

Coming and Going:

Nolot, Barthes, and the Porn Theater

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Let's be clear that a fantasy requires a setting (a scenario) and therefore a place.

- Roland Barthes, *How to Live Together*

Cinéma sans début ni fin ou le déroulement linéaire du scénario passe à la moulinette stroboscopique des allées et venues, des à-coups du plaisir.

A cinema with neither beginning nor end; where linear narrative progression is put through the stroboscopic mincing machine of people's comings and goings, their fits of pleasure.

- Guy Hocquenghem, *Le Gay voyage*

Appearing in over eighty roles since his onscreen debut in 1973, Jacques Nolot occupies a long-standing but peculiarly peripheral position within France's cinematic landscape. His acting career came to light most prominently by way of his connection to queer director André Téchiné. Nolot acted in Téchiné's *La matiouette ou l'arrière-pays* (1983) and *Wild Reeds/Les roseaux sauvages* (1994) and was both the scriptwriter and autofictional catalyst for Téchiné's 1991 film *I Don't Kiss/J'embrasse pas*. Nolot has also worked with lesser-known filmmakers such as Paul Vecchiali (*Le café des Jules*, 1989), another early and significant contributor to France's cinematic exploration of the AIDS crisis. Bridging the gap between these directors and the slightly later filmmakers who would come to be associated with the millennial zeitgeist of the French *cinéma du corps*, he would go on to appear in films by Claire Denis (*I Can't Sleep/J'ai pas sommeil*, 1994; *Nénette et Boni*, 1996) and François Ozon (*Under the Sand/Sous le sable*, 2002). While there has been relatively little scholarly attention dedicated to Nolot (either as an actor or filmmaker), the broad scope of his filmography is significant.¹ Not only does his career map lines of continuity between the otherwise distinct modes of filmmaking mentioned above, but his enduring presence on film might also play a vital role in resuscitating earlier moments in French queer cinema--particularly a figure such as Vecchiali, who continues to languish in the footnotes of cinematic history despite being the first French filmmaker to make an AIDS-related film from an explicitly gay perspective.²

Speaking on the occasion of a retrospective of his work at the Queer Sicilia Festival in 2018, Nolot states "je ne suis pas connu, je suis plutot *reconnu*" (I am not well known, I am well recognized).³ Indeed, the position that he occupies within French cinema deserves further unpacking here given his lesser-known status as writer and director of films in addition to his career as actor. If we first consider his presence as an actor in other directors' films, we might note that while many of his roles have either been secondary characters or cameos, his presence onscreen readily exceeds the sum of its (bit) parts. James Williams has noted certain similarities in the characters that he has embodied: charming but jaded men, often in their fifties or early sixties, who are invariably social outsiders.⁴ Whether playing himself or a thinly veiled alter ego, Nolot's ubiquity in French queer cinema effects an intertextual bleed from one role to another, which at times places under duress the diegetic integrity of any given film.

For example, we might consider the intertextual dynamics at play in Denis's *J'ai pas sommeil*. Midway through the film, the protagonist, Daïga--a Lithuanian émigrée who, following the collapse of the Eastern bloc, has come to Paris to work in a hotel--is enticed by the neon hues of the beckoning street signs and explores her new neighborhood of Montmartre by night. It is not long, however, before she attracts unsolicited male attention and seeks refuge in a nearby movie theater in the environs of Pigalle. Daïga stumbles inadvertently into a porn theater, a fact she comes to realize when confronted with the image onscreen. While we might not be able to discern these images in great detail, the film can be identified as a heterosexual porn flick; the granular images, saturated palette, kitsch fur furnishings, and male hirsuteness anchor us in the visual idiom of 1970s softcore. As Daïga starts to laugh, she provokes the attention of the man in the neighboring seat, Jacques Nolot, whose penetrating gaze interpellates her and tells her that she is not the theater's typical client. In short, and as ever, she finds herself out of place.⁵ This minor event represents just one in a chain of alienating incidents that are relayed in *J'ai pas sommeil*, a film that deftly limns the urban contours of northern Paris with particular attention to racial, sexual, and gendered alterity. Yet the deferred resonance of this particular scene and the broader implication of Daïga's incursion into Nolot's homosocial milieu can, however, only be registered after the fact.⁶ Spectators familiar with Nolot's own later work are subsequently encouraged to infer from Denis's casting of Nolot an admittedly subterranean intertext, given that a similar porn theater within close proximity to Montmartre would later lend itself, as both subject and setting, to the second film in his own trilogy, *La Chatte à deux têtes* (2002, hereafter

referred to by the English-language title *Porn Theatre*).⁷ Denis's calculated enacting of Daïga's misidentification is, however, more significant than an anachronistic in-joke, a breaking of the fourth wall, or a Hitchcockian pun at one remove. For Williams, such a scene "bespeaks [Nolot's] particular persona," which we can understand in a broad and a narrow sense.⁸ First, the scene encapsulates the dynamics of sex and senescence that rest at the core of his later cinematic endeavors. And second, the cameo points proleptically toward his later more fleshed-out role as a gatekeeper of the auditorium's homosocial spaces. Indeed, in Williams's writing it is particularly telling that he titles his formalist account of Nolot's cinema "His Life to Film" so as to foreground the interdigitated registers of cinematic mediation and biographical reality--the slippage from "reel" to "real"--that structure and also threaten to overdetermine Nolot's autofictive project.⁹

This essay starts from the contention that the invocation of place in Nolot's film *Porn Theatre* places him within a set of discourses that are themselves germane to a discussion of queer cinematic space. Given that Nolot's work has not received adequate scholarly attention, my ambition is to give him a more prominent position within scholarship in film and modern French studies. I contend that Nolot's cinema ought to be understood in dialogue with a broader constellation of queer artists and intellectuals, given that his anachronistic cinema engages specific forms of Parisian sociality and indexes a fast-disappearing generation and milieu.

