Kenji et al. (2007), Kawano Fumie (2018), Parley Ann Boswell (1993), Maekawa Naoya (2021), and Kubo Yutaka(2021, 2022).

In the third section (III), this paper analyzes *Hush!*. It takes on the strategies deployed by film director Hashiguchi Ryôsuke to queer domesticity. The survey of this film shows that he succeeded in re-inscribing queer characters into the domestic space, and such enterprise presents a model of family structure inclusive of the queer characters. This third section focuses on domestic spaces and how they are occupied or subverted by the characters. It also sheds light on the use of food and meal scenes to fortify the queering of the 'traditional' family structure. The section ends on a reflection of the nature of this queering, arguing that it plays dangerously with notions of heteronormativity and homonormativity, characteristic of the 'mainstreamization' of gay people during the 1990s to early 2000s.

The fourth section (IV) focuses on *Family Complete* by Imaizumi Kôichi. In it, this paper presents how the idea of 'queering domesticity' is brought to a greater degree, in a sense more radical, deconstructing the 'traditional' notions of family through overflowing and un-regulated sexuality that goes as far as to break some of the social taboos surrounding familial relationships. Imaizumi creates the perplexing picture of a 'traditional' family, living in a 'traditional' Japanese house where 'non-traditional' events and rituals occur, bringing the family structure to its demise. Furthermore, some of said 'non-traditional' aspects in relation with the narrative device of 'T-virus' invite to read the deconstruction of the said family as a representation of gay communities during the 1980-1990s HIV/AIDS panic. Finally, the analysis of *Family Complete* is rounded up by discussing how failing chrononormativity (Elizabeth Freeman, 2010) and reproductivity in the family makes it non-viable, opening up the space for new possibilities.

My analysis concludes by comparing Hashiguchi and Imaizumi's approaches to queer domesticity, addressing the debate of queer (and primarily gay here) people's assimilation into society.

II　Filmed Families: Family as a motif in Japanese Cinema

According to the elements I provided to address the idea of 'queer domesticity' I gave in the introduction, it appears that I need first to define 'domesticity' in the contemporary Japanese context. Only from there will I address any 'queerings' of Japanese domesticity. However, defining Japanese family structures is a complicated task. What can be referred to as a familial structure in Japan possesses a rich history spread over 1500 years and started with implementing the ancient Chinese administrative system of *Ritsuryô*, in which families and domains were registered. Therefore, instead of going over the history of Japanese family structures, which would necessitate a paper on its own, I wish to present elements that characterize the centering of heteronormativity and the gender divide of contemporary Japanese domesticity. From there, this section will address the history of domestic representations in Japanese films history to confirm the presence of said heteronormativity, the use of food and meals as the center of domestic life. By establishing what is to be the familial 'norms', it becomes more explicit in what ways *Hush!* and *Family Complete* are presenting two different versions of a transgression of domesticity: queer domesticities. The section ends with a short overview of the rare queer representations of domesticity that occurred before 2000 in Japanese cinema. It gives me a historical context of the queer domesticities portrayed in *Hush!* and *Family Complete* (discussed in sections III and IV).

II.1 What is the 'Japanese family'?

The pre-modern Japanese family structure is usually referred to as the *ie* system. From a rural community in which men and women had (more or less) equivalent authority (Kawane Yoshiyasu, 1982:2002), it transitioned progressively to a patrilineal system (Nonoyama Hisaya, 2000 p.27). The transition occurred first within families of military power, then within wealthy merchant families, before reaching affluent farmer families (Yamamoto Shinkô, 1991:2002 p.193, Nonoyama, 2000 p.27). The power of such families and the expansion of their dominion was realized by exchanging women, given or received in marriage, to forge political alliances (Suzuki Kunihiro, 1992:2002).

This system beneficiated from a legal and ideological backup when the country transitioned to a modern society during the Meiji Era (1868-1912). The implication of law devices to define the 'family' and stabilize it directly relates to the Nation-State ideology developed to position Japan on the international political stage. The legal apparatus was doubled by recycling cultural elements such as *Kô* (filial piety) or the religiously connoted positioning of the *Tennô* (Emperor), symbolic Father, at the head of Japanese society, culture, and religion (Yamamoto, 1991:2002, pp. 193-196). In doing so, lawmaking and law enforcement were given legitimacy, smoothing the transition from a feudal society to a society that could compete with the hegemonic European world. What

has just been described is usually referred to as *kindai kazoku* (modern family), mainly because it echoes the familial configuration implemented at the time of modernization that answers the need for a strong national identity.

However, Muta Kazue, who – from a gender critic perspective – aims to call this familial configuration the *jendâ kazoku* (gendered family), underlines its conflation with gender ideology (Muta, 2006, pp.6-9). Since the modern family is the smallest unit from which the Nation-State is made possible and which can reproduce it, inherently, it requires the institution of heteronormative reproductive sexuality as the basis of society.

Timely associated with Western ideologies of romantic love and socio-economic changes via changing mode of production mainly through the spread of capitalism,[9] the couple-centered ideology, *ippu ippu seido* (one husband one wife institution) gained a critical weight, helped through contemporary naturalizing medical and philosophical discourses. Muta interestingly argues that societal changes were made possible by promoting women's education through the *Ryôsai Kenbo* (Good Wife and Wise Mother) ideology (Muta, 2006, pp.76-77).

According to Koyama Shizuko (1991:2013), *Ryôsai Kenbo* ideology was implemented around 1890, and it reveals how women were utilized to accomplish the *ie* system and the Nation-State. Indeed, from Meiji onward, children's education became an essential feature to build a modern Nation-State. Consequently, women's role as educators for the children and as managers of the household came to be emphasized.

However, *Ryôsai Kenbo* is a double-edged sword. While it allows women for better education and the possibility to access a social status, it also confines them more and more into the home realm as they participate in modernity through their reproductive labor (Koyama, 1991:2013, pp. 181-183).

The gendered division of labor, between male productive work and female reproductive work, resulting from the modernization process, is one of the fundamental aspects of the gendered family. It finds justification in the various discourses aforementioned naturalizing gender differences from the differences in the biological sex (genitals already being a binary division effectuated through the idea of gender). In focusing on the gendered imbrication of the modern family configuration, Muta intends to show that such configuration actually encompasses more than modern society and still enjoys hegemonic value in contemporary Japanese society.

Learning from the work of Ochiai Emiko (1994:2007, 2014a, 2014b, 2015), it is possible to address some characteristics of the concept of family in postwar Japan. Ochiai refers to Korean sociologist Kyung-Sup Chang's concept of "compressed modernity" (Chang, 1999, 2010) to address the Japanese position on demographic issues and the ideological status of the family. "Compressed modernity" refers to the short stability between two demographic transitions in Asian countries. For example, in Europe, the first demographic transition – introducing the gendered nuclear family and

modernization – enjoyed stability until the 1960s before showing the signs of a second demographic transition. This second demographic transition is characterized by the fact that "fertility began to drop below the population replacement level […] divorce rates jumped, the age at marriage rose and cohabitation and births out of wedlock increased." (Ochiai, 2014a, p. 211). The decline in demographic parameters translated into the idea of family as a "lifestyle choice". Therefore, the second demographic transition is characterized by individualization and the transformation of intimacy.

In Japan, the same phenomenon occurred in the 1970s, with the fertility rate rapidly declining, reaching by the 1990s some of the lowest fertility rates in the world. However, cohabitation rates and out-of-wedlock births did not undergo a similar increase as in Western societies because the institution of marriage persisted.[10] Japan had a window to de-familiarize its social fabric, but such a process was not realized. Ochiai's explanation for such a phenomenon is as follows. Where Western countries managed to build welfare states to prepare for the ageing population and improve women's status, Japan reinforced its familialist position in the 1980s by recycling Confucianist ideas to justify attributing the care of the elderly to their families. As a result, it reinforced the positioning of women in the domestic space despite their necessary participation in the labor force after various socio-economic crises. It encouraged the matrimonial institution to ensure women's care work and participated in the focus placed on reproductive sexuality to address the ageing of the Japanese population.

Another feature to be acknowledged of the postwar Japanese family is the social centralizing of children. The notion of childhood as a time for young individuals to develop themselves before entering the labor force is relatively recent (see Philippe Ariès, 1960). It was developed within the upper classes because the need for children to participate in the labor force was less necessary than within the working classes. However, the recognition of children's social status eventually expanded throughout social classes following the capitalist economic shift and the white-collar labor area growth.

