



FORUM

University of Edinburgh
Postgraduate Journal of Culture and the Arts
Issue 37 | 2026

Title	"Our bodies are hydrophilic": Queer Hydro-Politics in Robin Campillo's <i>120 BPM</i> (2017)
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Publication	FORUM: University of Edinburgh Postgraduate Journal of Culture & the Arts
Issue Number	37
Publication Date	October 2026

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“Our bodies are hydrophilic”: Queer Hydro-Politics in Robin Campillo’s *120 BPM* (2017)

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*The HIV/AIDS crisis has become a core theme in contemporary French cinema reflecting upon queer loss and collective response in times of social precarity. Despite the abundant use of liquid imagery in these works, scholarly discussion of how such imagery produces a conception of liquidity through which queer embodiment can be reimagined remains limited. This paper examines how Robin Campillo’s *120 Battements par Minute/120 BPM* (2017) mobilises liquid imagery to reconfigure queer embodiment and its political possibilities during the AIDS outbreak. Drawing on Astrida Neimanis’s *Bodies of Water* (2017), I argue that Campillo constructs queer bodies as permeable, porous, and gestational, thereby resisting the hegemonic heterosexual ideology premised upon the metaphysical integrity of the self – an idea that has facilitated gay oppression. Attending to Campillo’s deployment of liquid imagery across multiple scales, this paper investigates water as both a metaphor and a physical element, considering the proximity between queer corporeality and wider bodies of water as a trans-corporeal ethic that sustains marginal existence. I argue that Campillo’s queer hydro-politics transforms liquids from signs of contamination into an ecological medium of shared vulnerability, collective action, and non-reproductive futurity. This queer futurity challenges both systematic oppression of gay people and the prevalent anti-social thesis in queer theory.*

Introduction

“We had never really discussed it until the red, red blood on the white, white sink made it impossible to look away. Something had to come out and out it came. Gushing” (Caron, *The Nearness of Others* 25). In queer theorist David Caron’s experience after his HIV diagnosis, blood, spurting from the skin, triggers a discussion about HIV/AIDS with his friends. Since bodies have become symbols of rational social order, bodily fluids that violate carnal borders and leak into public spaces are considered threats in social norms (Misgav and Johnson 732). In his film *120 Battements par Minute* (2017, abbreviated as *120 BPM*), Robin Campillo sees the political potential of fluidity, using liquid as a central visual cue that runs throughout the work. The film is set during the early 1990s, showing the grassroots

political organisation ACT UP-Paris's activism against the apathy of the Mitterrand government towards HIV/AIDS. The film unfolds through queer activism and the romance between Sean (Nahuel Pérez Biscayart), an energetic protester who is seropositive, and Nathan (Arnaud Valois), a new member who witnesses Sean's gradual death.

Critics have noted the abundant liquid imagery in *120 BPM*, describing the film as "an insistent and repeated juxtaposition of plasticity and fluidity" (Dalton 203), "a rallying cry" (Hartford 219) marked by "the bloodied waves of the Seine" (Hartford 218), and "the aqua of collective kinship" (Hoad, "Viral Visuality" section). Despite these insights, a reading of *120 BPM* with regard to the political potential of liquidity remains underdeveloped. This gap, as Bourdeau argues, might result from "a close relationship between sexuality, fluids, and infection" (114) that can lead to pathologisation and moral condemnation. However, it should be noticed that Campillo displays liquidity across multiple scales, from cellular fluids flowing in human bodies to the Seine in Paris, which illustrates the proximity of queer corporeality and wider bodies of water on an ecological level. Therefore, this paper investigates the political potential of liquid imagery in *120 BPM*, employing it as both a physical element and a metaphor that animates queer critique and queer activism. In demonstrating the layered meanings of liquidity in both queer theory and *120 BPM*, I first focus on how bodily fluids – such as blood, sweat and semen – are stigmatised by heteronormative society and made remarkably visible by Campillo in the film. Crucially, this visibility moves beyond the sphere of individual trauma and gives rise to a logic of fluids that blurs the self-other boundary, thus fostering shared vulnerability and collective action. The article then explores water as an ecological medium in *120 BPM* that interweaves queer history, loss and the materiality of the Seine River, advocating an ethics of trans-corporeality between the body and the environment that sustains the marginal existence.

