

The Desiring Narratives: Queer Encounters in the Cinema of Alain Guiraudie

Alborz MAHBOOBKHAH

Ph.D. Candidate in Film Studies

Freie Universität Berlin - Germany

Abstract

Alain Guiraudie's cinema is driven by a desiring energy that structures his narratives. This energy arises neither from the characters themselves nor from their relationships, but from the encounters between them—transforming into physical movement, pursuit, and escape. At its core is a queer politics of non-possession, where narratives resist fixation, refusing to be claimed by any single character, genre, or resolution. Guiraudie's work unfolds through three key types of encounters: with the stranger, between the real and the surreal, and across competing narrative regimes. These encounters take place in liminal spaces—lakes, forests, highways—where social norms dissolve, allowing desire to emerge in its rawest, most unfiltered form.

Alain Guiraudie is a French filmmaker known for blending male gay eroticism, fantasy, and rural life into a unique cinematic universe. From his early short films like *Les héros sont immortels* (1990), *Tout droit jusqu'au matin* (1995), and *La force des choses* (1997), he stages male desire as a pursuit—playful, delayed, and always tangled in landscape and language. In *Du soleil pour les gueux* (2001), his first medium-length film, a fugitive is chased through the southern countryside, and a woman is searching some fantasy animals. His acclaimed second medium-length, *Ce vieux rêve qui bouge* (2001) portrays a young technician who is hired to dismantle the last machine in a shut-down factory, caught between his gay desire for the manager and an old man's desire for him. His first features, *Pas de repos pour les braves* (2003) and *Voici venu le temps* (2005), drift between surreal fables and queer allegories. With *Le roi de l'évasion* (2009), he tells the comic story of a middle-aged gay salesman fleeing with a teenage girl into the woods. His breakthrough *L'inconnu du lac* (2013) is a minimalist thriller set at a gay cruising spot, where desire and danger, love and death become inseparable. *Rester vertical* (2016) follows a writer torn between the escape from his life and work, the desire to encounter with wolves, fatherhood, and gay desire. In *Viens je t'emmène* (2022), he explores intimacy and fear in a city shaken by a terrorist attack. Most recently, *Miséricorde* (2024) returns to a village haunted by murder and repressed longing.

Guiraudie's work constructs a unique cinematic world in which queer desire functions as both subject and driving force. This article examines how his work reshapes narrative possibilities and transforms queer cinema through three interconnected dimensions. First, we engage with a detailed narratology of his films to explore how this logic of desire structures their stories. Next, we analyze

the interplay of bodies and spaces, followed by an examination of the plastic qualities of his figural and generic strategies. Finally, we consider how his films challenge cinematic naturalism. Rather than depicting decay or social determinism, Guiraudie's work emphasizes transformation and renewal, highlighting a dynamic process of becoming. By tracing this movement across desire, space, and plasticity, the article illuminates the distinctive contribution of Guiraudie's work to contemporary queer cinema and narrative theory.

1. Desire as Narrative Logic

Alain Guiraudie's films have been the subject of numerous studies, particularly for the way he breaks with prominent traditions of representing queer bodies in the history of cinema. In his study of love and friendship in Guiraudie's work, Olivier Cheval argues that the filmmaker sets himself apart from dominant traditions epitomized by three major styles: European auteur cinema, the naturalism of 1980s and 1990s French queer cinema, and the baroque performativity of contemporary auteurs. Cheval writes:

« First, the French filmmaker breaks with the dominant poetic tradition of major European auteur cinema in its representation of homosexuality [...] such as Kenneth Anger's *Fireworks* (1947), Jean Genet's *Un chant d'amour* (1950), Werner Schroeter's *Weisse Reise* (1980), Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Querelle* (1982), or Gus Van Sant's *Mala Noche* (1985). But Guiraudie also breaks with the dark naturalism of his time and country, that of Chéreau, Collard, or Téchiné, who, in the end, had merely added homosexuality to the realist tableau of social interactions and human drives that 1980s cinema held up as a mirror to French society, [...] Finally, the French filmmaker cannot be associated with the generation of contemporary auteurs who played with homosexuality as a representation of self, as cliché or performance, in a postmodern spirit, to invent a new baroque art of reversals and illusions—Pedro Almodóvar's work is emblematic of this cinema, with François Ozon as its French representative. » (Cheval, my translation)