Ochiai (1994:2007) argues that the same phenomenon occurred in Japan, and, especially, it was reinforced in the postwar period as the Japanese economy shifted to a white-collar-dominated economy. Moreover, Ochiai discusses the centralizing of children in connection with the 'housewifization' of women (in Japan and internationally). They argue that it can be demographically observed through the M-like curve of women's participation in the labor force.

On their part, Fuse Akiko, Shimizu Tamiko, and Hashimoto Hiroko (1986:1987) focus on the postwar development of children's rights internationally and in Japan. From their scholarship, we can see that children's rights were decided through international institutions such as the Declaration of the Rights of the Child (Geneva Declaration, 1924), adopted and expanded by the United Nations in 1959. The institutionalization of

children's rights implies recognizing children's fundamental needs to be met and allows the state to intervene in case such needs fail to be fulfilled. Yamada Masahiro speaks of this phenomenon as a transition from a "for the country" ideology to "for the family" and "for the children" ideologies (2005, p.143). However, as Ochiai demonstrates, the decrease in Japanese natality, right after the baby-boom years (1947 to 1949) and in from the second half of the 1970s, and the centralizing of children are not incompatible phenomena, especially when considering the heavy costs required to raise children in the postwar Japanese economy.

To summarize, it must be remembered that the contemporary idea of the Japanese family, while being linked to ancient Confucianist notions of 'Asian-ness' and 'Japanese-ness', is the result of a relatively short ideological process that occurred progressively from the Meiji Era. It is based on fundamentally oppressive notions of gender and heteronormativity that confines women inside the domestic space and the development of a familialist society that places an essential value on marriage, reproductivity, and children. Of course, some families are divorced, single-parented, recomposed, or never-married, but those are symptomatic of an individualist postmodern turn of the concept of family. In the following section, I briefly tackle the history of representation of the Japanese family and try to show the blueprints from which queer domesticities diverge.

II.2 The history of family on the Japanese screen: a brief overview

The Lumière Brothers invented the cinématographe in 1895. Among their first recordings, *Le Repas de Bébé* (*Baby's Dinner*, 1895) is the first inscription of the family on film. Iwamoto Kenji (2007) remarks that the Japanese history of the family film representation also starts with the dispatching of cinématographes worldwide by the Lumière Brothers. A French cameraman, François-Constant Girel, recorded the *Family Meal* (1897), portraying the Inabata Katsutarô's family sharing a meal. Even though Inabata's wife is absent, the scene portrays a meal shared by two generations, and women are in charge of making it. It is a good starting point to address that cinema is bound to represent the modern family by its contemporaneity with modernization (Iwamoto, 2007, pp.10-11). As a result, it is no surprise that family-centered film genres constitute an important part of the cinema landscape, would it be Japanese or not.

From the 1920s on, Iwamoto identifies as *shôshimin eiga* (petit-bourgeois films) films mostly oriented towards white collars families in rapid expansion due to the progressive urbanization of Japan. Ozu Yasujirô's films are representative of this genre, capturing its variations, such as the tragicomic *Tôkyô no Kôrasu* (*Tôkyô Chorus*, 1931), the comedic *Umaretemitakeredo* (*I Was Born But…*, 1932) or the more tragic *Hitori Musuko* (*The Only Son*, 1936). As Iwamoto suggests, it is crucial to understand such

productions, as made within the Japanese Studio System, therefore restricted in what can be said and done. Especially in this period, before the war with China and World War Two, national(ist) ideologies were peaking (Iwamoto, 2007, p.16-19).

A certain proportion of the films produced at that time shows a tendency to address complex family structures or difficult themes. For instance, *Soyokaze Chichi to Tomo ni* (*Breeze, Together with my Father**, 1940) by Yamamoto Satsuo presents the story of a young woman that learns that the man that raised her was her uncle. Another representative of this epoch is Mizoguchi Kenji, who tackles the family differently. Indeed, his *Naniwa Eleji* (*Osaka Elegy*, 1936) paints the tragic destiny of a young woman who lost her place in the family home.

The *hômu dorama* (home drama)[11] genre intervenes as a label after World War Two. It works as an advertising device to promote three films of 1951, *Yukiwarisô* (*Hepatica**) by Tasaka Tomotaka, *Waga Ya ha Tanoshi* (*Home Sweet Home*), and *Saijôke no Kyôen* (*Feast at the Saijyôs**). According to Iwamoto, 'home dramas' qualify sentimental films made primarily to cater to women audiences. Still, they revolve around salaryman father figures (Iwamoto, 2007, pp. 23-24). Primarily a film genre produced by the Tôei studio, it became linked to the Shôchiku studio afterward. However, the apparition of a specified film genre does not imply that films focusing on the family were only made after the war. Instead, it means that the family was discursively invested after the war through the "for the family" ideology mentioned before. Such a phenomenon is both the negotiation of the defeat and the memory of the war and the transformation of war ideology toward the country's reconstruction under the General Headquarters' administration. Iwamoto encourages such interpretation when stating that two years after home dramas started being made, in the 1953's NHK general opinion survey, most of the answers as for what is the most important for them, people answered: "family" (Iwamoto, 2007, p.26).

Establishing the *hômu dorama* around family matters also explains a specific focus on female characters as mothers. In their chapter, Itakura Fumiaki discusses the intricacies of the Japanese studio system and film genre of *haha mono*, analyzing its rise and fall. The *haha mono* (literally translatable by mother's stories), according to Itakura, possesses two definitions: in its broad sense, it refers to the film genre that appeared from the 1940s on that has for subject the love of a mother for her children. In its narrow sense, *haha mono* refers to the production of fiction starring the actress Mimasu Aiko and made by the film studio Daiei from 1948. The standard structure of *haha mono* portrays the mother's sacrifice to her children's happiness, usually their social status (Itakura, 2007, p.108). Itakura mainly discusses the *haha mono* from its film genre properties. What is of crucial importance in Itakura's discussion on film genre is that a film genre is a tool that aligns film production, reception, and evaluation (criticism), acting as a unit of meaning shared within a society. Hence, the *haha mono* as a film genre

allows us to go beyond the cultural products of film and film genre to investigate ideological issues of the representation of women and their confining to the home sphere, and the discourse of the mother's self-sacrifice promoted in those years, linkable to Ochiai's discussion (1994:2007) mentioned before. However, as demonstrates Itakura, the *haha mono* genre was not created with explicit, intentional ideologies. Instead, it was a multifactorial process including – among others – the continuing of the modern and gendered narrative, as well as the sheer success of Mimasu's acting (Itakura, 2007, p.108).

Discursively speaking, even though the *haha mono* focuses on the mother and her hardships, this film genre illustrates the centering of children within the Japanese family structure. Furthermore, it hints at the renewing of the Japanese population after the defeat, therefore reinforcing the mother's responsibility in her reproductive labor.

In their extensive study of Naruse Mikio's filmography, Susanne Schermann analyzes the representation of family as one of the main keys to understanding Naruse's art and Japanese society. According to Schermann, among the eighty-seven films realized by Naruse, half of it, forty-four to be precise, are, in a broad sense, centering the story of a family over a filmmaking carrier of about forty years. The family in itself has many configurations that Schermann divides into two categories: 1) films centering only one generation, usually a couple (about nine films), and 2) films centering two or more generations (about thirty-five films) (Schermann, 2007, p.186).

In their closing statement, Schermann focuses on a certain number of elements that echo this paper's understanding of the Japanese family and Ochiai's work. First, instead of an active, positive display of agency and mobility, for Schermann, Naruse's characters tend to be at the mercy of social obstacles. Their resilience thus characterizes them. Schermann operates the fascinating connection of said resilience to the development of the myth of *gaman* (endurance) during postwar Japan to redress the Japanese economy and society. Such explanation concurs with the recycling for men of the war period military spirit into economic regrowth argued by Romit Dasgupta (2013, p.29).

Then, Schermann notes that while Naruse prewar films center men's experiences mainly concerning the rise of unemployment, postwar films focus more on women's experiences of Japan's postwar democracy, capitalism, and consumer society. Consequently, they qualify Naruse's filmmaking as representative of the socio-economic changes in Japan at that time.