Placing *120 BPM* in dialogue with cultural theorist Astrida Neimanis's study, *Bodies of Water* (2017), this paper argues that queer bodies are permeable, gestational, and porous, resisting the hegemonic heteronormative ideology about discrete bodies. Neimanis uses a posthuman feminist approach to reconfigure human embodiment as watery and deny an autonomous and anthropocentric understanding of the body. By exploring the intersection and immersion of queer bodies and liquidity in Campillo's *120 BPM*, this paper argues that

Campillo echoes Neimanis's undoing of a sovereign body to rethink a fluid mode of queer existence. The watery bodies of queer people in the film challenge multiple spatial borders: between the inside and outside of the skin; between the self and the other; and between human bodies and the waterscape of the city. This erosion of borders transforms bodily fluids from signs of contamination into queer hydro-politics of shared vulnerability, collective action, and non-reproductive futurity. By thinking through a watery lens to reimagine the connection between queer people and unruly fluids, this article articulates a new queer futurity that gestates collectivities, challenging both systematic oppression of gay people and the prevalent anti-social thesis of total negativity in queer theory.

Porous Boundary of Queer Corporeality

In the dominant Western understanding of embodiment, an ontological division separates the biological from the cultural, and the body from its surrounding environments (Tuana 189). This tradition of dualism excludes uncontrollable elements from a stable framework through which individuals make sense of the world they live in. Via this same logic, bodies are understood and disciplined as autonomous entities by social and legal institutions in order to uphold the operation of these systems. As Neimanis puts it, "regimes of human rights, citizenship, and property for the most part all depend upon individualized, stable, and sovereign bodies ... as both a norm and a goal" (2). In other words, bodies are estranged as discrete individuals from other humans and their surroundings, with their borders thus being defined by the skin. While this paradigm of dichotomy underpins social systems, it becomes problematic in the context of pandemic as it provides justification for condemning others. Amid the HIV/AIDS crisis, public discourse has described gay men as "contaminated vessels" (Bersani 17). Queer scholar Leo Bersani contends that this metaphor ascribes the transmission of AIDS to gay men's promiscuity, thus morally rationalising gay oppression. On the other hand, it could also be interpreted as a consequence of the notion of the body as a sealed container to enclose bodily fluids. One must emphasise the independence of corporeality in order to protect the integrity of their own body, which eliminates the possibility of seeing bodies as common ground.

Similar to the metaphor of bodies as vessels, the metaphor of the 'closet' also reinforces the discourse of the discrete body, which reflects systematic gay oppression and excludes queer people from heteronormative spaces. Metaphorically, the closet is a space of secrecy and confinement that prevents queer people's sexuality from being known. In addition to this symbolic connotation, Michael Brown finds that the closet metaphor also has spatial counterparts in real life, such as gay men's secret gathering places that divide their physical geographies (47). The closet metaphor also suggests the notion of a discrete body, as though queer people have sufficient free will to choose the placement of their bodies: they hide by placing themselves in the closet or liberate themselves by coming out of it. However, the relationships around queer bodies are more complex than closing or opening the door of the closet. Being in the closet can be seen as a form of internalised oppression that requires gay people to conform to heteronormative expectations. As Eve Sedgwick points out, for a queer person, every encounter with someone new erects new closets that require "new surveys, new calculations, new draughts, and requisitions of secrecy or disclosure" (68). Therefore, the closet describes queer absence "in countless interlocking ways", and "subtly and blatantly dictates that heterosexuality is the only way to be" (Brown 1). The prevailing heterosexual presumption about the closet is a deliberate simplification that situates queer people in a marginalised space and keeps others unthreatened. Both the metaphors of the closet and of gay men as vessels embody a dual oppression by assuming a discrete body, via which the dominant public can distance themselves from queer people physically and socially.