Nolot's films are liberally peppered with anecdotes that serve to reinforce his position as a node in a network of prominent gay figures. Roland Barthes, whom Nolot came to know through a mutual friend, filmmaker André Téchiné, was at one time Nolot's cruising partner, and the two would encounter one another in and around the Place Saint-Sulpice. In a rhetorical gesture that is consonant with the theme that animates my following inquiry, Barthes draws on a spatial lexicon to describe Nolot, who was then twenty years his junior. This designation is recounted to us by Pierre, Nolot's alter ego in *Before I Forget/Avant que j'oublie* (2007), who claims that Barthes once introduced him to his friend, filmmaker André Techiné, as a "roulure." While the term commonly circulates in the French vernacular as an injurious term for a prostitute (somebody who, to adopt the similarly moralizing English idiom, gets around), Barthes exercised his penchant for wordplay by twisting and thus blunting the connotative barb of his words. The term was supposed to be understood with greater creative and semantic license to mean someone who is more generally nomadic or without roots. Indeed, it is through a close analysis of Nolot's

Porn Theatre, which I engage in conversation with the film theory of Barthes, that I wish to pursue the tensions that inhere in this anecdote--one that operates in the registers of the literal and the metaphoric, evoking both spatial and sexual practices.

Roland Barthes by Jacques Nolot

Jacques Nolot's nod to Barthes's writing is prefigured in his first film, *Hinterland/L'Arrière-pays* (1997), which charts the filmmaker's journey home to the southwestern town of his childhood following the death of his mother. While Barthes famously withheld from view the photographic referent of his mother that is the absent center of *Camera Lucida* (1981), his meditation on photography, Nolot's unflinching presentation of his dead mother's corpse as an explicit but nonetheless graceful reverse pietà registers itself among the film's most memorable images (due in no small part to the incomparable Agnès Godard, his cinematographer). This tension between Barthes's form of nondisclosure and the frontality of Nolot's cinema underscores a broader relation between both figures that comes to the fore with greater acuity in the subsequent two parts of his trilogy. *Porn Theatre* presents to us the sociospatial obverse of Nolot's first film *Hinterland* and reveals a milieu more familiar to the adult Nolot, to which *Hinterland* in its measured discretion does not make us privy. *Porn Theatre* is set in Le Méry, a crumbling erotic movie theater on the Rue de Clichy, and documents the comings and goings of the theater's denizens with a combination of humor, pathos, and near-anthropological precision.

Prior even to entering the eponymous theater, the way in which this setting connotes queer sexuality is twofold. Not only does the cinema's location in the environs of Pigalle situate the film against the backdrop of perhaps the most powerful toponymic signifier of France's sex tourism, but movie theaters more generally have long occupied an assured place in French queer culture. Consider, for instance, the significance of the fact that the French entry in Guy Hocquenghem's *Le Gay voyage*--a 1980 atlas of gay culture that chapter by chapter sets its imperious sight on a sweep of cities from Berlin to San Francisco--focuses not on the Marais or the more insalubrious corners of the Tuileries but rather on the art deco movie palace, Le Louxor, which is described as a particularly rich and vibrant sociosexual enclave. As David Caron notes, "For Hocquenghem, the social function of the old theaters appears to be just as important as their sexual one. In fact, the two cannot be so easily separated, and desire without purpose allows for the perpetual reinvention of social relations as a series of seductive contacts

with no future in mind."¹⁰ One other notable example can indeed be found in Barthes's own posthumously published memoir *Soirées de Paris*, wherein he pens a more introspective account of the evenings he spent in Le Dragon, a gay cinema in Saint-Germain-des-Prés.¹¹ While clear parallels might also be established between Nolot's film and Tsai Ming-liang's near-contemporaneous *Goodbye Dragon Inn* (2003)--another example of early slow cinema that is set at the cusp of the film medium's supposed obsolescence, as is Delany's anthropologically thick description of the deleterious effects of erotic rezoning in *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*--I argue here that a short essay by Barthes titled "En sortant du cinéma" (hereafter "Leaving the Movie Theater") offers perhaps the most compelling urtext and theoretical reference point for Nolot's film. If the pretext for such a reading might at first seem to be animated by a set of bad relations (that is, those all too convenient discourses supplied to us by virtue of Barthes and Nolot's personal ties), then the following account stresses the conceptual rather than personal relations between them. By fleshing out, so to speak, what appears to be a missed encounter, I draw out with greater precision the diverging ways in which Barthes and Nolot configure relations between eroticism and embodiment, cinematic time and space, as well as the politics of the auditorium. Here, I suggest that film texts and histories of viewing practices might themselves offer substantive possibilities for queer film theory instead of simply serving as objects that illustrate more notorious and influential theoretical concepts.

The opening shot of *Porn Theatre* presents us with a cloudy blue sky. The tranquility of the image is undercut abruptly by the subsequent shot, in which a flock of pigeons flutter through the streetscape accompanied by the ambient noise of traffic. We then move closer indoors as the birds mill around a theater's chipped tile floor. The pigeons' movements guide the camera in an upward motion toward the box office, where we are introduced to an inattentive cashier (Vittoria Scognamiglio) who acts as the establishment's gatekeeper. While this sequence could be understood in symbolic terms, either as postlapsarian allegory or linguistic pun (Williams reminds us that the French *oiseau* is also a priapic signifier), this movement from outside to inside serves also to concentrate the film's spatial relations in two ways.¹² First, the shift from the boundless sky to the theater's restricted spatiality offers an unwitting index of the origins of Nolot's project. James Quandt notes that Nolot's "chamber drama . . . derives quite conspicuously from a theater production," a point that Nolot corroborates in a later interview as he explains that he first conceived *Porn Theatre* as a play set *à huis clos* before being encouraged by future

producer Pauline Duhault to adapt it into a film.¹³ Second, the sequence suggests an analogy between the movement of the pigeons and the exchanges we will come to witness between the theater's patrons. By abstracting these spatial practices in the opening sequence, the film registers an attention to a choreography of gestures; through the unrelenting triage of body types that will be at stake later on in the film, Nolot goes on to offer an extended meditation on the politics of the pecking order.

A *travesti* sex worker in a yellow dress (credited simply as "l'homme à la robe jaune," played by Olivier Torres) enters the foyer from the stairs below.¹⁴ His footsteps are heavy, his gait is slow, and his movements are exaggerated. With a wistful air of nonchalance, he exchanges a few words with the cashier, checks his hair and lipstick in the glass reflection of a poster frame (a *mise en abyme* advertising the eponymous skin flick *Porn theater à deux têtes*), and follows the next punter through the double doors and into the theater. Despite his heavy-handed solicitation, the second man does not pursue Torres, who prowls languorously down the aisle, his yellow dress matching the drab ochre of the theater's decor. The ensuing passage announces the film's preoccupation with cinematic slowness and self-reflexivity. Walking with a measured pace, the camera tracks the movement of the figure in yellow through the darkness of the side aisle and toward the image onscreen. As he disappears and reappears from behind the theater's colonnades, his splintered, stroboscopic presence recalls the photogrammic structure of Muybridgean motion. He moves toward and across the pornographic image as the projector's light beam abstracts his body into a silhouette. Following a close-up of the female porn star--seemingly at the point of climax, her lips bright red and her skin drained of color--the final shot pans back across the counterfield to reveal around fifteen men spread evenly across the auditorium.