Lastly, Naruse's films seem to portray what Ochiai has found through her research about Japan's conceptualization of marriage. Besides the penetration of Western ideas of individualism and romantic love, marriage seems to represent more a means than an end, being just a part of the societal process and being reinforced by the gendered division of labor and the familialist politics developed in ideas of Japanese-ness

and Asian-ness.

Up to this point, I have made clear that, in portraying the family, Japanese cinema has primarily centered on women as a reflection of gendered ideology and their confining into the home space. I have decided to bring up two other topics to guide my film analysis: food and meals to represent domesticity and the history of queer domesticity in Japanese film history.

II.3 Domesticity through food and meals

Starting with food and meals, Parley Ann Boswell, in their 1993 article, "Hungry in the Lands of Plenty: Food in Hollywood Films", focuses on audiences' tendency to oversee food and meals in films. They do so because of their everyday-ness, even though they are essential vectors of meaning. Boswell quotes Mary Anne Schofield (1989, p.1):

> *Food counts because it articulates in concrete terms what is often vague, internal, abstract... Food cooked, eaten, and thought about provides a metaphoric matrix, a language that allows us a way to get at the uncertainty, the ineffable qualities of life. (Boswell made the ellipsis)*

Accordingly, the breakfast scenes in *Kramer vs. Kramer* (Robert Benton, 1979) endorse an essential part in representing the father-son relationship and how it is built up progressively. Boswell argues that it is possible to understand the characters' connections to one another, as well as their psychology, that 'there may be no scenes so valuable to our understanding of family dynamics or sexual relationships as dining scenes" (Boswell, 1993, p.8).

Although Boswell only focuses on Hollywood cinema and only one fragment of it, her interest in the representation of food can also be used to analyze food matters in Japanese cinema. For instance, Kawane Fumie, in their graduation dissertation (2018), uses Boswell theory to deliver an exciting analysis of dining scenes within *Soshite Chichi ni Naru* (*Like Father, Like Son*, Kore-eda Hirokazu, 2013). They discuss the parallel editing of two dining scenes in which father-son relationships are represented. Concretely, they suggest that the mise-en-scène of the two scenes helps the audience understand Kore-eda's discussion of family relationships: is it 'blood' or 'time' that holds a family together? The fact that such a discussion occupies the core of Kore-eda's 2013 film is proof enough that beyond the 1980s, the postmodern turn undertaken in families concentrates on individuals and small units, progressively criticizing blood relationships and possibly outdated conceptions of the family.

A relevant and recurrent example of such "degeneration"[12] of the family structure in the film is *Kazoku Gêmu* (*The Family Game*, Morita Yoshimitsu, 1983).

Indeed, both Richiko Ikeda (1996) and Charles W. Hayford (2015) discuss this film, concentrating on dining scenes. One of the main discussions developed about *The Family Game* concerns the visual shattering of the family when they sit at the dining table, not facing each other, as they are expected, but next to each other facing the same direction. My objective here is not to discuss the postmodernity of the table arrangements but instead to note that there is a table configuration, a spatial dynamic expected to translate family and domesticity. I might add, in passing, that Hayford's essay is quick to oppose dichotomously the notions of Confucianism and West, tradition and modernity, and to argue that the dining table used in *The Family Game* is "a narrow Western-style table" (Hayford, 2015, p.127). Nevertheless, such a remark teaches us about material and spatial expectations of family representations. Here, reading between the lines, we understand that Japanese family illustrations should include low to the ground tables where family members sit, facing each other.

II.4 Where are queer homes?

From the discussion above, it cannot be helped to acknowledge that not once queer figures or forms of queer domesticity were mentioned.[13] Therefore, it is relevant to investigate the film history of queer domesticities to contextualize my film analysis.[14] As mentioned in the introduction, queer representations in mainstream Japanese media are mainly visible from the 1990s. Therefore, in this subsection, I first present film examples from the 1990s in which attempts to portray queer domesticities were intended.

According to Jeffrey Dobbins (2000), in the 1990s, Japanese popular culture is marked by a growing presence of queer, primarily gay, representations. Dobbins focused on five examples in their demonstration: *Kirakira Hikaru* (*Twinkle*, Matsuoka Jôji, 1992), *Okoge* (*Fag Hag*, Nakajima Takehiro, 1992), *Hatachi no Binetsu* (*Touch of A Fever*, 1992) and *Nagisa no Shindobaddo* (*Like Grains of Sand*, 1995) by Hashiguchi Ryôsuke, and the TV series *Dôsôkai* (*Class Reunion**, scripted by Izawa Man, 1993). However, for Dobbins, these films "should not be taken as expressions of gay men in Japan, for (…) they are heterosexually authored and created for the voyeuristic pleasure of heterosexual viewers" (Dobbins, 2000, p.28). Indeed, *Twinkle*, *Fag Hag*, and *Class Reunion* paint gay characters as narrative props devised to help care for complicated and hurt female characters. For example, in *Twinkle*, the main female character, Shôko, has a history of mental instability and a drinking problem. She marries Mutsuki, a gay doctor in love with a young man named Kon. Their union is based on an arrangement destined to free them from heteronormative expectations. However, Shôko's condition worsens, and their arrangement fumbles progressively. Their relatives realize the situation is getting worse and firmly push them to have a baby to consolidate their relationship. Such a happening illustrates the ideologies discussed in subsection II.1. It is before Shôko and Mutsuki's arrangement is revealed and the two families conflict with each other.

The film allows for imagining a domestic configuration that would allow gay men to be assimilated into society. Such a possibility reaches a peak when Shôko consults Mutsuki's colleague and asks him if it would be theoretically possible to mix two men's sperm in the case of medically assisted procreation. Here the two men discussed are Mutsuki and his lover, Kon. She investigates the possibility of using her womb to allow the gay couple to have a child or for the three of them to become parents together without participating in the heteronormative expectations of monogamous romantic love ideology.

Despite providing relevant elements of criticism of the 1990s Japanese film production representing gay characters, Dobbins' argument seems oblivious to Hashiguchi's sexuality and does not discuss its place in their corpus. Therefore, Dobbins's account provides no insight regarding Hashiguchi's authority on gay representations.

On the contrary, in their 2022 account, Kubo Yutaka investigates Hashiguchi's filmmaking's authority in discussing it within the framework of the *kirakira seishun eiga* film genre and its heteronormative aspects. Kubo considers the filmmaker's sexuality to discuss their quality as an author. He values the idea of Hashiguchi's using film as a means to create role models for queer people (Kubo, 2022, p.204). Among other points, Kubo notes that Hashiguchi's filmmaking –as a practice validated in commercial circuits of film production for many years– offers the chance for his narratives to evolve and present different stages of life (Kubo, 2022, pp.205-206). In other words, Kubo values the possibility for queer ageing presented in Hashiguchi's filmmaking practice. The queer ageing referred to here is realized or palpable because gay characters in *Hush!* have grown out of the teenage years portrayed in *Touch of a Fever* and *Like Grains of Sand*. In *Hush!*, they are now questioning how to live the remaining of their lives. Consequently, and probably against his initial intentions, it could be argued that the possibility of ageing defended by Kubo in this film takes the appearance of adhesion to heteronormative monogamy and parenthood.

However, what seems to be a misleading paradox in Kubo's discussion is crucial for understanding Hashiguchi's filmmaking practice. The durability of Hashiguchi's representation of gay experiences rests on the claim to the universality of love and the fact that gay experience is not so different from heterosexual experience. What I mean is that it can be said that Hashiguchi's possibility to keep representing an otherwise still frown upon subject within Japanese commercial film circuits probably comes from his application to portray gay experiences easily assimilable into heteronormative discourses. In this sense, therefore, his first commercial film, *Touch of a Fever*, is probably the most disruptive because it portrays young gay men selling sexual services to older men living within the heteronormative domestic space, pretending to be heterosexual.