These metaphors of bodily containers in relation to queer people suggest a sharp boundary between inside and outside, containment and release, as well as secrecy and disclosure. Although, as Didier Eribon suggests, the closet might engender a "play with prohibition" (49) that enables queer pride and freedom within boundaries, a watery understanding of the body offers an alternative mode of intersubjective queer existence through its permeation of these boundaries, be it the skin, the closet, or human/nature distinction. Donna Haraway identifies the work of queerness as "undoing 'normal' categories, and none is more critical than the human/nonhuman sorting operation" (xxiv). In this sense, the characteristics of water, such as fluidity, permeability, circulation, and the infinite connections among different bodies of water, resonate strongly with the political

commitment of queerness to embracing openness and entanglement. Placing queer bodies in aqueous relations, rather than in containers, can deconstruct the normative notion of autonomous bodies and open an alternative paradigm to transcend the logic of dichotomy. This proximity between queerness and water has been exhibited in cinema. In particular, Loïc Bourdeau recognises an extensive liquid imaginary conjured up by HIV/AIDS in French cinema, from Guiraudie's *L'Inconnu du Lac* (2013) to Campillo's work. The water in *120 BPM* mobilises the subversive power of queerness at both the material and symbolic levels in the context of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

As Neimanis suggests, understanding watery experience begins with attending to "the specific ways in which water travels, and the specific kinds of bodies that certain waters comprise, transform, and dissolve" (23). In *120 BPM*, it is the protagonists' shared identities as people with HIV/AIDS, along with that of their loved ones, that characterise their engagement with water. The lives of HIV seropositive characters are inextricably dependent upon the human water cycle: they must drink water every four hours to take their medications and get intravenous fluids regularly. The ingested water is then transformed into excretion, tears, semen, or blood. Because water both sustains their lives and, in the form of bodily fluids, infects them with HIV/AIDS, it serves as an apt visual symbol of protest against the government's reluctance to disseminate anti-AIDS education and pharmaceutical companies' delays in releasing clinical trial data. Blood appears repeatedly in the film as a metonymy for both the transmission of HIV/AIDS and activism. Its recurrence builds a visual rhythm that vibrates with the urgency of addressing HIV/AIDS as it will lead to death if left unattended.

Campillo presents blood as unruly. In a scene near the beginning of the film, ACT UP-Paris visits Melton Pharm to ask for the test results of a new HIV medicine. Using blood as the implement of their protest, a member passes a bag of fake blood to Sean from directly opposite him. The bag explodes the moment it touches Sean's fingers, spilling all over his body. This explosive bag of fake blood symbolises the bodily fluids of people with HIV/AIDS – fluids that move beyond their control. In a later scene, when an ACT UP-Paris member is learning to produce fake blood, his nose begins bleeding without him realising it. This unpredictable flow of bodily fluids is the norm for members of this organisation. During the

amphitheatre gatherings, bloodstains appear repeatedly on multiple members' faces and clothing. It is impossible to distinguish whether it is the fake blood lingering after a collective action or their own blood.

Flowing outward from the body's organs into the external environment, uncontained bodily fluids in *120 BPM* radically challenge the idea that the skin marks the outer boundary of the body. With the relinquishment of the integrity of one's own body, an individual enters relations with other bodies that materially course through them. Campillo further visualises this fluidity of bodily boundaries in a clubbing scene. Framed in a wide high angle shot, as the activists' torsos grow invisible in the darkness, only the waving of their arms is captured in the dazzling disco lights. The camera gradually shifts focus from the characters to foregrounded dust particles bumping in beams of light, blurring the concrete shapes of human bodies. In the deep blue sheen that creates a feeling of being submerged in deep water, the rhythmic movement of the arms and dust imitates the regular ebb and flow of water, making the human and non-human subjects aquatic creatures that sway within the current (see fig. 1). After the refocusing of the camera, dust turns into the computer-generated images of the cells in bloodstreams, then cuts to a hand-drawn sketch of cells projected on a screen. As Dalton argues, instead of showing a teleological narrative from contamination to death, this scene indicates "a circular movement of material, formal interactions in which queer bodies, biologies, relationships and politics occur as communal metamorphoses effectuated within an atmosphere of self-abandonment" (201). Dissolving, within the fluid atmosphere, the ontological distinction between individual bodies, dust, and cells, watery bodies deny the skin's function of dividing individuals from one another and humans from their environment.



Fig. 1, ACT UP-Paris members dance in a club, 2017.