I describe the opening scene in detail here in order to highlight Nolot's explicit interest in demarcating the cinema's material, architectural, and phantasmic spaces. The scene advances from sky to ground, from outside to foyer, and then from the seating of the auditorium to the screen. Despite the film's centripetal attraction toward the screen in this instance of abstraction, which threatens momentarily to collapse the distinction between diegetic pornography and the site of its reception, it nonetheless resists what Steven Marcus has named the organizational logic of the pornotopia.¹⁵ While the cinematic screen and the auditorium are both spaces in which desire is produced and circulated, Nolot's interest lies also in thinking the limit of this

coextensiveness, a task he achieves by punctuating the film's action with dead time, with scenes of waiting and labor, notably that of sex work and the concierge.

Nolot's cathexis of the movie theater and his attention to the physical and phenomenological coordinates of erotic filmgoing clearly work to frame the auditorium as a space of anonymity and availability. But *Porn Theatre* further demands that viewers theorize the isomorphism between what José Capino has termed the "complex, mutually reinforcing internalization or externalization of both cinematic text and spectatorial presence that occurs in adult theater" *beyond* the "obvious and pedestrian practices of corporeal mimicry."¹⁶ In order to gain a critical purchase on the asymmetrical relations between texts and spectators and to come to a more nuanced understanding of the affective and relational modes that the film explores, I suggest that we ought to bring in--and perhaps by implication also bring out--Barthes's writing on film.¹⁷

Entering the Movie Theater

Nestled among Barthes's intermittent reflections on cinema is a short essay titled "Leaving the Movie Theater" in which he describes both the psychic and embodied experience of filmgoing. The essay first appeared in a 1975 special edition of the journal *Communications* dedicated to "Psychanalyse et cinéma," which also contains within its pages two examples of what can retrospectively be labeled "apparatus theory": an early version of Christian Metz's "Imaginary Signifier" and an essay by Jean-Louis Baudry on the cinematic *dispositif*. In a marked but measured opposition to these thinkers, Barthes's essay presses subtly against the grain of much psychoanalytic film theory. Although the personal register in which he writes undercuts the false universalism that is often imputed to psychoanalytic film theory, the essay's confessional address (its opening line runs thus: "There is something to confess: your speaker likes to *leave* a movie theater")¹⁸ and the recurrent motifs of mirrors, keyholes and hypnosis suggest that he is far from dispensing wholesale with a psychoanalytic image repertoire. Furthermore, the evocative account of succumbing to the ambivalent charm of the image flirts with but ultimately undercuts earlier Situationist critiques of the spectacle.¹⁹ In his sharp and impassioned exegesis of the piece, James Williams notes the essay's slippage from third- to first-person singular to first-person plural.²⁰ Such a rhetorical strategy indeed typifies the deictic approach of the later Barthes and provides a stylistic analog to the essay's subject: the "color" of the movie theater's "diffused eroticism."²¹

Although Barthes's essay has yet to find its place in scholarly accounts of the topographical in his oeuvre, spatial dynamics guide his inquiry forcefully. Barthes writes, for instance, that the word "cinema" calls to mind a place (the theater "hall") more readily than a medium ("film").²² This provocatively simplistic formulation is further complicated by his coinage of the term "une 'situation de cinéma,'" whereby the word "situation," signifying both topos and affective disposition, points to broader ideas about how spectatorial experiences are conditioned by our specific spatiotemporal coordinates as well as the desires that we entertain when we enter the theater. Such a desire, for Barthes, typically responds to a state of *otium* ("idleness, leisure, free time"), and the films that he goes to see are rarely the "object of a veritable preliminary alert"--that is to say, precognized.²³ Yet if it is a sense of openness, contingency, or even innocence that initially governs the tone of the essay, this sensibility quickly attains a disarmingly erotic charge when questions of proxemics and relationality are raised. "The movie house (ordinary model) is a site of availability" (even more than cruising), and the "inoccupation of bodies" that Barthes senses in the cinema best defines metropolitan "eroticism" (even more than striptease).²⁴

While the connections that Barthes draws between cinema's site of reception and the erotic possibilities that the spaces engender are hypostasized in Nolut's film, we ought not to overlook the more coded queerness of the essay itself. We can note how the cinema is framed here in contradistinction to the domestic site of televisual reception, a privatized space in which "eroticization" is necessarily foreclosed. In a queer gesture that might best be understood as articulating a proto-Edelmanian sentiment, Barthes opines that "television doomed us to the Family."²⁵ The dark anonymous space of the auditorium, by contrast, opens onto a horizon of relational possibilities that stretches well beyond the bounds of the conjugal. Philip Watts has also made a strong case for the critical-theoretical prescience of the essay in more general terms. If we consider schematically the paths that film theory has taken in the forty years since the piece was penned, we can surely note its brilliant flashes and moments of foresight. Watts writes that Barthes "called into question the tenets of apparatus theory quite subtly, . . . not through argumentation, but through the staging of his own body."²⁶ As such, his writing represents "one of the very first attempts to resist what is now widely recognized as the overreaching, universalizing gestures of Paris School apparatus theory by opening up a space to reflect on desire and on the sensuous world of the film spectator."²⁷ If the critical ascendance of affective

and embodied film theories (as well as their privileged object in the context of French film, the *cinéma du corps*) represent some of the discourses that have since emerged in the "space" that Watts describes, then Nolot's conspicuous return (in 2002) to the apparatus and auditorium, as both physical and theoretical loci, undoubtedly complicates this periodization.²⁸

Far from disavowing its jarring historicity and succumbing to the self-effacing logic of cinematic architecture that Jocelyn Szczepaniak-Gillece has termed "neutralization,"²⁹ the mise-en-scène of Nolot's film depicts the film theater of Le Méry as a late 1970s relic in decorative terms.³⁰ But I want to suggest that the anachronistic contours of the film might also be sensed in theoretical terms. Nolot's film, which appears conversant in Barthes's conceptual language, seems to resist broad teleological narratives of film theory that tell us there is little left to learn by revisiting prior theorizations of the cinematic apparatus. A close engagement with Nolot's film, then, allows us first to expand on the sexual and spatial dynamics that informed the context in which "Leaving the Movie Theater" was originally penned. And subsequently, by ushering these ghosts into the contemporary period, *Porn Theatre* indexes shifting approaches to public sex and tests out the viability of the theater's relational modes and political blueprint.