Maekawa (2021) presents helpful insight to understand the differences between

the older and the younger generation of gay men in *Touch of a Fever* or the shift between the gay characters contracting heteronormative marriages (e.g., *Touch of a Fever*) and those trying to live their sexuality openly (e.g., *Hush!*). Maekawa's discussion rests on a brilliant study of gay magazines from the 1970s, the 1980s, and the 1990s. Indeed, Maekawa focuses on the dialogue between Tatsuru and his client, in which his client tells him that he would have been lucky if he had a "son" like him. According to their analysis, gay relationships underwent different configurations from the 1970s to the 1990s. Starting from the 1970s, gay magazines portrayed a family-like bond in which gay people referred to their sexual partners as fathers, brothers, or sons. Around the 1980s, these relationships evolved more towards a friendship-related vocabulary, in which gay partners referred to each other as friends. Finally, the 1990s marked the introduction of a love-oriented vocabulary in which gay people referred to each other as lovers (Maekawa, 2021, pp.97-101). Consequently, exploring the dialogues between Tatsuru and his client from this perspective allows for understanding the generational gap between the characters and how they relate to and live their sexuality has evolved. Maekawa writes that the use of family-like bonds denotes, among other things, the possibility to experience the relationship beyond normative paradigms while still obeying the social injunctions of heteronormative marriage. On the other hand, later usage of the love-related lexicon is a way to establish a hierarchy of desires and bring same-sex relationships to the same level of heteronormative romantic love, that is, to a higher place than family or friendship-like relationships (Maekawa, 2021, p.100).

Kubo's 2021 discussion echoes Maekawa's analysis while still providing further insight into the history of the representations of gay domesticity. According to Kubo, from the 1980s already, it is possible to witness the use of family-like relationships paradigms among gay characters in the film sub-category of *barazoku eiga*, a genre of gay erotica mainly produced and distributed by the ENK Production company. Kubo's analysis focuses on the *Bokura* series, constituted of three films: *Bokura no Jidai* (*Our Era** 1983), *Bokura no Kisetsu* (*Our Season** 1983), and *Bokura no Shunkan* (*Our Instant** 1985), realized by Hiroki Ryûichi. It is interesting to see how these earlier examples have developed similar strategies to investigate the introduction of gay characters in the family sphere. For example, Kubo discusses the second opus, *Our Season*, in which a female character, Mami, decides to grant a gay couple the possibility to have a baby through her womb. She does so to return them the favor of taking care of her when she was in need. Concretely, and not without reminding us of Shôko's attempt to birth both Mutsuki and Kon's child in *Twinkle*, Mami allows both gay men to ejaculate in her. Unfortunately, it is proven later in the story that the child she gives birth to is related to her former lover. Consequently, the two gay men have to renounce the hope of becoming parents (Kubo, 2021, p.113).

Among other examples, Kubo raises the fact that the *Bokura* series can also be

read as the site of negotiations and conflict within the members of the Japanese gay community, in which life expectations may differ. For instance, in the third opus, *Our Instant*, Kubo notes the generational gap in how the older generation of gay men are focused on heteronormative marriage. In comparison, the younger generation explores new ways to relate to each other (Kubo, 2021, p.116).

It is interesting to see that the negotiations of gay representations of domesticity have been around on film since the 1980s, progressively evolving along with the construction of gay identities and the mainstreamization of gay experiences. Even though there is no one correct answer to the question, it is undeniable that negotiations of gay domesticity require addressing the questions of heteronormative marriage and child-making.

Up to this point, the importance of Hashiguchi's filmmaking practice regarding the portrayal of gay characters and their attempts to domesticity in the Japanese film landscape is hardly deniable. Among the sources brought in this paper –Kubo, Maekawa, and, in the next section, Kawaguchi Kazuya (2003)– all agree to state that Hashiguchi's *Hush!* is the pinnacle of Hashiguchi's intent to articulate the idea of queer domesticity. I agree with the fact that *Hush!* makes a compelling case to discuss the intricacies of picturing gay domesticity, yet, I find that these previous works fail on two critical points. First, their analysis is usually narratively-based, and, to the extent of my knowledge, little attention has been brought to concrete film details that confirm Hashiguchi's attempt at queer domesticity. Then, although *Hush!*'s transgressive potential has been broadly praised, almost no attention has been brought to the homonormative dangers presented by the film. The following section is my attempt to contribute to this discussion focusing on formal aspects that make for queer domesticity and discussing the homonormative risks in the film.

## III　Gay domesticity, domesticating gays: a reading of *Hush!* (2001)

The ghost of the 'traditional family' –or "gendered family" (Muta, 2006)– still ideologically lingers, influencing discourses of what should be and what should not be considered as a family, even though Japanese family and its representations have been undergoing a postmodern turn including more diversity. As an example of such a postmodern turn, *Hush!* (2001) by Hashiguchi Ryôsuke is a fascinating example queer characters' negotiations of the 'traditional family', offering a first pattern of queering domesticity.

Hush! narrates the story of three characters in their thirties: Asako, Katsuhiro, and Naoya. All living apart, but soon to be in each other's lives. *Graphics 1* shows the essential characters to remember for the demonstration. Naoya, a pet groomer, and Katsuhiro, a 'salaryman' engineer, meet in a gay bar in Ni-Chome, Tokyo's 'gay' district.

After a first successful night spent together, [15] their relationship develops into a committed monogamous one. As for Asako, she enters their life one day when Katsuhiro and Naoya eat *soba* noodles in a restaurant far from Katsuhiro's company to provide them with privacy. Asako, a prosthodontist whom a doctor told to decide soon if she wants children or not, realizes that she wants to be a mother without having to marry anyone. She decides to ask Katsuhiro because he "has the eyes of a father" would be the perfect candidate to help her. Of course, Asako has picked up on Katsuhiro and Naoya's more or less discrete displays of affection and knows about their relationship.

Consequently, she gets in touch with Katsuhiro and asks him directly to have a child with her. Contrary to Naoya, Katsuhiro has not given up on having children and a family because of his sexuality. Such different visions of what being gay means between the two male characters generate friction that their feelings for each other eventually help surmount. Progressively Naoya gets warmer to the idea and welcomes Asako into their life. The three start their version of a family, two gay men and a woman trying to have children together. While their respective families oppose them, Katsuhiro's in particular, which stands for the 'traditional' understanding of family, the final scene portrays the three of them around the dining table in Asako's new apartment, getting two pipettes out for both Katsuhiro's and Naoya's sperm. The film ends with the three of them wholeheartedly laughing at their prospect of becoming a family. The film's overall comedic and sentimental tone is easy to watch and lightens the audience.

It is apparent, through the synopsis, that the idea of family, while reconfigured to integrate two gay men and a single straight woman, is at the center of the narrative. My analysis of *Hush!* will address the following points: the use of food and meals to paint the characters and their relationships, the use of domestic interior space to both define domesticity and its possible queering, and, finally, a discussion on the limits of Hashiguchi's queering of domesticity in this film.
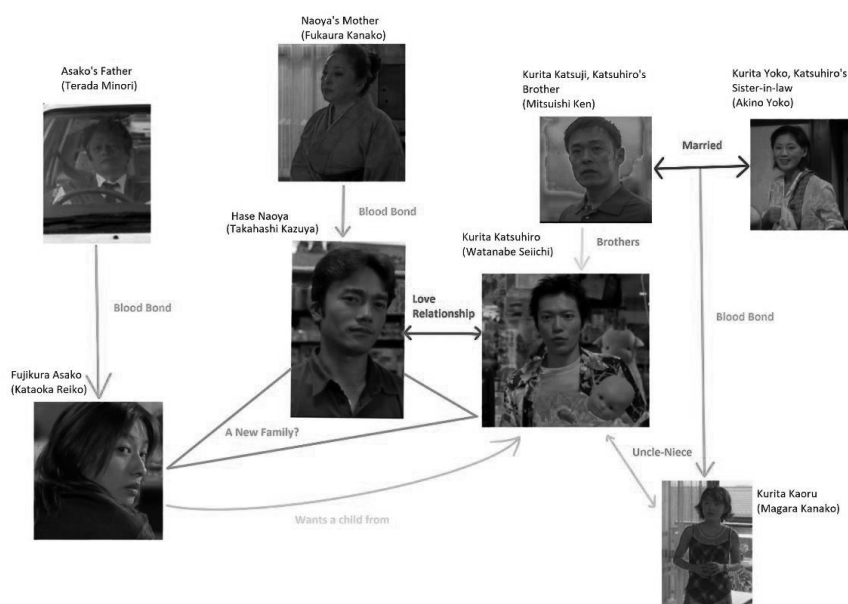
Graphics 1 Character Chart of the main characters in Hush! *and their relationship to each other.*

(Pictures cropped from stills of the film by the author)

III.1 Home-cooked meal?