Queer Gestationality in Bodies of Water

The act of being together in watery bodies is both an erotic and a political gesture that goes beyond the confinement of skin because unstable and permeable bodies are queer people's subversive mode of existence to challenge individualism characterised by a sovereign self. This communality of bodies is exhibited in the sex between Sean and Nathan, which continues the sense of immersion and intimacy that Campillo creates in the clubbing scene. They lie together in a bedroom, facing each other in an atmosphere of grief after the death of an ACT UP-Paris member. The camera zooms in to a microscopic level as they move to kiss, showing cellular processes in the bloodstreams. The image of cells then progressively cross-dissolves to a translucent blue liquid that occupies the entire screen, with faint silhouettes of Sean and Nathan floating in it (see fig. 2). This scene renders difficult any attempt to distinguish between their bodies' interior and exterior. Extracellular fluids flowing in blood vessels suddenly transmute into the water in which they are submerged, making Sean and Nathan seem like two cells belonging to a single body. This sequence is followed by an extreme close-up shot that depicts Nathan touching Sean's body from the neck to the waist. As Caron contends, to be touched evokes a sense of "one's corporeal limits" ("AIDS/holocaust: Metaphor and French universalism" 280), which is also the limitation of the self.

This behaviour of touching, therefore, is emblematic of the negotiation of the boundaries of their bodies and the resistance of discrete corporeality. In his discussion about the *jouissance* of queer sex, Bersani argues that as long as physiological sex differences exist, sexual relations between males and females are the eroticisation of the social structure of dominance and submission (20). Thus, considering the cultural taboo on anal sex and promiscuity, Bersani proposes that gay men “should resist being drawn into mimicking the unrelenting warfare between men and women” (25). In *120 BPM*, depicting queer sex via bodies of water erects the mutual erotic that suspends hierarchical relations of power through permeability. This approach decentres desire from the physicality of the body, bringing it into a sense of flow and interconnectedness. This “loss of the ego” (27), in Bersani’s terms, locates the potential of political transformation in the radical openness of the body, shattering fixed power structures built upon the sovereign subject.

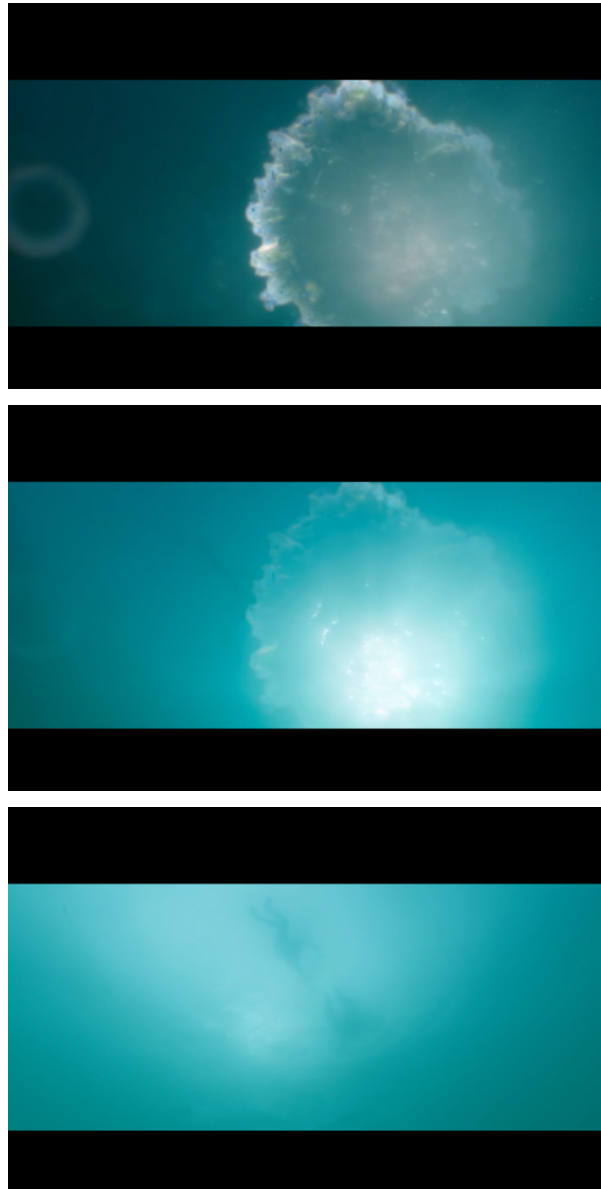


Fig. 2, The cellular processes presented during the sex of Sean and Nathan, 2017.