We can add one more important characteristic to this set of qualities that distinguishes Guiraudie's queer cinema from its predecessors: his narratives seem to have completely succumbed to the logic of desire—to the point that narrative and desire become indistinguishable. Desire is not merely one motif among others in his films; it functions as the core narrative structure. Following this logic, there is no resolution in his narratives: once a desire is satisfied, it sets out to repeat itself anew. The characters are constantly in search of new encounters, driven by the urge to expend an excess of [sexual] energy, as Georges Bataille contends. (Bataille, 20–21.) It may be for this reason that we almost never see anyone working in Guiraudie's films—at least not in the sense of work as the accumulation of profit. The only conventional worker appears in *Ce vieux rêve qui bouge*, where a technician is ironically hired to dismantle the last machine in a factory, effectively putting an end to labor in the capitalist sense of the word. The female shepherd in *Rester vertical* is as much tending the herd as she is shooting wolves. *L'inconnu du lac* becomes a grand ceremony of leisure, desire, and fear played out during the summer holidays. Similarly, the opening scene of *Le roi de l'évasion* is the only time we see the main character—a tractor salesman—at work, as he ironically negotiates with a potential buyer torn between different tractor colors, only to quickly change the subject to a nighttime date. In Guiraudie's films, everything quickly turns into a journey of desire. Noting queer desire as the main narrative drive in his work, Cheval writes: « This opening of desire to atypical and unattainable bodies contributes to the ideal of a libidinal economy that would include bodies in their pure singularity, in an expenditure of pure loss, with no concern for profitability or capitalization. » (Cheval, my translation)

Narratives driven by desire lead bodies into new encounters, and bodily encounters, in turn, propel narratives along new paths. Guiraudie's films are marked by a particular kind of energy—one that is neither intrinsic to the narrative, as in goal-oriented plots, nor to the characters, as with those guided by an *idée fixe*. Instead, it arises from the encounters themselves, each shaped by a multifaceted and shifting desire. « The poetics that unravels the scriptwriting and its cinematic embodiment from a bond of necessity and an imperative of verisimilitude gives rise to an ethics of the sovereignty of the encounter and the boundlessness of desire. » (*ibid.*, 8, my translation) Figuratively speaking, there is no single center—whether in terms of a principal character or a central storyline—around which Guiraudie's narratives unfold. Instead, there are multiple provisional centers that momentarily stabilize a narrative circle, only to quickly dissolve into new, unforeseen paths. Every point of convergence is simultaneously a point of divergence. This reflects the logic of non-possessive queer desire in his films—a desire that resists fixation. In this sense, one could say, following Blaise Pascal, that Guiraudie's narrative world is infinite, with its center everywhere and its circumference nowhere. (Pascal, 66) Pascal's metaphor—originally describing the cosmos—aptly captures Guiraudie's decentralized storytelling: just as the infinite universe lacks a fixed focal point, his films refuse hierarchy or permanence. Characters and plotlines orbit one another temporarily, their connections always shifting, never congealing into a stable structure. Writing about his latest film, *Miséricorde*, Nathan Lee argues that « Guiraudie's latest clarifies and perfects a farcical logic of the social that underpins all his filmmaking, characterized by spontaneous relationality, capricious alliances and ephemeral connections, and sexuality as an impromptu drive rather than a fixed identity.» (Nathan Lee)

One could say, in fact, that Alain Guiraudie narrativizes desire, rather than the other way around. This is why narrative in his films follows the logic of desire: anticipation, encounter, act, satisfaction, and repetition. In this sense, in Guiraudie's films, the Deleuzian action-image takes on the form of what might be called a desire-image. This can be observed in the structure of his narratives, which often consist of multiple threads all driven by desire: someone is pursuing someone else, is involved in a relationship with them, and at the same time is being watched, followed, or chased by another character(s). These secondary threads are motivated by the desire to reach or intersect with the primary one. In most of his films, these side stories or characters either merge into the main narrative or come to replace it entirely. Conversely, the primary narrative or character may be drawn toward a secondary thread and join it. In this sense, the desire-image functions like a cyclone, simultaneously pulling in and casting off narrative elements.