As I have touched upon in the representations of families on-screen (II.2), food plays an important role that we overlook because of its banality in our everyday lives. Yet, as Parley Ann Boswell (1993) demonstrated, foods and meals in films have signifying properties that help the audience follow the characters' development or the story. Therefore, this sub-section investigates the use of food throughout the film to understand what the audience can learn from it.

Food appears early in the film. Naoya's last one-night stand ruffles through Naoya's refrigerator in the hope of finding anything to eat or drink before leaving unnoticed. Naoya asks him if he wants coffee, but the man declines and starts to exit Naoya's apartment. Naoya tries to give him his phone number, but in vain. As it appears clearly through Naoya's reaction to the man's rejection is that Naoya's attempt to offer him coffee was a first step towards creating a relationship. Through the act of sharing breakfast with his guest, Naoya hopes to connect with him on a more emotional level. However, his wish is unfulfilled. This first sequence serves as a counterpoint to translate the success of Naoya's encounter with Katsuhiro later in the fiction. It also allows the audience to understand Naoya's emotional state and have a glimpse of his worldview. As Maekawa notes (Maekawa, 2021, 104-105), Naoya, is a character that came into realizing his queer desires during the 1990s and possesses a strong desire for heteronormative monogamous love.

Consequently, later in the fiction, after Naoya and Katsuhiro have passed their

first night together, Katsuhiro wakes up first and makes coffee. For Naoya, this banal action has a deeper meaning that is skilfully translated on screen when he pours their coffee. He starts pouring the hot water into the coffee pot, and the camera alternates between close-up shots of his face and the pot. Gradually, Naoya's facial expression appears blissful. Out of the frame, Katsuhiro is desperately looking for his sock. When he finally finds it, he says, "I found it!". The camera focuses on Naoya's actions, and Katsuhiro's last words resonate beyond their intended meaning. Here, "I found it!" also becomes the accomplishment of Naoya's long quest for love. At the same time, the shot changes on last time to the overflowing coffee pot, a metaphor for Naoya's feelings in this scene (*Still 1*).

Still 1 - The camera alternates shots between Naoya's satisfied facial expression and the overflowing coffee pot as Katsuhiro seems to be staying.

Later in the fiction, food, in its ritualistic dimension, the repetition of food habits in given circumstances, also creates a domestic atmosphere. Naoya gets upset because Katsuhiro is not answering his questions. He then goes to the freezer and takes a pot of ice cream that he starts eating directly with a spoon. Katsuhiro immediately deciphers this food ritual indicating Naoya's emotional state. In this scene, it is interesting to see the 'traditional' configuration of the table as defended in Charles W. Hayford (subsection II.3). Family members are gathered around a low-to-the-ground table, usually sharing food. Therefore, Hashiguchi adapts the table canon to represent the domestic connection between the two gar characters. However, he still marks tension between the characters and the domestic realm's risk of crumbling by portraying Naoya turning his back to

Katsuhiro during their argument (*Still 2*).

Still 2: Naoya is eating ice cream as he always does when upset. The characters surround a low-to-the-ground table as they would in a domestic setting, yet, the tension of their argument is expressed when Naoya turns his back to his partner.

Once Naoya and Katsuhiro have agreed on Asako's request for a baby, a quick scene portrays them getting ready to get dinner in their new apartment. Contrary to the 'traditional' Japanese home-meal scenes discussed before, Naoya and Katsuhiro are seated on high chairs at a high table. They eat a Japanese curry; a simple meal frequently shared with family members. My interpretation of this short scene is that their configuration of domesticity acts as a re-writing of traditional family configuration that would endorse a postmodern and urban turn. It shows a fracture with the historical low-to-the-ground culture of domesticity that can be seen either in *Hush!*, when Katsuhiro goes back to the family house, or in a large variety of previous Japanese film works portraying family meal scenes.

In *Hush!*, food and meals scene often appears on the screen. More than just events of the characters' daily lives, they allow the audience to understand the evolution of the characters and their desires. In the case of food and meals situations discussed here, it becomes clear that they are an unavoidable part of representing the ideas of home and family in which gay characters are re-inscribed.

III.2 Portraying the domestic space

This subsection concentrates on how domestic space is recreated or queered in *Hush!*. As the story unfolds, the audience gets a glimpse into five different homes. In order of apparition, Naoya's apartment (*Still 3*), Asako's apartment (*Still 4*), Naoya and Katsuhiro's apartment (*Still 5*), the Kurita's family house (*Still 6*), and finally Asako's new apartment (*Still 7*).

First of all, it must be said that every home space undergoes a queering of a certain degree. Naoya's apartment is made queer through his sexuality and by occupying the space with his collection of dolls and stuffed animals that are transgressive of cisgender male norms. It is also the only place where gay sexuality, in its physical dimension, occupies the domestic realm. Naoya's apartment stands for a celibate's place

(*Still 3*). It differs from a 'home' because the sexuality there does not allow for reproductivity.

Still 3- Naoya in his apartment after a fruitless one-night stand.

In this sense, it echoes the configuration of Asako's apartment. Indeed, similarly, Asako's apartment is transgressive of the cisgender woman norm. It is full of detritus, dark, unable to represent the reproductive space discursively attributed to women. Its configuration allows the audience to analyze her psychology and determine her uneasiness with social norms imposed onto women. Furthermore, the sexuality that occurs in it does not allow for reproductivity –even though her partner does not wear a condom– because Asako is marked by her use of abortion twice (*Still 4*).

Still 4- Asako's apartment appears messy and unhealthy. She sits far from the table, far from the center of domesticity.

Still 5 represents the three main characters in Naoya and Katsuhiro's shared apartment. In this domestic space, the queering is conveyed through the nature of the relation of its occupants. Naoya and Katsuhiro are in a committed love relationship that is overall similar to any heteronormative, except that they are both men and that their sexuality in itself does not possess the capacity to be reproductive. It is also the space in which the relation between the three main characters blossoms the most, as they compare their bellies as if the three of them were to be pregnant or share Asako's potential pregnancy.

Still 5- The three main characters compare their bellies as they talk about physical changes occurring during pregnancy.

The following domestic space is the most heteronormative in itself and its queering is only temporary and very discrete. Katsuhiro goes back to the family house in the Kansai region. There, he is welcomed by his big brother's wife and daughter. They gather around a low-to-the-ground table for dinner. The father (Katsuhiro's brother) sits at the center, face to the camera. He represents the central axis of the screen. His sister-in-law manages everything around the table, brings the food, replenishes the water dedicated to the ancestors standing behind her husband. She serves everybody food. In a nutshell, the scene depicted here is the canon representation of a heteronormative setting of the family. However, Katsuhiro does one little thing that could be interpreted as queer. Before his sister-in-law sits down, he offers her a glass of beer. Here, the beer should be understood as a masculine symbol of authority that has been firmly anchored within the postwar Japanese 'salaryman' culture. Consequently, Katsuhiro shares some of the masculine privileges with his sister-in-law. It does so because, being himself oppressed by heteronormativity, he can only relate to her status (*Still 6*).

Still 6- Katsuhiro shares the 'patriarchal beer' as an act of queering domestic power relationships.

The last domestic space is Asako's new apartment. It offers a queering of two natures by reversing gender norms and power relations. In its unfolding, this scene operates a parallel with the scene in *Still 6*. While being physically understood to be a

woman, Asako comes from outside the home space, while the physically male characters are helping with tidying the home and cooking. She sits in the middle, face to the camera, in a dominating position, just as Katsuji, Katsuhiro's brother, did in the scene described before. Thus, she is queering the scene mentioned above, *Still 6*, by parodying its structure. Also, in a related second degree, she brings the gender-coded male artifact of beer to the table. She also brings out the ostensibly phallus-shaped pipettes in front of the male characters, turning upside gendered notions of female and male roles. However, despite the pipettes, her suggestion to become the site of gay male child-making, even if it is primarily for her happiness, relates to the history of female characters that intended similar actions (Shôko in *Twinkle*, or Mami in *Our Season*) (*Still 7*).

Still 7- Asako gives Katsuhiro and Naoya a pipette to conceive a baby with each of them.