While the permeability of bodies enables the closeness of different subjects during sex, Neimanis points out how this watery embodiment sheds light on an expanded understanding of reproduction that prioritises the proliferation of new beings and social relations over one's own materiality. Because of the association between life and water – from humans in amniotic fluid to microbes in pools – fecundity has been characterised by Jamie Linton as the essential nature of water (3). Neimanis extends water's ability to generate new lives to the realm of posthumanism, calling this "gestationality" (68).

Gestationality refers to “the meeting of at least two bodies of difference in order to proliferate further life” (Neimanis 92), which refuses the necessity of the human reprosexual womb and the overlapping of the feminine with the maternal. Therefore, this mode of reproduction is fundamentally queer as it is released from a heteronormative binary view of bodies. Neimanis further suggests that gestationality occurs through permeability, which nurtures other bodies through transiting across and between different corporealities (98). However, this discussion of permeability is not a naive statement that every aqueous life melts together into the same body of water. Instead, interchanges of life-proliferating matter are achieved through the amnion, which simultaneously allows permeability and sustains the difference between bodies (Neimanis 95-96). Neimanis radically redefines gestationality not as a biological essentialist dimension of female morphology but accentuates an ongoing and permeable form of becoming, a “proliferation of life-in-the-plural” (106).

The gestationality of water facilitates a mode of sociality that nourishes others in one’s own aqueous flesh and foregrounds the possibility of new beings emerging from oneself. In *120 BPM*, ACT UP-Paris embodies this gestational modality because its members unify their bodies and forces to become a collective new form of existence in order to bring the urgency of the AIDS crisis into the public discourse. Although the organisation’s gatherings in the amphitheatre are marked by disputes and disagreements, these differences do not prevent voices from permeating from one person to another. After the death of Jeremie (Ariel Borenstein), a history student in the organisation, members of ACT UP-Paris parade down the city’s streets holding copies of his funeral portrait. With Sean leading the cry, “*Sida, homo, l’indifférence de meure*” (“AIDS, gay, we die of indifference”), other members follow and repeat the chant in a collective sound. Multiple bodies of ACT UP-Paris members transform into an amplifier for a singular, shared voice, responding to the HIV/AIDS crisis in 1990s French society. The shot of the funeral procession is a close-up, tracking the participants’ facial expressions as they cry and their unified movement on the street. It presents a moving gesture that invites the audience to participate in the parade and embed themselves in this new body.

In putting forth the queer gestationality of water, Neimanis emphasises that this process directs to instantiations of “yet-to-come” (88), a future tense that is distant from the prevalent anti-social thesis among queer theorists. Because bodies share the same gestational logic as water, the possibility of generating a future is enfolded in the permeability between bodies, which responds to the queer futurity of negativity. In *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, Lee Edelman contends that to address the dominant political imagination that employs reproductive futurism as its basis, queerness occupies a status of resistance by challenging the structure that is dedicated to the image of the Child. Similarly, Jack Halberstam considers the influence of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, claiming that queer time deviates from the normative temporal frames of reproduction, family, and inheritance, facing a constantly diminishing future (13). Both Edelman and Halberstam dismiss queer futurity by reducing reproduction strictly to biological procreation or normative symbolic continuity. The yet-to-come aqueous gestationality opens a space for imagining an alternative version of queer futurity – one that reproduces a collective sociality and political continuity to secure a future where vulnerable people are taken care of. As Nicole Seymour demonstrates, this is an intersection between queer and ecological values that cares not just about the descendants but “about the Other species and persons to whom one has no immediate relations” (27), and which allows the development of political alliances. ACT UP-Paris’s members share the value of aiming to protect the public from further HIV infection through theatrical actions and the disclosure of their own identity as people with HIV/AIDS, thereby practising future-oriented and relational care essential for queer survival.