Across Barthes's essay we find a suggestive triangulation of questions of desire (whether erotic, embodied, or cinematic--these are purposefully hard to disaggregate); the social, material, and relational conditions of film viewing (the nature of one's relation to the other "unoccupied" bodies that populate the room, questions of space, proxemics and the distribution of attention); and an understanding of the apparatus as *appareil*--"the currency of a gleaming vibration whose imperious jet brushes our skull, glancing off someone's hair, someone's face."³¹ The various turns and textures of the essay, its binding and loosening of these interrelated dynamics, are simultaneously stretched and fleshed out by Nolot. Another compelling element of Barthes's account (which, I believe, will ensure his continued relevance as film theory grows increasingly attentive to the phenomena of lingering, boredom, and other minor affects) is that he accords similar weight to the spectator's apprehension of the screened image and the cinematic "situation" at large: the movements of bodies, ambient noises, and other contingent details of the viewing encounter. As Watts notes, this mode of fetishistic apprehension is guided by a principle of metonymy, "grounded in a hermeneutics that takes a part . . . for the whole."³² For Barthes, cinematic pleasure is bound to a cathexis of the part object and also seems to rely, somewhat counterintuitively, on two coextensive orders of sensation: a tug and pull between immersion and

distraction.³³ His theorization, then, diverges markedly from that of Baudry, who describes the spatial and perceptual fixity of the spectator as one of enchainment, capture, and captivation.³⁴ Though the affective dynamics that Barthes describes have recently interested scholars such as Jean Ma and Elena Gorfinkel, for whom this oscillating lull can be mapped onto the interstitial states of the soporific, I want to focus here on how these forces find their more pointedly erotic expression in the cinema.³⁵ As Barthes stresses in *The Pleasure of the Text*, "it is intermittence, as psychoanalysis has so well stated, which is erotic."³⁶

Nolot's *Porn Theatre* suggestively extends Barthes's contention that the cinematic apparatus functions as a matrix of nonocular pleasures. The film is interested, moreover, in exploring the asymmetry between viewers and film texts as well as the jarring incongruity between the diffuse homosocial eroticism of the movie theater and its putatively straight stimulus. These interrelated tensions are best emblemized in an erotic tableau that is presented midway through the film. Two men stare agape into the offscreen field where pornography is being screened. Their wide eyes are locked in this gaze as if to register hyperbolically the catatonia of spectatorial immersion. The suturing effect is called into doubt, however, as the camera pans down and we see that they are flanked by a third figure (a *travesti* credited as "l'homme nu," played by Jean-Louis Coquery) dressed in a loose robe, a red quarter-cup bra, and a suspender belt. As Coquery reclines in his seat, his body displaces the projected image as the locus of erotic entanglement. While the eyes of the spectating men are transfixed by the projected image, their hands massage the chest of the newly supine figure before edging down toward his genitals. Looking relations are clearly at stake in this scene, which is figured as a *mise en abyme* of pornographic spectacle. Metz's warning against the ideologically suspect fantasy of the spectator's mastery over the screened image is redoubled here, given the imbrication of both physical and projected bodies. In this scene, however, Nolot probes more concretely at the limits of ocularcentrism. Framed in a quasi-Bressonian close-up, the hands of the spectating men grasp, as it were, to answer the question of how the relational aporia of the porn theater (its simultaneous invocation and disavowal of contact) might be worked out at the level of the senses.

The entanglement of bodies on display here recalls, in turn, a passage from Barthes's essay in which he writes of erotic spectatorship as the coexistence of two states of reception: the submission of the body "twice over."³⁷ The first state, Barthes suggests, is engrossed in--and

narcissistically attached to--the profilmic image, while the second he describes as lingering, slightly disengaged, and attuned to epiphenomenal detail. In "Passing over Peripheral Detail," film theorist Roger Cardinal turns to one of Barthes's earlier essays ("The Third Meaning," 1970) to subject the perceptual margins of the filmic experience to greater scrutiny. Here, a similarly bipartite mode of cinematic apprehension is identified, and its sensory corollaries are explored in further detail. The first order of viewing engages "a single-minded gaze [that] is directed towards the obvious Gestalt or figure on offer" and, upon the seizure of a focal message, "ignores its periphery."³⁸ The second "focusses less narrowly and instead roams over the frame, [is] sensitive to its textures and surfaces--to its ground," a mode of sensory apprehension that imbricates "habits of looking" with "habits of touching." As Cardinal continues, "[the second] decentred sensibility is, moreover, receptive at all levels, with the result that any encouragement to attend to what lurks at the fringes of normal sight is equally an encouragement to summon up the resources of the sensory system over and beyond the visual."³⁹ His schema is rendered more explicit in Paul Willemen's postscript to the essay, which gestures to the productive possibilities of applying Barthes's framework to the object of pornography. Within Cardinal's schema, Willemen surmises that "the look is a signifier for the repressed desire for tactile contact and as such retains vestiges of tactility in its signifying operations."⁴⁰ This elaboration sheds light on the negotiation of these two perceptual registers--the ocular and haptic, the distanced and proximate--that Barthes describes tellingly as the "difficult" fetishism of spectatorship.

Through what we might consider a further fleshing out of Barthes's corporeal metaphor, Nolot considers the social implications of this spectatorial mode. His scene engages at least three bodies rather than one, and through an emphasis on tactility and peripheral vision, Nolot's film queries apparatus theory's frequent reduction of spectatorship to an asocial mastery of the visual image. As such, these questions raise a different order of interpretative "difficulty"; the scopic and sensory splintering we see in his film begs the question not only of how bodies relate to one another but also which conceptual language might best equip the film theorist in their reading of the film. If the analytic lens of haptic film theory is beset by an uncomfortable literalism here, then a recourse to object relations theory raises further questions still. The pitfalls of this interpretative quandary are indeed evident in Olivier Cheval's account of the scene, which partakes in the dubious reduction the queer body to its constituent parts, to signs in the schema of psychosexual allegory. His reading, which exhibits a clear debt to Baudry's taxonomy of the

dream screen, focuses on breasts as "a partial object" involved in the "sublimation, transfer and projection" of the onscreen spectators. Moreover, the prefixal weight of "trans" is put to questionable allegorical work, articulating a set of interstitial relations that are at once spatial (Coquery's body as existing in a space between spectator and screen), psychoanalytic (the body part as transitory object), gendered, and intersensory.⁴¹ While it would be misleading to deny that the film undoubtedly *does* force us to tarry with the stakes of psychoanalytic interpretation and moreover that the tenets of apparatus theory offer themselves up as a convenient interpretative foil, Nolot's focus on Coquery attempts nonetheless to rescue his body from the pull of allegorization rather than concede ground to the cinematic and conceptual apparatus that would be complicit in his marginalization. Both Barthes and Nolot therefore can be seen as starting to queer these discourses from within. If "Leaving the Movie Theater" took aim at the limits of psychoanalytic reductionism, as Watts says, "through a staging of [Barthes's] *own* body,"⁴² then we can, in turn, note how Nolot extends these questions to attend to issues of nonnormative embodiment and intercorporeal modes of spectatorship.