Another angle to analyze queer domestic spaces would be to do it from the material position of what is in the home and what value those items hold regarding the potential of queering the space or expressing nonnormative sexuality. Both Pilkey (2013) and Gorman-Murray (2006) have analyzed how gay males negotiate material possessions and sexual identity from interviews and the representation in lifestyle television. As mentioned above, the sexual identity and the queering of the gender norms operated by Naoya are visible and take the form of is memorabilia, his dolls, and other feminine toys. When he moves in with Katsuhiro, he keeps his collection, but another object brings the audience's attention to the queering of home realized by the two protagonists. That is the photograph of them put on display. A close-up shot of said photograph follows an outside midair shot of a building new to the audience. The shot possesses both the narrative value of making the audience understand the evolution of the protagonists' relationship and their negotiation of domestic space but also manifests how memorabilia such as photographs is both the crystallization of their non-normativity that cannot be freely represented outside (see the scene at the *soba* restaurant). However, at the same time, it gives form to their commitment and their orthodox practice of the romantic love ideology. While their new home does not display

homoerotic artwork as Pilkey's interviewees had in their homes, a sequence does play a similar part. As Naoya and Katsuhiro watch television in Naoya's apartment, an advertisement for abdominal reinforcement plays on the television. Both men are focused on the screen. While their conversation does not suggest sexual innuendoes, the saturation of the color red on the screen brings the vitality of the male model's skin, giving an erotic overtone to the scene.

Finally, regarding the queering of the space, another argument could be made of the opposition made between the rural environment of the heteronormative familial home of the Kurita family in Kyôto and the urban queer space inhabited by the main characters. Explicitly, by combining rurality with the archetypal family home, Hashiguchi Ryôsuke amplifies the opposition of both sexuality and generations when Katsuhiro visits his brother. Quite ironically, in the end, the 'traditional' rural home, inherited from their father and supposed to be passed down to Katsuji and Yoko's descendants, ends up sold, the well sealed, as the heteronormative family ends there.

This section has demonstrated that various levels of queering the domestic space occur in *Hush!* eventually undermining the heteronormative arrangements of the family. However, to what extent these queerings are effective? Is there anything beyond? The following section investigates the limits of said queerings by analyzing how the transgressive potential of the character is toned down.

III.3 The dangers of homonormativity

While in the previous subsection the analysis focused on how the domestic space is queered in *Hush!* it is necessary to understand that its transgressive potential is limited and subject to homonormative redirections.

The film's opening scene presents Naoya's sexual conquest waking up in his bed. The floor is covered with used tissues, which with the camera fixing Naoya's back, leaves close to nothing for the imagination. The character stands up and, fully naked, crosses the room, revealing his naked buttocks. For the first-time audience, the nature of the sexuality displayed or the gender of Naoya in bed is yet to be revealed. When the naked character reaches a picture, the audience can identify a man playing with a dog. A jump cut projects the audience a few minutes later, as the naked man is now fully dressed and scavenging the refrigerator. It is the first time that the nature of the events that occurred the night before is revealed and that the nature of the sexuality filling the previous scene is confirmed. Whereas a full naked back and props like used tissues perfectly transmit the sexuality of the scene, it is the only time that sexuality and, more specifically, queer sexuality will receive such a heavy treatment.

It also goes for Asako's sexuality with a young man. As they return to her place, the young man almost assaults her, voluntarily refusing to wear a condom. Again, the scene is descriptive enough not to be interpreted any other way. However, the rape

overtone that emerges from the scene –and that it is reinforced when she maniacally tries to wash her body afterward– prevents the audience from feeling optimistic about such depiction of sex.

Besides a solid sexual beginning, sexuality itself tends to disappear afterward. Even the encounter between Naoya and Katsuhiro is undescribed. The parallel structure with the film's first scene hints at a sexual understanding of the events that happened between Naoya and Katsuhiro. Another potentially sexually connoted scene would be described above when both Naoya and Katsuhiro are absorbed by the television and the abdominal reinforcement advertisement. As argued already, the sexual nature of the shot comes mainly from the color saturation of the screen rather than the two men's actions or word.

On the contrary, the following events show that their mind was completely elsewhere, Naoya desperately trying to figure out the price of the gym equipment displayed, and Katsuhiro preoccupied with his encounter with Asako earlier. The scene eventually escalates to a fight between the lovers, definitely exorcizing any sexual undertone. In the same sequence, a kiss is displayed between the two men, but between the use of comedic aspects and the lack of any pursuit of the kiss, no sexualization of the scene is made possible. This last scene stands for the last explicit display of any characters' sexuality.

The presentation or not of sex regarding sexual minorities is a political choice. However, as will be demonstrated in the last section, it is interesting that Imaizumi and Hashiguchi have made two different political choices in queering the domestic space, providing this paper with a point of comparison between the two films. While the presence or not of sexuality *per se* should not be obligatory to portray queer characters, it is only fair to recognize that the choice of not portraying intimacy does have inevitable consequences, even more so when the entire cultural production revolves around the idea of making a family.

This paper argues that under the choice made by Hashiguchi to not be more explicit in his representations lies a homonormatively driven desire of assimilation, reinforced by film market imperatives. By homonormative, pulling from Lisa Dungan (2003), this paper means an essentialization of sexual minorities that are 'sanitized' – that is, their sexuality and lived experiences are welcomed as long as they reproduce polarized heteronormative penetrative sex at a reasonable frequency. The benefices of bending to the heteronormative norms are the prospect of assimilation and the recognition of rights that are by default reserved to heteronormative relationships.

On the other hand, but also in the same order of things, Hashiguchi's filmic production is part of the commercial distribution circuit, making him dependent on how well his film can perform commercially speaking, as demonstrated through Kubo (2022) before.

As an obvious point of comparison, Imaizumi's film production, on the other hand, belongs to independent circuits where both the impossible investments and the income prospects are unavoidably limited. The last section discusses the nature of the queerings of domestic space operated in *Family Complete* as an independent film that is not subjected to political correctness.

IV   Kill your loved ones: the queer art of failing family in *Family Complete* (2010)

The analysis of Family Complete is yet to be fully achieved because some aspects deserve further inquiry from my part. However, I present in this paper my preliminary results as a point of comparison with Hashiguchi's filmmaking.

While *Hush!* illustrates one way 'queer domesticities' can be imagined, relying on the subversion of the 'traditional' family by including queer characters into the heteronormative domestic space. However, there are other possibilities to explore. For example, one possibility further along the road of queering the family would be to rethink the idea of the family all over or show the limits of its working. This paper argues that *Family Complete*, by director Imaizumi Kôichi (2010), is an interesting negotiation of the meanings of 'family' and its mechanisms.

Family Complete narrates the collapse of a three-generation family living in a traditional Japanese house.[16] The characters and their relationships are as put together in *graphics 2*. The storyline is quite simple, the character of Kôichi, the grandfather (played by Imaizumi himself), is the bearer of the "T-virus". This sexually transmitted virus makes contaminated people feel sexual desire for him. The "T-virus" also stops the ageing process, so contaminated people do not age after contamination. Shusaku, his son and one of the first victims of this contamination, is working on a cure. The action starts when Kuma, the house pet, a moving giant stuffed bear that meows, sexually assaults Kôichi. Alerted by his wife, Sayoko, who discovered the unconscious body of her father-in-law, Shusaku has a flashback that provides the keys to the audience to understand the circumstances of his contamination. Progressively, the audience realizes that all members have been contaminated, all but Tsugio, Shusaku's second son. By an interesting turn of events, he seems to be the only character to properly endorse a 'gay identity expressed through its coding of meeting strangers through the internet to have sex in love hotels. Oddly enough though, he seems to have trouble assuming his sexual orientation or the idea of commitment.

Once the proverbial cat is out of the bag, the family collapse, starting with Sayoko, leaving the house with Kuma. From there on, the family members, all men, have to reorganize themselves to make up for the leaving of Sayoko and go on with their lives. This coincides with Hajime, Shusaku's firstborn, returning from his honeymoon. He has been kicked out because he could not have sex with his wife because of the T-virus.