This queer futurity, emerging from elemental thoughts, requires individuals to “become milieu as womb ... or milieu for gardens that will grow from our deathly and discarded matters” (Neimanis 102). In *120 BPM*, this futurity manifests not merely as a metaphor but also in the death of three ACT UP-Paris members. The film opens in the amphitheatre, with an announcement that a founding member of the organisation has died. Instead of mourning, the members rapidly shift the meeting towards employing his death to raise the Mitterrand government’s awareness about HIV/AIDS. Sequences about the deaths of Jeremie and Sean follow a similar narrative. Initially, Jeremie actively participates in several ACT UP-Paris activities; then, his health condition worsens with a decreasing T-

cell count. His funeral is highly political, becoming a site for another ACT UP-Paris action. Meanwhile, the deterioration of Sean's health proceeds as the film unfolds, interwoven with the activist group's collective story. At the end of the film, Sean's funeral serves as ACT UP-Paris's protest against a pharmaceutical company, and the scene is intercut with a clubbing and a sex scene. The short rapid cuts between these three scenes are connected through flashing disco lights; spaces shift with every few flashes. When the screen fades to black, the film credits roll. Death is registered both at the beginning and end of the film. As Benjamin Dalton states, "Sean's death in the film is not seen as an end, but yet another entry into the film's cyclical sequences of kenotic yet ineffaceable queer forms and essences" (202). This structure adopts circularity and repetition rather than a linear narrative, corresponding to the gestational potential of queer futurity. The death of each member is not the end of action but forges a new space for reinforcing the political demands of ACT UP-Paris. The ways members' corpses engage in activism demonstrate the gestational characteristic of water: a transformation that turns an individual into a nourishing environment that enables new beings to flourish.

Moreover, the sequence of Jeremie's death brings closer the public and people with HIV/AIDS to generate a new "we" in the fight against the virus. On his deathbed, Jeremie recounts the history of the French Revolution of 1848, with the crosscutting between real-life archival footage of ACT UP-Paris and scenes of the medical treatment Jeremie received. The marginalised situation of people with HIV/AIDS parallels the crowds during the Revolution who suffered social and political oppression from the dominant class, thus integrating the history of ACT UP-Paris's resistance into the official narrative of the nation. Jason Hartford observes this intention in Campillo's *mise-en-scène* of the French national colours, which "insists on queer identification with, and reintegration into, the French republic" (220). As a result, the film rejects the view of seeing people with HIV/AIDS as the Other by evoking the feeling of togetherness across people from different generations and historical backgrounds.

Urban Waterscapes and Hydrocommon

While water provides a posthuman approach to metaphorically reflecting upon queer activism, characters in *120 BPM* engage with the urban waterscape in a physical sense, interweaving their bodies into the water cycle. As the centre of Paris's cityscape, the Seine is associated with local queer history. Since the eighteenth century, the Seine's banks and quays have been cruising grounds for gay men to seek sex (Sibalis 18). This use declined after the 1970s due to fears of HIV/AIDS among other reasons, such as the expansion of commercial gay space in Paris (Sibalis 22). Campillo evokes and reflects this local history in the activism of ACT UP-Paris. When members of the organisation are pasting posters along the banks of the Seine to circulate knowledge about HIV/AIDS, a gay couple wandering there makes the accusation that these posters scare them and prevent them from enjoying sex.

Following this queer appropriation of the urban waterscape, Campillo presents the Seine being dyed red to make the HIV/AIDS epidemic pivotal in public awareness and show the shared vulnerability of human beings in this crisis (see fig. 3). The sound of the Seine's red currents interweaves with Sean's laboured breaths, with the cross-cutting between the blood-red dye flooding the river and Sean lying on a hospital bed. The body of Sean and the flow of the Seine become inseparable – even the pronunciations of their names are similar – as though the river is also a body. Scholarship has identified that *120 BPM* repeatedly juxtaposes queer bodies with bodies of water to show their inability to be dissolved and effaced (Dalton 202). Considering the hydrological cycle, this trans-corporeality is not metaphorical but material. Human bodies intake reservoir water; bodily liquids descend into moist soil; groundwater flows into the city's rivers. As Neimanis demonstrates, water connects our bodies to other worlds beyond our human selves, which extends to “a more expansive sense of ‘we’” (12). In this respect, the water that passes through Sean's body is also the Seine that transports blood around the city. When ACT UP-Paris distributes HIV/AIDS prevention materials at a school, a girl responds that she will not get AIDS because she is not gay. This sequence illustrates how HIV/AIDS has been commonly acknowledged as a consequence of “the gay lifestyle” (Crimp 238). The bloody Seine challenges this presumption because water, an element susceptible to poisoning, is the point of communion among human bodies. As long as we, with our porous bodies, live in the hydrocommon, we share a vulnerability under the threat of the HIV/AIDS crisis.