It is important to stress that the vision *Porn Theatre* paints of polymorphous sexuality, however, is neither utopian nor unambiguous. Drawing on the terminology of Judith Butler, the discursive address of the film might be described as "critically queer" insofar as it subjects the erotic economy of the theater to its own internal limits.⁴³ As the film unfolds, the politics of sexual practices is posed in an increasingly reflexive fashion. Carefully choreographed scenes of group sex open to broader concerns surrounding the politics of queer counterpublics. Differences of age, gender, race, serostatus, and even gay self-nomination come to shape the implicit hierarchy of the auditorium, its force field of attractions and forms of prophylaxis. Just as the previously discussed scene pivoted between specular immersion and peripheral distraction, this pattern is operative in the film more generally. Scenes of auditorium sex are punctuated by behind-the-scenes activities. Conversations between sex workers, interactions--ranging from the banal to the poetic--between the concierge and her clients, and the footfall of local vagrants work to undercut the cinematic spectacle and indicate, as James Williams has noted, that despite "the claustrophobia of the film's highly theatrical interior space, it does not take place in a vacuum."⁴⁴

Through the film's relentless display of competing drives, embodied temporalities, and relational forms, the theater comes to exemplify a site of what Barthes would later call *idiorrhythmia*--a term he coined (from the Greek *idios*, own + *rhuthmos*, rhythm) to explore how

the rhythms of the individual find a place within a wider social and spatial totality, and that Susan Harrow glosses helpfully as a "median term between aversive forms of loneliness and hyper-integrative forms of collective living."⁴⁵ Though cinema did not inform Barthes's elaboration of this term explicitly, Williams nonetheless situates Barthes's "idea of an erotics of cinematic space" within his "general project in the 1970s to open up the social and collective sphere to new forms of critical enquiry."⁴⁶ Offering his own intervention into discourses of queer world making, however, Nolot's film offers a critical--indeed crucial--reminder that these forms of imagined collectivity do not always harbor an egalitarian or utopian dimension. His film counters a growing tendency in recent years to frame the spaces of queer cinema's reception (its auditoria and festivals) as sites of utopian possibility, spaces in which counterpublics not only dwell but also thrive. These positions frequently hinge rhetorically on the strategic yoking together of utopia's two meanings--imputing to the utopia as "nonplace" (derived from the Greek *ou* [not] + *topos* [place]), a positive valence (i.e., *eutopia* as "ideal place"). That the spaces of *Porn Theatre* oscillate ambiguously between idealism (fantasies of erotic communion, uninhibited displays of polymorphous sexualities) and realism (its cynical tenor, foregrounding of boredom, and exploration of queer inequities) courts but ultimately undercuts this implicit valorization. Nolot's position hews closely to Kadji Amin's call for the deidealization of queer culture, theory, and practice in this regard. As he writes "deidealization deexceptionalizes queerness in order to analyze queer possibility as inextricable from relations of power, queer deviance as intertwined with normativity, and queer alternatives as not just alternatives."⁴⁷ *Porn Theatre* is similarly not blind to the ways in which Barthes's idiorhythmic ideal must negotiate the strains, hierarchies, and inequities that come to structure the queer socius. Indeed, while the "queerness" imputed to the site of the theater might all too readily be characterized along the lines of its general resistance to monogamy, conjugality, and its unbridled expression of polymorphous sexuality, the auditorium also reifies a particularly masculinist and priapic economy, one from which the *travesti* is often markedly occluded.

As the film gathers pace, the spatiosexual dynamics that lay dormant in Barthes's writing are stretched, and relational possibilities are multiplied. Group sex scenes take place in the toilets and alcoves; even the box office becomes the site of the apparatus' allegorical "queering." The cashier, played by Vittoria Scognamiglio, eventually seduces the young projectionist (a timid but willing neophyte, played by Sébastien Viala), engineering a threesome in which, we assume,

Nolot will ultimately partake as the film draws to its close. Largely consigned to the *hors champ*, the skin flick that is being projected seems to function merely as a pretext for cruising. Such a configuration indeed recalls the writing of Guy Hocquenghem, who similarly conceives of the screen as a "protection-prétexte" that, to adapt a Cavellian pun, screens the secrets of the filmgoing public.⁴⁸

However, just as spectators of Nolot's film start to question whether we in fact need moving images to sustain the theater's idiorrhythmic mode of erotic communion, Nolot is quick to reassert the apparatus's indispensability. Increasingly caught up in the advances of the cashier, the projectionist is led astray from his post in the booth. When the film reel comes to its end, and the theater's patrons are momentarily suspended in the dark, erotic activity is held in abeyance. It is particularly telling that it is not the end of the screening that is experienced as an incursion but rather the fact that the lights have come up. Such a reaction tallies with the emphasis that Barthes himself places on lighting (rather than film screening) in addition to his invocation of the discreet yet plentiful possibilities afforded to us in the dark. As Barthes's writing suggests as and Nolot's staging makes manifest, the relation between screened images and the spaces of cinema's circulation and reception is far from ensured. The activities that take place in the theater's darkness exist on a spectrum, which, as Barthes's writing reminds us, ranges from slumber through to sex.

Boredom, Bliss, Entropy, Utopia

While Barthes's suggestive account of film spectatorship pries open a field of erotic possibility, it frequently lingers--in a manner perhaps not too dissimilar from the writer's own experiences in *Soirées de Paris*--in the optative mood, the register of subjunctive possibility. I have sought to argue here that while *Porn Theatre* runs the very real risk of flattening its urtext through this hypostatization, Nolot's literality allows him to expand upon the questions that Barthes so creatively contoured and also resituate them within broader social, spatial, and political parameters. *Porn Theatre* ultimately effects a slippage; the film marks a declension from the vantage point of the first-person spectator through to intercorporeal and idiorrhythmic forms of spectatorship. Though the screened image figures as a necessary structural precondition, given that it organizes spectatorial attention, it is ultimately dethroned when Nolot turns his attention to the more peripheral sites of the toilets and the foyer that function as thresholds onto the outside

world.