Shortly after, Kôichi gets sick. This episode acts as a narrative device to introduce Kôichi's hidden son, Shuichi, a bearer of the virus. The narrative resolves when Tsugio confronts his grandfather after finding someone to be committed to. He ends up assaulting him sexually, eventually strangling him to death. Since he did not use a preservative, Tsugio gets contaminated as well. Finally, he kills all the other members of his family. The film's conclusion presents Tsugio and his partner, Hiro, doing some funeral rites for Tsugio's family. They visit their grave, and on their way home, the audience learns that Hiro has not gotten older since he started dating Tsugio. The film concludes with a shot showing Tsugio holding a wooden ladle over his head as he might attack Hiro, who turns his back to him.
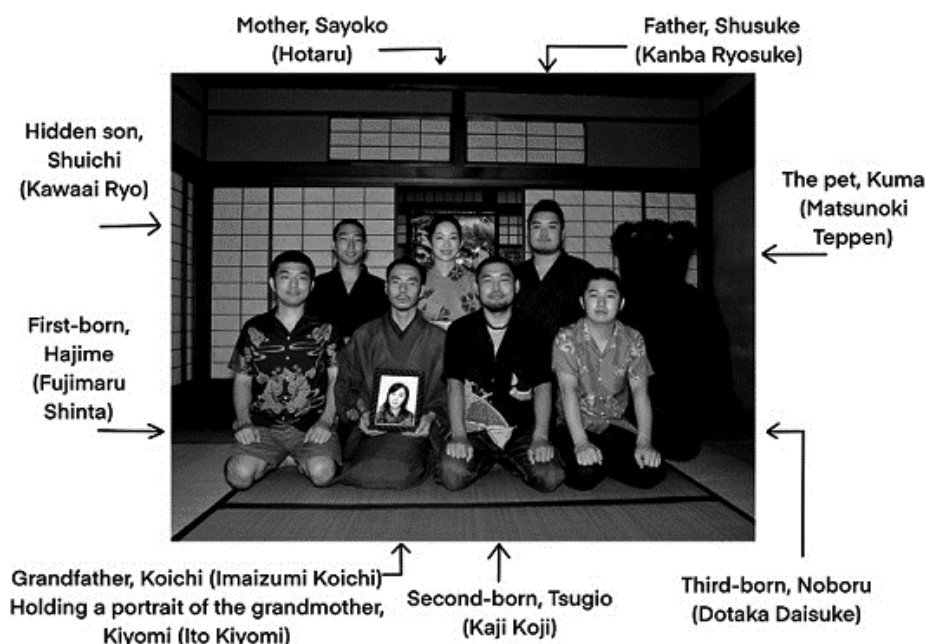
Graphics 2 Family Members in Family Complete*, picture taken by Taguchi Hiroki and available at the following link:*

http://www.taqotsuka.com/Tacs_Knot_Gallery/2012nian/peji/2012nian8yue_H.TAguchi.html#7

(Roles and names added by the author)

IV.1 Overflowing and unregulated sexuality

At the antipodes of Hashiguchi's representative strategy, Imaizumi's film production is sex-positive, blurring the borders between fiction films and pornography. In fact, and it must be explained beforehand, Imaizumi's filmmaking techniques are self-taught and come from his background as an actor in erotic films of the 1990s typical of Japan called *pinku eiga* (Pink films). Therefore, his work usually includes sexually graphic scenes, even pornography in the most recent ones, *Berurin Hyôryû* (*Berlin Drifters*, 2018). Also, because he does not use mosaics as requested for sensitive contents

in Japan, his distribution circuits there are relatively limited, if not almost inexistent. Nevertheless, he also enjoys more freedom to experiment with forms and themes for the same reasons.

Accordingly, what would be more uncensored than to repeatedly represent one of the strongest taboos of our society: incest? As already mentioned in the film's synopsis, the story revolves around the multiple sexual relationships the grandfather of a three-generation family entertains with all the family members. The theme of incest relationship is double with the theme of the contamination by the T-virus, sexually transmitted, but what this section explores is the portrayal of overflowing and unregulated sexuality.

Soon in the narrative, the themes of sex and incest come to be depicted, as the first sex scene is the sexual assault of Kôichi, the grandfather, by Kuma, the house pet. Moreover, from there already, sexuality can be qualified as unregulated since it takes place between a man and an animal. The animal in question is the costume of a black bear worn by Matsunoki Teppen. However, all the characters identify and recognize Kuma as a pet. Through this sexual involvement with the pet bear, the audience can admire some transformative experience of sexuality as the bear costume disappears through the technique of footage superposition, revealing the man inside. It happens twice, the first time during the assault mentioned above, and later, when Sayoko leaves the family house with Kuma. Such revealing of the man's body is somewhat perplexing as it does not serve any narrative purpose. When Kuma is about to leave the house, Tsugio calls him, and the man's face inside the costume is visible for a brief instant. The mise-en-scène in itself hints towards some more profound meaning of their relation, but in fact, no more evocations of the relationship between the grandfather and the bear will occur to provide reasons to believe in a deeper meaning.

Since transformation has been brought up, it is interesting, on the other hand, that Tsugio, the second grandson, chained his grandfather with Kuma's chains in order to take vengeance on him, therefore attributing the grandfather the status of an animal.

Not only animals but also objects are incorporated into sexual practices. During a flashback of why his father has contaminated Shûshaku, the audience assists to a scene of sexual nature involving red Tengû masks. Tengû is a winged monster from Japanese folklore with a prominent nose associated with the phallus. Masks, especially the red Tengû one, are recurrent in the story. The red Tengû one generally precedes or accompanies impactful scenes for the story.

Another reason to qualify sexuality as unregulated comes from Kôichi's sexual activity with every member of his family without questioning anybody's sexual preferences. Narratively, the affluence of sexual desire without any consideration for sexual preferences is justified by the T-virus and its effects; however, for the time of the fiction, heteronormative regulations of sexuality are dropped, creating a continuum of

sexual interactions at the center of which can be found Kôichi.

An additional scene may have attracted the audience's attention. When coming back from his honeymoon that was interrupted because his newly wedded wife realized he was gay, Hajime, the first son, visits his grandfather and has sex with him. The point of interest in this scene is the dissociation of sexual intercourse with romantic feelings as, while being penetrated, Hajime tells his grandfather that he hates him. Of course, there are multiple ways to interpret his words. For instance, he could be angry against his grandfather for contaminating him and being forced into desiring him. Nevertheless, the point to be made here is that, with the familial house, romantic love ideology has no more meaning nor influence as to justify nor deny the various sexual exchanges the characters have.

However, on the other hand, while all or most of the barriers regarding sexuality seem to have been put down, Tsugio, the only member to almost escape contamination, seems at a loss with his sexuality. Whereas almost all male members seem to be more or less gay-coded, Hajime talks about himself as being gay, Noboru, the third son is jealous of the others for not being picked by his grandfather, their father, from a young age as maintained a steady sexual relationship with his father, Kôichi; only Tsugio participates in gay sexuality outside the family home, meeting strangers met on the internet for one-night stands in love hotels. It could be argued that Tsugio's comportment can be interpreted as either 'closeted' or afraid of commitment. Either way, there is a dissonance between his actions and how he insults his brothers for being "homos".

The overall fluidity and abundance of sexuality in this film complicate the reading, especially when trying to read the meanings attached to the family where incest is so commonly used. The following sections argue that *Family Complete* is an attempt to go beyond family structures as a way for people to come together.

IV.2 Failing chrononormativity: the negation of domesticity

By exploring what has been considered inexplorable to maintain the heteronormative family structures, Imaizumi Kôichi deconstructs the limits of the sacred and profane to offer a neat ground to rethink the ways humans could form meaningful relationships. However, it is difficult to argue that this attempt was successful considering that Tsugio murdered all family members.

It is interesting to decipher the meaning of the film's title: *Kazoku Compurîto* (*Familly Complete*). Those words are pronounced twice during the film. When Tsugio, seeking revenge on his grandfather, sexually assaults him the first time. At that moment, he refuses to wear a condom, exposing himself to the T-virus. When the sexual transmission seems to be achieved, that Tsugio penetrated his grandfather, the latter's last words are "Kazoku Compulîto". The second time the title pronounced, Tsugio, when wearing the Tengû masks recurrent along with the story, he has just assassinated all his

relatives. The intention of those words is difficult to grasp. Was Kôichi satisfied with contaminating every family member, or was he simply happy that they would all share something? Likewise, was Tsugio commenting on his murdering of his family, or was he addressing the salvation he brought them by offering them death?

