

Equation to an Unknown (1980): Visibility, Community, and Rendering Queer Utopia

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Abstract : Dietrich de Velsa's *Équation à un inconnu* / *Equation to an Unknown* hybridizes art cinema style with the sexually explicit aesthetics of pornography to envision a uniquely queer world unmoored by heteronormative influence. This stylization evokes the memory of a queer history that once approximated such a prospect. With this historical and political context in mind, this paper utilizes formal analysis to assess how the film frames queer sexual encounters as tender acts of care, sometimes literally mending physical wounds. However, *Equation to an Unknown* also highlights the transience of these sexual exchanges. By emphasizing the homogeneity of the protagonist's sexual conquests, the film reveals that these practices have a darker meaning when the men reject the individualized connection to pursue purely visceral gratification. Given the lack of diversity or even recognizable identifying factors, the men become more anonymous to each other the more they pair up. Ultimately, *Equation to an Unknown* both celebrates and problematizes its vision of a queer utopia, highlighting areas in the community wherein intimacy and care flourish and locating those spots in which they are neglected.

Keywords : pornography studies, queer cinema, French cinema, history

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