In *L'inconnu du lac*, this structure is exemplified through three intersecting lines of desire: the protagonist Franck's desire to sleep with Michel, who has drowned and murdered his former lover—a crime Franck witnesses while hidden in the bushes; Henri's (the divorced man's) latent desire to be killed by Michel, revealed later in the film; and the detective's desire to catch Michel. Each of these desires is fixated on Michel, who, in turn, desires all of them in his peculiar way. In *Le roi de l'évasion*, all the film's various narrative threads—the affair with an underage girl, the chase, the tractor deal, gay cruising—ultimately converge in a cabin in the woods, where everyone ends up sleeping together. Even the subplot involving the police chief pursuing a fugitive is absorbed into this same queer circle. In *Ce vieux rêve qui bouge*, the unemployed workers repeatedly gather to drink or play, while two of them explicitly take turns following the young man who has come to dismantle the

machine—and the young man, in turn, desires one of them. These overlapping desires generate multiple lines of movement within the narrative. In *Miséricorde*, everyone—from the dead man to the priest—keeps circling around the protagonist, attempting to appropriate the central narrative associated with him. Yet this does not prevent the main character from continuing to follow his own lines of desire, whether they coincide with or diverge from those imposed on him. This narrative structure finds its visual counterpart in Guiraudie's mise-en-scène. Starting with *Ce vieux rêve qui bouge*, his sequences and shot compositions employ a rhythmic alternation between gathering and dispersal. Two patterns dominate: either an isolated character is gradually joined by others before fragmenting again, or an established group is interrupted by a newcomer before dispersing to leave them alone. The first pattern appears in the opening static shot of Franck waiting alone at the factory door, his solitude broken by passing workers until the manager arrives—their entry marked by a tracking shot. The second emerges in communal spaces: the workers' yard gatherings and, most strikingly, the changing-room sequences, where Franck's arrivals and departions redefine the frame's composition. This centrifugal-centripetal dynamic culminates in the machinery-dismantling scenes, where Franck is watched by the manager (his gaze hovering between supervision and desire) before being joined by his pursuer. Guiraudie's later films sustain this spatial choreography, making desire's narrative logic visually manifest. Like a cyclone, the desire-image operates through centrifugal and centripetal forces: it draws narrative elements toward a provisional center (Michel, the cabin, the factory machine) only to destabilize them again, spinning characters into new configurations. These vortices of desire—whether in *L'inconnu du lac*'s fatal triangulations or *Le roi de l'évasion*'s chaotic convergence—refuse stasis, ensuring that no single thread dominates. Even when trajectories momentarily align (the cabin's orgy, the workers' gatherings), the structure remains volatile, as desire's energy inevitably redistributes the narrative's weight.

This relentless reconfiguration reveals Guiraudie's narrative logic: his films unfold through circuits formed and unformed around a series of encounters. The one who desires is also the one who is desired. As a result, centrality is constantly undone—again, the center is everywhere yet the circumference is nowhere. Narratively, his films resemble Hitchcock's in the sense that actions take place within a zone of indeterminacy—there's no clear motive or goal, and the stories are triggered by an encounter. But the difference is that in Hitchcock, the encounter usually results from a small mistake—what we might call the *wrong man* theme—which leads inevitably to pursuit, with *North by Northwest* being a prime example. As Deleuze writes,

« in Hitchcock's films an action, once it is given (in present, future or past), is literally surrounded by a set of relations, which vary its subject, nature, aim, etc. What matters is not who did the action—what Hitchcock calls with contempt the whodunit—but neither is it the action itself: it is the set of relations in which the action and the one who did it are caught. » (Deleuze, 200)

In Guiraudie's narratives, the initiating action—what we might call a small mistake—is no longer necessary. The kind of mistake Hitchcock embeds within traditional crime or spy stories to open up new sets of relationships and encounters is replaced in Guiraudie's work by the very law of desire (or queer desire), which, because it has always already begun and almost never ends, branches off into new narrative paths from the very start of the film. Indeed, Guiraudie follows in Hitchcock's footsteps while severing his final ties to the action-image. In *L'inconnu du lac*, Michel resists Franck's invitation to go to his house several times, saying he doesn't want the relationship to collapse too

quickly into exhaustion. In fact, he explicitly avoids transferring desire and narrative from the open space of the lake to the confined space of his bedroom. Similarly, in the penultimate scene of *Le roi de l'évasion*, the older man tells Armand that he doesn't want to orgasm because he wants to keep desire and love infinite.