The cinema "hall" occupies a tenuous place, negotiating the hermetic enclosure of the "optical vacuum" and the expansiveness of the outside world. James Williams identifies moments in which everyday expressions of disciplinary power (for instance, a police raid targeting clients of Arab origin) are entwined with broader problems in sociopolitical actuality, such as the rise of France's far-right figurehead Jean-Marie Le Pen.⁴⁹ Such eruptions of the real put under further duress the idea that erotic movie houses cultivate increasingly frangible (albeit primarily fraternal) social bonds, that their spaces of interclass contact might act as a social balm.

Although I have argued that Nolot's film is implicitly underwritten by discourses on cinematic spectatorship and homosociality that came to prominence in the late 1970s, we ought not overlook how the film is indelibly shaped by the ongoing effects wrought by HIV/AIDS in contemporary France. Through a mismatch of architectural styles and narrative spaces, Nolot's film presents a disjunctive view of periodicity, a parallax view that remains hard to parse. We habitually move back and forth between two sides of a historical juncture; against a backdrop of decidedly retro decor, the film is punctuated by a string of poetic monologues of its seropositive protagonist, played by Nolot, which he delivers to the concierge at the concession stand-cum-confession booth. Through the connotative possibilities of theatrical space, temporality figures multiply. Negotiating the tensions between the auditorium's real and virtual spaces, its dynamics of labor and leisure, exposure and discretion, the theater represents a fertile space for Nolot. *Porn Theatre* explores the spaces of both literal and phantasmic projection--registers that, while enigmatically intertwined, are frequently held in tension.

Given that I earlier introduced Nolot against a wider backdrop of French queer cinema, there exists an extratextual component to his film that merits mention. Looking beyond the diegesis of *Porn Theatre* and toward its broader relation to cinephilic discourse, how might the status of cinema itself be understood in this film? According to Williams, the Parisian film theater figures as an emblematic site of self-reflexivity. Thus, he reads Nolot's film as an attempt to broaden the representational scope of gender and sexuality in French cinema through an engagement with one of its paradigmatic spaces. Williams argues that the film theater--the "archetypal, self-reflexive site of the nouvelle vague"--holds a privileged space in French cinematic heritage, which Nolot seeks both to "excavate" and "regender."⁵⁰ (Yet, to recall my earlier invocation of Daïga's alientation in *I Can't Sleep*, "queerness" and "regendering" are not

necessarily coterminous.) Therefore, I now wish to expand the metacinematic remit of *Porn Theatre* further still by drawing out some links between Nolot's film, Barthes's thought, and a broader body of queer cinema. Due precisely to the self-reflexivity that Williams identifies, the film presents a rich chronotope that resists absorption into any one spatiotemporal, generic, or even geographic frame. Not only is it the case that Nolot "make[s] queer the very territory of French cinema," as Williams has it, but in a reverse gesture his reflexive film enjoins us to consider French cinema against a wider backdrop of queer film.⁵¹

To expand first on the comparison to which I earlier alluded, *Porn Theatre* can be productively aligned with the near-contemporaneous art film *Goodbye Dragon Inn* (Tsai Ming-liang, 2003). The material qualities of Tsai's film resonate with those of Nolot; *Goodbye Dragon Inn* is similarly underwritten by a tension between boredom and immersion. The luminous, delicate, and ephemeral quality of screened images offers only a momentary reprieve from the existential heft otherwise characterizing Tsai's film. For both filmmakers, the turn-of-the-millennium cinema is colored with a particularly melancholy tinge. Auditoriums swell with cigarette smoke, which, as Leslie Stern has compellingly argued, offers up both an index of and a synecdoche for dead time.⁵² But while both films illustrate how the obsolescence of the cinematic medium dovetails with the loss of certain sociosexual practices--for physical cruising becomes an analog practice in a digital age--finitude is further underscored in Nolot's film given that the specter of HIV/AIDS is inscribed within the narrative.

The paradox at the core of Nolot's cinema is that despite the creative means by which it seeks to undercut an economy of the spectacle, it nonetheless cultivates a latent cinephilia. An attentive yet once again distanced viewer of his film might well note that *Porn Theatre* contains cryptic allusions to canonical postwar avant-garde cinemas in an American context, not least through its choreography of onscreen bodies that work to forge a somewhat subterranean pathway through to a broader corpus of queer film. For instance, the erotic tableau I earlier discussed echoes strikingly, in both style and composition, the orgiastic concatenation of limbs explored in Jack Smith's cult classic *Flaming Creatures* (USA, 1963). And while the mirror play in Nolot's toilet scenes might be read through a psychoanalytic lens, is it not perhaps more interesting to note its rehearsal of the boundary between on- and offscreen space that constitutes a key motif in Andy Warhol's *My Hustler* (USA, 1965)? Indeed, as Nolot's film continues to traffic reflexively in Warholian tropes, we can also sense his absorption of the influence of

structuralist theories of film spectatorship. In one particularly protracted scene, we are enjoined to watch one of the patrons as he watches the screen: the camera is perched behind the spectator so as to reveal only the back of his head. After a short while, the head of the *travesti* in yellow emerges from this spectator's lap, leading us to register (once again belatedly) that we were in fact bearing witness to an altogether different activity. Spectatorial eventlessness is displaced by erotic eventfulness. Not only does Nolot's sleight of hand--a quip that is richly suggestive of Warhol's *Blow Job* (USA, 1964)--ask us to consider the politics of the pornographic *hors champ*, thus literalizing the spatial dynamic of what Linda Williams famously terms "on/scenity,"⁵³ but he also asks us to respond critically to the constant modulation of the film's affective register, its ebb and flow of titillation and boredom, immersion and distraction, affect and intellect. We might invoke here a well-worn aphorism from Barthes's *The Pleasure of the Text*: "Boredom is not far from bliss: it is bliss seen from the shores of pleasure."⁵⁴ Offering his own--once again more *literal*--twist on this dictum, Nolot shows us that boredom might just be bliss seen from the row behind, a conceit that pithily encapsulates the relation between both texts that I have detailed above.