From a purely commercial aspect and Hollywoodian type of editing, it cannot be argued that *Family Complete* stands for success. Narratively, the film is confusing, disconcerting, and offers little closure. Nevertheless, this paper argues that its true value lies in its emancipation from the known and the common. It shall be rephrased: in its failure, *Family Complete* is valuable. What is suggested here is that rather than trying to reappropriate already known and how-many-times-modified family structures, the film instead asks the audience to face its deconstruction through the painful expressions of its most forbidden transgressions.

Lastly, stands the enigma around the T-virus. Beyond the obvious yet capital metaphor of the HIV/AIDS panic from the mid-1980s to the 1990s, where queer people were chased from their homes and families and had to find comfort in care communities of other contaminated people, another intriguing point was brought up by the film. Why would people contaminated by the T-virus stop getting old?

This paper presents the following argument with no assurance that it is the correct answer.

Heteronormative ideology, based on the fabricated idea of gender, is exceptionally pervasive and has infiltrated every sphere of human lives. One of the spheres that are significantly invested is the conception of time, especially the modern linear conception of time. As Elizabeth Freeman explores it in her work on queer ageing and queer time (2013), she argues that the modern Western conception of time is a succession of heteronormative signposts called a life course that they coined as 'chrononormativity'. First, people are born, grow up, become adolescents, and get accounted with sexuality, their bodies, and the body of the other sex. Then, they find a significant other from said other sex, get married, have children that they educate and prepare to become adults, they grow old, and eventually die with the satisfaction of knowing that the life cycle (even though modern time is linear) will be faithfully reproduced as to pass along amassed capital.

In making his characters unaffected by the progression of time, Imaizumi renders reproductivity meaningless and therefore compulsory heterosexuality senseless. In the end, the whole viability of heteronormative ideology becomes futile.

While Imaizumi fails to present an operational structure of the family, in the queer art of failure defended by Halberstam (2011), it opens the path to rethink what has not been the object of doubtful thinking for a long time.

V　Conclusion

　　　　To conclude, the present paper would like to focus on the productive aspects of the two queerings of domesticity presented here.

　　　　On the one hand, Hashiguchi Ryôsuke's *Hush!* offers the possibility of becoming visible for queer people and finding a place, more or less adapted to their needs to access a feeling of belonging. However, in the end, it can be argued that what Hashiguchi is presenting is merely a mimicking of heteronormative structures, which most of them are inadequate and oppressive to queer people. It relies on homonormative assimilation of queer people who further render invisible queer nonnormative queer experiences. Nevertheless, it does not mean that no queering is taking place. On the contrary, progressively infiltrating the structures and devices closed to queer people is an essential move towards a better life.

　　　　On the other hand, in Imaizumi Kôichi's *Family Complete*, the queering of domestic space takes on a radical aspect that transgresses most of the values on which human lives have been built. Narratively speaking, Imaizumi's attempt is concluded by a failure. However, it must be commanded that it opens the debate and the reflection for further investigations of family structures beyond heteronormative ideology and Its conception of time: chrononormativity.

　　　　Both approaches are valid and must be thoroughly explored. However, the argument resides in the degree to which the queering of the domestic space, home, and family is necessary, and in what timing? A superficial yet quick involvement of queer lives probably resides in the option *Hush!* suggests: homonormative assimilation. On the contrary, a thorough reflection on how to exorcize heteronormative ideology from family structures may necessitate more time and a more radical approach attempted by *Family Complete*.

　　　　　　(Doctorate Program, Graduate School of Intercultural Studies, Kobe University)

Notes

1 Also, despite the rise of various queer representations in Japanese media in recent years, non-gay images are still rare. An example of non-gay queer domesticity is *Karera ga Honki de Amu Toki ha* (*Close-Knit*, 2017) by Ogigami Naoko. Even though in this film domesticity follows heteronormative configurations, a concrete analysis would bring valuable insight regarding the queering of family through the centering of a transgender character.

2 For a more accurate discussion on the discriminatory nature of queer people's tropes in Hollywood cinema, see Vito Russo, *The Celluloid Closet* (1987), Harry M. Benshoff and Sean Griffin, *Queer Images: a history of gay and lesbian film in America* (2006), or Barbara Mennel, *Queer Cinema schoolgirls, vampire and gay cowboys* (2012). Also, regarding the increase of queer character visibility, the Gay and Lesbian Alliance

Against Defamation (GLAAD) has collected compelling data from 2013 to today regarding the representation of LGBTQ characters on screen, focusing on films produced by eight major motion picture studios. See: https://www.glaad.org/sri/2021 (last accessed November 16, 2021)

[3] For instance, see the *Abashiri Bangaichi* (*Abashiri Prison*) film series (1965-1967, by Ishii Teruo). In these films, the masculinity of the characters played by Takakura Ken contrasts with overly effeminate queer-coded characters.

[4] *Reipu 25 Ji Bôkan* belongs to the erotic films made by the Nikkatsu studio that mostly catered to adult male audiences. However, it is interesting that such films allowed for queer representation, even with discriminatory tropes. *Monzetsu!! Dondengaeshi* (*Painful Bliss! Final Twist*, by Kumashito Tatsumi, 1977), which navigates queer desire and transgender-ness, is another example of how queer representations were made possible in more underground circuits of film production.

[5] Most films I used as examples center (gay) male experiences, pointing to a lack of lesbian representations or gender transgressions from female characters.

[6] More details about what constituted such a 'gay boom' can also be found in Jeffrey Dobbins (2000: 2-7). Dobbins discusses the diversity of gay representations in popular culture, alongside the rise of visibility of gay and queer communities through political demonstrations such as the first Japanese 'Gay Pride' of 1994.

[7] I borrow Mennel's (2012) expression in her discussion of the rise of queer representations in mainstream culture. My paper addresses further discussion about "sanitized" queer representations in its second chapter, regarding issues of homonormativity in *Hush!*.

[8] In the remaining of this article, I will address these two films by there English titles: *Hush!* and *Family Complete*.

[9] One can say this is why the modernization of Japan is generally referred to as a 'westernization', hence, the famous quote of Meiji Era intellectual, Fukuzawa Yukichi, characterizing Japan's stance as 'Leaving the East and joining the West'. (In Ochiai, Emiko 'Leaving the West, rejoining the East? Gender and family in Japan's semi-compressed modernity, p.210. While there is no doubt that Japan assimilated various systems and concepts coming from the West during Meiji Era, the construction of the Nation-State ideology also required to define ideas of 'Japan-ness' and 'Asian-ness', therefore conflicting with a blatant 'westernization' of the country.

[10] Ochiai speaks of a 'semi-compressed modernity' of Japan because it is in between the the European process of modernity used as referant, and the Asian compressed process of modernity. As Chang demonstrates, in Asian countries, "modernization start[ed] later, [and] took place in a much shorter period of time and overlapped with other changes of a different nature." (Ochiai, 2014a, p.213).

[11] *Hômu Dorama* translates by 'home drama' because it refers directly to the English word 'home'. However, the notion of 'home drama' is a creation purely Japanese. In an English context it is usually translated by 'melodrama'. It is interesting however that the Japanese wording emphasizes the centrality of the home and family in a such film genre.

[12] Richiko Ikeda uses the word "degeneration" in their article "Degeneration of Japanese Family: A Barthean Analysis of Spatial Arrangements in *The Family Game*" (1996) in which they address the film as an illustration of the postmodern Japanese family.

[13] In all fairness, Iwamoto mentions the queer example of *Mezon Do Himiko* (*House of Himiko*, Inudô Isshin 2005) in their concluding remarks (Iwamoto, 2007, p.32). However, they only do so in passing, not concretely discussing the intricacies of imagining queer homes.

[14] Once again, and to make my writing coherent, the queer domesticities I am referring in my paper solely address gay sexuality. It is a regrettable consequence of my discussing of gay filmmakers' agency.

[15] No details of the nature of their encounter are explicitly provided by the film. However, since it happens in Naoya's apartment, following a similar structure as the first scene of

the film where Naoya's one-night stand appears his back fully naked, the audience understands easily the nature of the scene and the events that just took place.
[16] Imaizumi directly confirmed his intent of picking up a 'traditional' Japanese house, with tatami rooms and sliding doors. The house depicted in the film was in Kyoto. Imaizumi confesses that finding the location was the most troublesome aspect of making this film. (Comment gathered from an online interview given by the Taiwan Queer Film Festival, October 24, 2021)

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