2. Figural Energy: Convergence and Divergence

As we argued above, Guiraudie replaces the need for an initiating error or external catalyst with desire itself, which sets the film in motion. This desire unfolds as a circulation of energy across bodies, spaces, and gestures, constantly branching, delaying, or redirecting. It is within this circulation that figural energy—and its convergences and divergences—comes to the fore. In his cinema, the energy that drives movement and narrative unfolding takes on various figural forms. It may manifest as speed, chasing, running, cycling, swimming, sex, driving, long walks, or excessively fast talking and debating over minute details. What is central to all these modes is their tendency to either provoke or evade encounters. Nicole Brenez argues that « in a film, very different regimes of figural energy always exist: the problem is grasping their convergence or divergence » (Brenez, 13). As we have argued before, in a Guiraudie film, points of convergence and divergence are one and the same. The challenge lies in grasping that ever-changing, ephemeral point that is always on the move. Given that queer desire is the main source of energy in his films, obstacles and goals are no longer clearly distinguishable, as they can swiftly interchange their functions. One could speak of the coexistence of love and death, fear and excitement in his films. A prominent example is *L'inconnu du lac*, in which Franck falls in love with Michel, despite knowing he is a killer who drowned his lover in front of Franck's eyes.

Another important point about Guiraudie's invention of this particular kind of energy is that it is neither internal to the characters nor entirely external to them, as seen in classical cinema. Rather, it exists between things, between people, and in in-between spaces. It moves bodies toward the outside and makes them open onto space. What Nicole Brenez observes about the beautiful queer male body in the films of Fassbinder and Gus Van Sant—that it « no longer opens to an exterior—concrete space and the symbolic universe—but to an interior world of mental images, dreams, memories, and affects» (*ibid*, 54)—seems to be directly opposed in Guiraudie's films. The queer bodies in Guiraudie's films largely deviate from the glorified classical bodies; most of his characters are old, overweight, and conventionally unattractive. It is as if his return to a Hitchcockian mode of narrative frees his characters from interiority and liberates his stories from the confined spaces of cities and houses. In this way, he materializes and gives an immanent image to energy—an energy that was once conceived abstractly, as an idea or ideal, such as in Eisenstein's conception of communism as the driving force behind historical movement. As Brenez puts it, « Eisenstein amplifies and radicalizes this principle: In a representation, movement always exceeds the represented bodies, not only because it is the subject and they remain supports, but because movement is conceived solely as an energy differential. » (*ibid*, 47) In contrast, Guiraudie's radical invention involves an internal source of energy that, like Bataille's notion of solar energy, operates on the principle of pure expenditure. (Bataille, 28)

3. Plasticity, Biophilia, and Genre Mutations

As we will discuss later, this energy operates on multiple levels, including the spatial configuration of his films. Guiraudie often places a small, confined space alongside a vast, expansive one—an undefined, indeterminate zone that functions as a source of energy or a site for its expenditure. This spatial arrangement parallels the tension between limited bodies and unlimited desires: small towns and rural villages beside forests, wooded areas next to lakes, a decaying, abandoned factory that forcibly gathers workers, a small cabin in the middle of a vast field, and so on. Desire both draws characters toward one another and compels them to flee from or pursue each other. In this sense, the chase lies at the core of his cinema, propelling characters between these two spatial poles.

« *The chase is the central motif that binds and unbinds male bodies in Alain Guiraudie's work, beginning with his early short films [...] these pursuits are infused with playful eroticism, a way of deferring contact and encounter through a sensual play of visibility and distance between bodies, in moonlit shadows or the heavy heat of a southern forest.* » (Cheval, my translation)

This not only propels the narrative forward and allows it to branch into new encounters, but also liberates space from any fixed hierarchy between center and periphery. As we discussed earlier, in Guiraudie's films, there are infinite centers with no circumference. This spatial logic can be described as a libidinal economy that traverses the cinematic space—even in a geographical sense. Guiraudie often sets his films in rural, suburban, and wide-open countryside locations, where, as scholars frequently observe, non-human forms of being are treated on equal terms with human characters, both narratively and visually. For instance, Serge Weber notes the liberation of space from territorialization, writing:

« *The great outdoors is geographical decompartmentalization: no geolocation, no grid or cartographic projection, no territorialization of control; good sex is no longer confined to the patriarchal bedroom; centralities obey no spatial model. Geographical knowledge is liberated from its function of governmentality and domination.* » (Weber, my translation)

It seems that space in his films—like the treatment of queer bodies and sex—exists in a pre-historic or post-historic time, when forms have not yet fully taken shape, the divisions between modes of being have not yet been solidified, and identities have not yet been fixed. Or rather, all of these have broken from or exhausted their pre-established forms and acquired a certain plasticity, where mutations and shifts in life-forms no longer seem far-fetched. One reason for the countryside settings is that they dissolve the rigidity of the relations that structure urban life and facilitate queer encounters in the most literal sense of the word. As Guiraudie puts it in an interview, « in the countryside, young and old people cross paths much more often, whereas in the city, we quickly find ourselves separated into clans. » (Guiraudie, 2006, 27, my translation). Two very explicit examples that come to mind are the scene in *Rester vertical* where the main character undergoes an electrocardiogram test using several thin branches of a tree to wire his body, and a scene in *Voici venu le temps* where the main character uses jack holes on a stone as an outlet to connect his phone and make a call. Yet, the plasticity in his films goes beyond these explicit, almost fantastical setups. There is a distinct sexual tendency in his treatment of non-human organic forms of being, what Jules O'Dwyer calls his biophilic tendency, writing: « throughout the film [*L'inconnu du lac*], we watch a choreography of bodies as they come and go through bushes, thickets, and long grasses. They momentarily merge with their surroundings, thereby proposing a kind of ontological equality between bodies, beings, and

things that bespeaks Guiraudie's biophilic tendencies. » (O'Dwyer, 180) In *Rester vertical*, the primary biophilic encounter is between human beings and animals—the lamb and the wolf. In the final scene of the film, we see their actual encounter within the natural setting of a vast field. Guiraudie points out the mythological meaning of this encounter in an interview, noting:

« In this film, one can speak of the Big Other. The two Big Others are the baby—this alien who is one of us and whom we learn to adopt—and the wolf. The Other crystallizes in figures with whom it is difficult to establish contact. With the wolf, we find mythology again, that biblical utopia in which the wolf and the lamb could live in peace together, especially the lamb. One lives for and through the Other. » (Guiraudie, 2016, 25, my translation)

The queerness of forests and natural surroundings in Guiraudie's work parallels the branching off and mutations of his narratives. One can argue that, in his work, the plasticity of the narrative draws on the plasticity of life forms. Referring to Catherine Malabou, Benjamin Dalton writes, « plasticity is the mode of being that demands that a 'lifetime' is neither fully petrified nor dissolved, but able to take form in a way that allows this form to remain open to mutation. » (Dalton, 76) Nowhere is this more evident—both literally and figuratively—than in a scene from *Le roi de l'évasion*, where Armand, after consuming a fantastical libido-enhancing root, finds himself alone in the middle of a forest, masturbating while facing the open expanse of trees. A few moments later, he is caught by the police chief, who dryly remarks, « That's no way to have kids. » Similarly, in Guiraudie's most recent film, *Miséricorde*, the mushrooms sprouting from the soil where a corpse has just been buried offer a direct example of this plasticity at work. In this regard, Dalton exemplifies Guiraudie's forests as places « where a queer biodiversity of animal, insect, vegetal and geological beings constantly threaten to swallow human narratives and continue in their absence. » (*ibid*, 66)

The plasticity of the figural configuration of human and non-human beings in Guiraudie's films is equally evident in the thematic shifts within his visual economy—that is, in the smooth movements between genres and regimes of imagery. Once again, what is queer about his films is not only the depiction of same-sex relations but also the queerness—or peculiarities—of a visual regime motivated by queer encounters. It is as if his characters exist in a state of sleeplessness, and the narrative result is a blend of realism and fantasy in which every cut functions as a point of encounter between two genres. At least one of his films directly attests to this. In *No Rest for the Brave*, the main character decides to stop sleeping, believing that his next sleep would be his second to last—his eternal sleep; death. From that point on, the narrative enters a state of indeterminacy where the laws of causality loosen and events slip into a state of plasticity. Noting Guiraudie's mix of specific and fantasmatic spaces, Jules O'Dwyer writes:

« Just as his filmmaking attempts to intercalate these different spatial registers, the freewheeling, rhizomatic insistence of his cinema correlates physical movement with thematic shifts; as those familiar with his body of work can attest, it is not uncommon for Guiraudie to move from social realism, then to fantasy, and on to horror within the textual plane of the same film. » (O'Dwyer, 152)

In *Rester vertical*, this plasticity is marked by the main character's frequent back-and-forth movements between the city and rural spaces, where he drives, flies, and walks through different mental and spatial states. In Guiraudie's own account of the film, « there's the idea of being in reverie, in fantasy, of making an epic and everyday film, even a very poetic one, but without ever losing sight of the violence of reality. » (Guiraudie, 2016, 25, my translation)

4. Against Naturalism: A Mirror of Possible Worlds

As outlined earlier, in Guiraudie's work there is a coexistence of the pre-historic and the post-historic—as seen in the equal treatment of queers and straights—which parallels Deleuze's concepts of the originary world and derived milieux in naturalism. However, although all the elements of naturalism—the coexistence of primary and derived milieux (natural elements and machines, humans and animals, compassion and violence; in short, both the cultural and the natural)—are present in his films, they ultimately break away from naturalism. A brief look at naturalism in cinema will help us better understand Guiraudie's stance in this context. In his analysis of various types of movement-image, Gilles Deleuze explains that when qualities are realized within specific historical and geographical settings, we enter the realm of the action-image, which contrasts with the idealism of the affection-image. Between these two lies an intermediate stage—neither pure affect nor full action—called the originary world paired with elementary impulses. This pair creates a new kind of image, that of impulse-image. This stage represents the beginnings of action rooted in particular milieux, where impulses act as strong impressions driving behavior rather than just expressing feeling. (Deleuze, 123)

« *The ordinary world is therefore both radical beginning and absolute end; and finally it links the one to the other, it puts the one into the other, according to a law which is that of the steepest slope. It is thus a world of a very special kind of violence (in certain respects, it is the radical evil); but it has the merit of causing an originary image of time to rise, with the beginning, the end, and the slope, all the cruelty of Chronos. This is naturalism. It is not opposed to realism, but on the contrary accentuates its features by extending them in an idiosyncratic surrealism.* » (ibid., 124)

Deleuze cites the films of Luis Buñuel and Erich von Stroheim as great achievements in creating a cinema of naturalism, centering decay and degradation as their principal concerns (*ibid.*, 125–127). Indeed, in naturalism there is a swift encounter between the beginning and the end, between the ordinary world and the underlying world of decay and evil. Yet Guiraudie creates something similar but with a small difference: the rapid movements in his films do not follow the logic of the *steepest slope*. Instead, they connect one situation or space to another in order to make the energy of desire flow. It is in this sense that the frequent connections and escapes in his films not only replace the slope but are, in fact, one and the same, as they merely facilitate the flow of desire and, consequently, the narrative.

As noted earlier in this article, it seems that in Guiraudie's films, there is a kind of queer pre-history that is no longer concerned with linking the beginning to the end. Instead, it forms a kind of *in-between* milieu where encounters have only one enemy: privatization (of capital, of desire). This is the reason why his characters pursue infinite encounters—constantly in motion and opening up, operating in the direction of vital energy—in order to connect and sustain the flow of desire and narrative. It is also for this reason that his films deploy a certain repetition rather than a direct line from beginning to end. As he himself puts it in an interview, « [...] I had the wish to return to a form of filmmaking that was quite simple, a film where one repeatedly returned to the same spaces. » (O'Dwyer, 173) *L'inconnu du lac* is a film whose narrative directly builds on the idea of repetition, where a group of gay men repeatedly return to the same lake to cruise. In *Rester vertical*, Léo, the main character, repeatedly moves back and forth between the city and the rural area. *Miséricorde* specifically incorporates the originary world of a village—with its underlying desires and hatreds,