Fig. 3, The Seine being dyed red, 2017.

However, living in a hydrocommon does not indicate that humans are homogeneous subjects experiencing equal exposure to possible harms from water, given the complex conflicts of interests and various sets of power relations in social and political systems. Through his study on breathing – an elemental experience analogous to water – Jean-Thomas Tremblay points out an “uneven distribution of risk” (2) among populations facing a shared challenge. This uneven distribution means that different individuals experience unequally the vulnerability of breathing because of their varied statuses within the weaponisation, monetisation, and pollution of the air (Tremblay 2). This differential distribution is also observable in the mismanagement of HIV/AIDS as a public health crisis. Either in the context of France or other countries, the combined actions of biological particles with social and political processes have resulted in disproportionate impacts on queer people in this epidemic. In particular, universalism is a traditional value in France, under which “equal and autonomous citizens live harmoniously within a centralised and homogeneous nation state” (Sibalis 35). Under this circumstance, minorities are either expected to assimilate into the monolithic national value or are excluded from political legitimacy (Caron, “AIDS/holocaust: Metaphor and French universalism” 63). Therefore, any form of community, including the organisations of AIDS activists, risks advocating divisive identity politics and undermining the national value of universalism (Rees-Roberts 17). The

inherent erasure of non-normative communities leads to the government's and the public's ignorance of the particularity of queer people, who have suffered the heaviest losses from the HIV/AIDS crisis. Therefore, the trans-corporeal subject in *120 BPM* that emerges from the entanglement between Sean and the Seine is not merely a symbol of HIV/AIDS or of Paris under the threat of the HIV/AIDS crisis. Instead, it marks queer history that crystallised in the epidemic, from the oppression of the heteronormative hegemony to the marginalisation of queer people within the framework of French universalism.

Compared with the sense of intimacy and immersion in the blue imagery in the clubbing scene and sex scene, Campillo's radical portrayal of the bloody Seine shifts the emphasis into public crisis and political exposure. As Matthew Gandy states, "the history of cities can be read as a history of water" (22). The Seine serves as common ground that has witnessed the losses of Paris, from the massacre of Algerians thrown into the river by police in 1961 to the deaths of queer people who had once wandered its banks. By turning the Seine into a river of blood, *120 BPM* theatrically shows that the blood of queer people cannot be hidden.

Conclusion

120 BPM shows that queer activists' practice is a process of challenging the normative to enable alternative ways of being, which breaks boundaries between normative and non-normative sexualities, nature and culture, and human and non-human. The use of water in *120 BPM* reveals the relationships among queer bodies, queer activism, and social systems. The uncontrolled bodily fluids and unstable corporeal boundaries of people with HIV/AIDS in *120 BPM* contest the construction of discrete body in the heteronormative paradigm that alienates queer people. Campillo imagines a temporary suspension of hierarchical power relations through such porosity, which points to an erotic and political togetherness of different bodies. By emphasising the corporeal porosity and permeability, a new being – the collective response to the AIDS epidemic by ACT UP-Paris – is born from this carnal closeness with water's gestationality, which envisages a new queer futurity. This queer future reproduces collectivities that do not centre on the figurative Child, distinguishing itself from

the anti-social thesis proposed by Edelman and Jack Halberstam that equates reproduction with biological procreation. Moreover, the Seine in the city interweaves with Sean's body as a marker of shared vulnerability of social life, presenting HIV/AIDS as a challenge for human beings inhabiting a hydrocommon. The trans-corporeal subject formed from Sean and the Seine reveals HIV/AIDS as the result of both biological contagion and social and political events, and shows the severe losses queer people have experienced during this crisis.

While water might transmit toxic substances, and as bodily fluids be particularly risky regarding HIV transmission, what flows and connects through water across different bodies are also activism and care. By filming the collective trauma of the HIV/AIDS crisis in France during the early 1990s, Robin Campillo invites the audience to consider how the queer community can respond to challenges in contemporary society through bodies of water and their capacities of fluidity, permeability, gestationality, and trans-corporeality.

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