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Simulation and Friction: Replicant Sex Workers in Cheang Shu Lea's I.K.U.

"[The I.K.U. Project] aims at sending sexual pleasure signals collected from IT and Genom technology, directly to the brain without physical friction. Replicants of the X Generation were built in 2019, and orgasm data collecting was commenced immediately. IKU chips presently sold at vending machines... "

--DVD menu of *I.K.U.* (2000, Dir. Cheang Shu Lea)

Cheang Shu Lea's Japanese sci-fi porn film *I.K.U.* inducts the viewer as corporate manufacturer and consumer of the polymorphous sexual experiences collected mostly by simulation Japanese women. As viewer, the distinction between production and consumption collapses, as replicant female Japanese sex worker becomes both the instrument for the accumulation of sexual experience and the direct instrument of sexual pleasure. The replicant sex worker implodes fixed framings of the relationship among abstract labor, the body of the laborer, and commodity capitalism.

In *I.K.U.*, the replicant Japanese female sex worker seems fully appropriated within a postcolonial imaginary of the global. The primary replicant Reiko and her corporeal mutations are prototypical signs for the instantaneous exchangeability, mobility, connectivity, and intimacy associated with financialization, culturalization, and/or neoliberalization of the globe. At the same time, the simulated public and domestic economies (strip club, nursing, 3-D s/m performance, highway, etc.) that provide the replicant sex worker with sexual experience generate friction against easy incorporation into global sentiments.

My paper will explore the tension between global simulation and sexed postcolonial fetish as indexed specifically by the replicant female Japanese sex worker in Cheang's *I.K.U.* With this tension as a point of critical spinoff, I hope to pose some speculations on intimacy, as one global sentiment that relies in particular on a spatialized racial and sexual imaginary on an abstractly specified Asia. The paper will engage, extend, and reframe queer transnational studies, queer of color studies, the turn to affect in queer studies, transnational feminist studies, and postcolonial studies.