Any attempt to grasp Barthes's slippery writing on the erotics of spectatorship is beset by two problems. The first pertains to what critics have dubbed Barthes's "allergy" toward the cinematic medium, and the second concerns how we might best interpret the suffusion of sexually saturated tropes that populate his prose, such as the polysemic term "erotic" that frequently exceeds the bounds of sexuality, narrowly conceived. By literalizing the metaphorical register of "Leaving the Movie Theater," Nolot's insistently material staging of cinematic desire extends the spirit of Barthes's writing rather than stifling it. As Philip Watts suggested above, it is the assertion of the author's own body, rather than that of the disembodied spectator, that represents Barthes's most potent attempt to countervail the perceived overreach of Parisian apparatus theory. Moreover, Watts's framing of the essay as "a short speculative embodiment of his attempt to leave theory behind" is particularly instructive because it foregrounds the intractability of "theory" in a way that mirrors Nolot's own oblique positioning in relation to the symbolic.⁵⁵ The import of "Leaving the Movie Theater" lies not in Barthes's treatment of the image, then, but instead in his theorization of that which commonly recedes from view: the spaces of the cinema ("hall"), the material margins of the cinematic experience, the ephemeral and site-specific practices that the optical vacuum seeks to disavow by consigning it to the status

of epiphenomena. In turn, *Porn Theatre* subjects its theoretical urtext to a similar process of displacement, making bad objects of both the viewing encounter and the theoretical frameworks that subtend and sustain it.

Disambiguating the French terms "*appareil*" and "*dispositif*," which are often conflated by the English word "apparatus," Philip Rosen suggests that rather than instantiating a crude determinism that would reduce the apparatus to its technological base (*appareil*), the cinematic apparatus ought to be understood within broader cultural and discursive parameters as "one nodal point of a social construction of knowledge, desire, pleasure, signifying adequacies."⁵⁶ When conceived within this expanded frame, Nolot's turn to the space of the theater can be understood to animate alternative histories of (para)cinephilia as well as to scrutinize with a more critical eye the political possibilities of sociosexual experimentation. Yet, as the increasingly melancholy tone of Barthes's writing on his experiences in these theaters suggests--a shift in mood that Miller and Callwood note is consonant with the "elegiac note accompanying all of Barthes's late writing"--such spaces are often susceptible to disappearance.⁵⁷ Nolot's untimely *Porn Theatre* therefore offers a poignant meditation on the obsolescence of media forms and relational practices as well as the glimmer of their momentary revivification: a call to project them anew.

Notes

1. A valuable exception to this is James Williams's excellent essay "His Life to Film: The Extreme Art of Jacques Nolot," *Studies in French Cinema* 9, no. 1 (2009): 177-90, which I take as my primary point of interlocution here. Discussions of Nolot figure more briefly in Nick Rees-Roberts, *French Queer Cinema* (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2009); Olivier Cheval, "Le cinéma pur: Sur deux utopies pornographiques," in *Pornographiques* (Revue textuelle, no. 2), ed. Emmanuelle Andre and Laurent Zimmermann (Paris: Hermann, 2015), 133, 41.

2. Didier Roth-Bettoni, *L'Homosexualité au cinéma* (Paris: La Musardine, 2007), 591-92.

3. "Jacques Nolot--Sicilia Queer 2018," YouTube, September 24, 2018, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X5DA_OGtHfc.

4. Williams, "His Life to Film," 178.

5. A scene bearing a striking resemblance to Daïga's instant of nonrecognition unfolds in "Times Square Blue," Samuel Delany's essay on Manhattan's cruising culture. Here Delany recounts an instance in which his friend, Ana, accompanied him to an erotic movie house.

Focusing her gaze on the screen, she is largely impervious to the multiple uses of the auditorium spaces and how spectatorial attention circulates otherwise. As well as raising the gap between the implicit and explicit uses of theater space, the passage also renders explicit a culture of misogyny that stubbornly lingers in the cinema. See Samuel Delany, "Times Square Blue," in *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 26-31.

6. Details revealed in an interview between Claire Denis and Judith Mayne further compound the sense of this missed encounter, given that the scene in question was originally intended to be followed by a dinner between Daïga and Jacques, which did not make it to the final cut. Judith Mayne, *Claire Denis* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 135.

7. The film's English-language title is *Porn Theatre*. Contained within the film's French title *La Chatte à deux têtes* (literally "The Double-Headed Pussy") is an allusion to the Janus face of heterosexual pornography's appeal in this setting as well as a more oblique reference to Jean Cocteau's *L'aigle à deux têtes* (another object of French queer culture adapted from theater to film).

8. Williams, "His Life to Film," 178.

9. I borrow this term from Christine Gledhill, *Stardom: Industry of Desire* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 27.

10. David Caron, *The Nearness of Others: Searching for Tact and Contact in the Age of HIV* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 212-13.

11. Roland Barthes, "Soirées de Paris," in *Incidents* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 64. Barthes's exploits at Le Dragon are also addressed in Dan Callwood's excellent article on the rise of gay pornography in 1970s France. See Dan Callwood, "Anxiety and Desire in France's Gay Pornographic Film Boom, 1974-1983," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 26, no. 1 (January 2017): 36.

12. Williams, "His Life to Film," 178.

13. James Quandt, "Just a Gigolo," *Artforum International* 46, no. 10 (Summer 2008): 93.

14. Transvestism plays an important but ambiguous role in this film, which I address shortly. While the stylization of the *travesti* characters has attracted the ire of Nick Rees-Roberts, his critique relates in part to the anachronistic superposition of 1970s queer aesthetics (most notably Nolot's nods to Rainer Werner Fassbinder) over "realist" depictions of sexuality in the

early twenty-first century as well as the concomitant issue of negotiating prevailing discourses on gender and sexuality in and across both periods. In contradistinction to Olivier Cheval, who discusses these characters under a broad banner of trans, Nolot makes explicit his interest in depicting "men who dress in women's clothing to attain a certain form of masculinity." Far from constituting a free play of gender roles, though, the film's erotic economy is both cisnormative and overwhelmingly priapic.

15. In a pornotopia, Marcus argues, the pornographic imaginary informs the governing logic of actual spatiotemporal arrangements, thus blurring the line between the textual and extratextual space. Stephen Marcus, *The Other Victorians: A Study of Sexuality and Pornography in Mid-Nineteenth-Century England* (London: Corgi, 1964), 268-74.