epitomized by out-of-season mushrooms that pop out of the earth—into the repetitive actions of Jérémie, the young main character, who returns to the village to participate in the funeral of his late boss, with whom he apparently had an affair. Jérémie's repetitive encounters include the priest (the old man's son, who seems to both love and hate him), another village man who is hesitant to have sex with him, and the old man's wife, who has feelings for him. These encounters each lead to different resolutions, including fights, murder, sex, friendship, and more. As a result, there is no decay or corruption underlying the ordinary world of his narratives. Instead, it is the force of transformation and metamorphosis, exemplified par excellence by the sprouting mushrooms from a dead body in *Miséricorde*. Therefore, the task is not to reveal underlying forces of destruction but to reinvent the world—or, in his own words, « I had this ambition to remake the world through filmmaking. I want to remake France, to recompose it—so I recompose it in a mythical, poetic way. » (Guiraudie, 2006, 26, my translation)

Alain Guiraudie's cinema gives narrative form to desire itself. His films chart a continuous movement of encounters—between bodies, between humans and non-human life, and between distinct narrative threads—that generate their own momentum. Desire circulates in liminal spaces such as lakes, forests, and rural paths, animating a queer politics of non-possession in which relations are fluid, fleeting, and open-ended. These spaces become sites of transformation where bodies, landscapes, and narrative strands intersect in ever-shifting constellations. This circulating energy underlies the plasticity of Guiraudie's cinematic world. Genres bend into one another, figural regimes mutate, and narrative lines spiral into temporary alignments before branching again. Rather than leading toward predetermined meaning or moral resolution, these films sustain an ongoing process of connection and metamorphosis. By following the movements of desire across space and form, this article has sought to show how his cinema imagines a world in perpetual reconfiguration—where narrative is not a container for desire, but the living trace of its passage.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BATAILLE Georges, *The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy. Volume I: Consumption*, trans. Robert Hurley, New York, Zone Books, 1988

BRENEZ Nicole, *On the Figure in General and the Body in Particular: Figurative Invention in Cinema*, trans. Ted Fendt, London, Anthem Press, 2023

CHEVAL Olivier, "Voici venu le temps d'aimer. Les camaraderies utopiques d'Alain Guiraudie", *Revue critique de fixxion française contemporaine* [online]. Available at: <http://journals.openedition.org/fixxion/8216> (accessed on 2 June 2025).

DALTON Benjamin, "Cruising the Queer Forest with Alain Guiraudie: Woods, Plastics, Plasticities", in *Beasts of the Forest: Denizens of the Dark Woods*, John Libbey, 2019. pp. 65-91

DELEUZE Gilles, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1986

GUERAUDIE Alain, "Chercher le loup: Entretien avec Alain Guiraudie" (interview conducted by Joachim Lepastier and Vincent Malausa in Paris, 13 June), *Cahiers du cinéma*, no. 725, 2016, pp. 22–25.

LEE Nathan, “Misery Loves Company”, *Film Comment* [online]. Available at: <https://www.filmcomment.com/blog/misery-loves-company-misericordia-alain-guiraudie-review/> (accessed on 1 June 2025).

NEYRAT Cyril, “J’ai envie de refaire la France: Entretien avec Alain Guiraudie”, *Vertigo*, vol. 29, no. 2, 2006, pp. 26–28.

O’DWYER Jules, *The Seduction of Space: Cruising French Cinema*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2025

PASCAL Blaise, *Pensées and Other Writings*, trans. Honor Levi, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995

WEBER Serge, « Délivrés de l’urbano-centrisme ? », *Géographie et cultures* [online], no. 87, 2013. Available at: <http://journals.openedition.org/gc/2987> (accessed on 2 June 2025)

BIO-BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE ON THE AUTHOR

Alborz MAHBOOBKHAH is a PhD student at Freie Universität Berlin, researching French post-Nouvelle Vague cinema with a focus on Philippe Garrel. He is a writer and editor for *Vitascope*, a Farsi-language online journal dedicated to cinema. He has translated and published Serge Daney’s book *Perseverance* from French into Farsi. Among his international contributions, his work has also appeared in *Sabzian*, *Senses of Cinema*, and *Frames Cinema Journal* (forthcoming).