16. José B. Capino, "Homologies of Space: Text and Spectatorship in All-Male Adult Theaters," *Cinema Journal* 45, no. 1 (2005): 52.

17. The ambivalent status of Barthes's sexuality has been the subject of two notable studies. See D. A. Miller, *Bringing Out Roland Barthes* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); Nicholas de Villiers, *Opacity and the Closer: Queer Tactics in Foucault, Barthes, and Warhol* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 63-88.

18. Roland Barthes, "Leaving the Movie Theater" [1975], in *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1986), 345 (emphasis in the original).

19. See Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1994).

20. James Williams, "At the Reader's Discretion: On Barthes and Cinema," *Paragraph* 21, no. 1 (February 1998): 49.

21. Barthes, "Leaving the Movie Theater," 346.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid., 345.

24. Ibid., 346.

25. Ibid. See also Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

26. Philip Watts, *Roland Barthes' Cinema* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 67.

27. Ibid.

28. Williams also suggests that we ought to resist incorporating Nolot's filmmaking into the generic category of the *cinéma du corps* ("His Life to Film," 188-89).

29. I borrow the term "neutralization" from Jocelyn Szczepaniak-Gillece who, in her work on the architectural history of American movie theaters, uses the term to describe a shift in interior design away from superfluous ornamentation of "movie palaces" and toward an optical "vacuum" that asserts the sovereignty of the cinematic image. Jocelyn Szczepaniak-Gillece, "In the House, in the Picture: Distance and Proximity in the American Mid-Century Neutralized Theater," *World Picture* 7 (Autumn 2012): 1-2.

30. The actual site of Le Méry is at the intersection of the Place de Clichy and the Rue Biot, and the checkered history of the building is itself indicative of the commercial pressures and patterns of entertainment consumption over the theater's eighty-year history. The theater, originally named Le Clichy, opened in 1935 and subsequently turned into a small-scale cinema (*cinéma de quartier*) in the mid-1960s. Between 1980 and 1991, the space took the form that is recognizable in the film--a porn theater. By the time Nolot shot his film, Le Méry was facing an uncertain future; the auditorium was used intermittently for small theatrical productions and screenings before closing definitively in 2005. More recently, in 2016 a banner appeared above the building's entrance indicating plans for the cinema to be rechristened as the Théâtre Métropole. The signage, complete with pseudo art deco flourish, hung below the traces of the theater previously housed there. Despite efforts to remove the building's original sign, the dirt gathering under the previous lettering revealed a conspicuous sign of the building's obdurate historicity.

31. Barthes, "Leaving the Movie Theater," 347.

32. Watts, *Roland Barthes' Cinema*, 4.

33. This "tug and pull" is later echoed in Vivian Sobchack's phenomenological account of the relation between apparatus and perception. She uses the idea of an "echo focus" to describe the moments in which the "direct perception" of the spectator comes to be inhibited by the "echo" of the machine--a conspicuous though intermittent awareness of mediation via the filmic apparatus. See Vivian Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992).

34. Jean-Louis Baudry, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus," *Film Quarterly*, 28, no. 2 (Winter 1974): 44.

35. Jean Ma, "Sleeping at the Movies," paper presented at Society for Cinema and Media Studies Conference, Toronto, March 14, 2018; Elena Gorfinkel, "Somnolent Screens," *Sight and Sound* 28, no. 6 (June 2018): 14-15.

36. Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975), 10.

37. Barthes, "Leaving the Movie Theater," 349.

38. Roger Cardinal, "Pausing over Peripheral Detail," *Framework* 30 (1986): 124.

39. Ibid., 126.

40. Paul Willemen, "Postscript: Terms for a Debate," *Framework* 30 (1986): 131.

41. Cheval, "Le cinéma pur," 139-40 (my translation). C.f. Jean-Louis Baudry, "The Apparatus," *Camera Obscura*, no. 1 (1976): 117.

42. Watts, *Roland Barthes' Cinema*, 47 (my emphasis).

43. Judith Butler, "Critically Queer," *GLQ* 1, no. 1 (1993): 17-32.

44. Williams, "His Life to Film," 179.

45. The notion of idiorhythmmia was elaborated in Barthes's 1977 Collège de France lectures, the proceedings of which have been collated in *How to Live Together: Novelistic Simulations of Some Everyday Spaces*, trans. Katie Briggs (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), quotation on 6-10. The term is glossed in Susan Harrow, "Living Alone Together: Barthes, Zola, and the Work of Letters," *L'Esprit Créateur* 55, no. 4 (Winter 2015): 21.

46. Williams, "At the Reader's Discretion," 48.

47. Kadji Amin, *Disturbing Attachments: Genet, Modern Pederasty, and Queer History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 10.

48. Guy Hocquenghem, *Le Gay voyage: Guide et regard homosexuels sur les grandes métropoles* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1980), 135. I am also referring here to the contronymous "screen" as it is memorably evoked by Stanley Cavell in *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 24.

49. Williams, "His Life to Film," 188.

50. Ibid.

51. Ibid.

52. I am reminded here of Stern's comment that cigarettes fulfill a "supremely deictic" function in cinema, given that they both "ground the subject in the here and now and also . . .

function as a sign, a wand, as indexical." See Leslie Stern, "Paths That Wind through the Thicket of Things," *Critical Inquiry* 28, no. 1 (Autumn 2001): 345.

53. See Linda Williams, ed., *Porn Studies* (Durham, NC; Duke University Press, 2004), 3.

54. Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, 26. Barthes's comment on the proximity of boredom and bliss are curiously echoed in Nolot's commentary on the film. In *Riquet à la houppe, Millet à la loupe*, art historian-cum-erotic writer Catherine Millet describes the erotic tableau featuring Coquery as follows:

Some touch him with the end of their erect pricks. The others caress him energetically. The flesh is that of an elderly person; it no longer has much consistency and lends itself wonderfully to fondling. Here, therefore, perfectly submissive to gravity, the idol embodies the entropy of pleasure.

Catherine Millett, *Riquet à la houppe, Millet à la loupe* (Paris: Stock, 2003), 57 (my translation). When the filmmaker later recites this passage in an interview for Fredet's documentary *Nolot en verve*, a (fortuitous?) instance of parapraxis renders the "entropie" of Millet's original text into "utopie," signaling the very slippage from the temporal to the spatial that shapes my own analysis.

55. Watts, *Roland Barthes' Cinema*, 72.

56. Philip Rosen, *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 282.

57. D. A. Miller cited in Callwood, "Anxiety and Desire," 36.