

**QUEER CINEMA AS A FIFTH CINEMA
IN SOUTH AFRICA AND AUSTRALIA**

Ricardo Peach

Thesis submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

March 2005

University of Technology, Sydney

CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP/ORIGINALITY

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of Candidate

I dedicate this thesis to my grandparents, Barend Willem Stapelberg,
Elisabeth Jacoba Maria Stapelberg (née Gouws), Hans Jacob Peach and
Gertruida Susanna Peach (née Pietersen)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Michael for his support over the many years it has taken to write this thesis. Michael, thank you for your love, presence, encouragement and heart.

To my parents, Pieter and Trinka Peach and my brother, Pieter Stapelberg Peach, a big *dankie* for your continued presence in my life and for always giving me *moed*.

To all my family in South Africa, I miss you terribly. You have been the driving force behind my life's work.

And the biggest thank you to my supervisors, Dr Helen Grace and the late Dr Phillip Kent, whose support, tough love and attention to detail taught me invaluable lessons. Thank you Helen and thank you Phillip.

An enormous thanks goes to my friend Dionne Lew, who read and reread this thesis innumerable times. Without you, this text would no doubt have had more Afrikaans linguistic structures than English!

I would also like to thank the staff and students at the University of Western Sydney for their support. I am extremely grateful to the School of Humanities and the Centre for Cultural Research at UWS for an Australian Postgraduate Scholarship, for bringing myself and my partner to Sydney from Perth, for funding my field trip to South Africa and also for numerous local and overseas conferences. To all my friends and teachers such as Zoe Sofoulis, Ien Ang, Elaine Lally, Sharon Chalmers, Amanda Wise, Selveraj Velayuthum, Francis Maravillas and Tanja Dreher, thank you.

My relocation to the University of Technology introduced me to numerous other people whom I have had the pleasure to meet. To Paul Ashton and all the staff at the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, thank you for your warm welcome.

Without two Visiting Fellowships at the Centre for Cross Cultural Research at the Australian National University, I would not have had the time or the focus to pull together the many ideas floating around in this thesis. To Mandy Thomas, Anne Marie O'Brien, Judith McDougal and all the teachers and PhD students there, thank you for your support.

In particular I would like to thank the people without whose commitment, energy and willingness to speak to me about Queer Cinema this thesis would not have been completed. In Australia thanks goes to Digby Duncan, Simon Hunt, Martine Cucke, Gayle Lake, Tony Grierson, Mark Woods, Toni Francis, Paulo Alberton, Fanny Jacobson, Megan McMurchy, Jan Chapman, Barbara Creed, Franco Di Chiero, Roger Ward, Marilyn Dooley, Fiona Nicoll, Bridget Pierce, Margot Nash and staff at the Australian Finance Commission, Screensound Australia, the Gay and Lesbian Archives of Australia in Melbourne and Queer Screen in Sydney.

In South Africa thanks goes to Mathew Krouse, Martin Botha, Jack Lewis, Nodie Murphy, Mark Gevisser, Luiz de Barros, Clive van den Berg, Ruth Morgan, Graham Reid and staff from the National Film, Video and Sound Archives of South Africa, the *Out in Africa* Film Festival Office, UNISA, the University of Pretoria, the University of the Witwatersrand and in particular GALA, the Gay and Lesbian Archives of South Africa.

Lastly, to all my friends who will be celebrating the submission of this thesis with me (somewhere where alcohol will be in plenty of supply), thank you for your patience and understanding. I will never again be turning down invitations to dinners, lunches, parties, picnics, exhibition openings, film festivals or all night dancing adventures, ever again.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

.....	1
Setting the Scene: The Birth of Film, the Boer War and Anti-Queer Sentiments in South Africa and Australia	3
Literature Review and Methodology.....	8
North-South and South-South Dialogues	12
Sydney and Capetown.....	18
Queer Rights in the Region	19
Chapter Summaries.....	20

1. QUEER THEORIES AND QUEER CINEMATIC CULTURES

.....	26
Queer's Epistemology and Etymological Origins.....	28
Strands of Queer Theories.....	30
Queer Theories' Local Inflections and Impact on Queer Cinematic Cultures in South Africa and Australia	36
South African Queer Theories	37
Australian Queer Theories.....	41
Queer Cinematic Cultures in Australia and South Africa.....	43
Towards a Heterognosis.....	46
Queer Strategies for Cinematic Cultures.....	48
Visibility/Coming Out	50
Documentation	56
Positive/Negative Images.....	61
Mobilisation	65
Access.....	66
Self-critique/Self Recognition	69
Diversification.....	72
Pleasure.....	76
Interventions	78
Queering.....	81
Conclusion.....	87

2. SKEEF: A BRIEF HISTORY OF SOUTH AFRICAN QUEER CINEMATIC CULTURES

.....	88
<i>Sarie Marais: Queering Early South African Cinema</i>	90
Cross-Dressing with Al Debbo and Frik Burgers	93
Ernst Thorpe	97
Apartheid.....	103
Parallel Queer Histories.....	107
Forrest Town and the Club Scenes	111
Emerging Queer Film in the 1970s.....	113
Army Movies	114
Queer South African Films in the 1980s.....	117
Queers, Politics and Video Evenings in the 1980s	118
Braamfontein Weekend Theatre.....	124
International Queer Cinematic Influences	127
Emerging Gay and Lesbian/Queer Film Festivals	130
The Problem with Racism and the Delmas Treason Trials.....	131
The First Local Queer Films	135
Towards the New South Africa.....	143
The First <i>Out in Africa</i> Gay and Lesbian Film Festival.....	145
Political Outcomes: The National Gay and Lesbian Coalition	152
Township Showings.....	153
<i>Skeef Cinema Entja: New Queer South African Cinema</i>	155
African Lesbian Images	162
Towards the Future: South African Queer Cinematic Support.....	164
Conclusion.....	165

3. THE WOLF IS AFTER YOUR BASKET! A BRIEF HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN QUEER CINEMATIC CULTURES

.....	167
Natural Born Milkers: Queering Early Australian Cinema.....	170
Silent Crossings: <i>Sunshine Sally</i> and <i>Jewelled Nights</i>	172
Queering the Talkies	178
Trimmed with Feathers: War and the Emergence of Queer Sub-Cultures	183
From the Movements: The 1970s and the Birth of Queer Australian Cinematic Cultures.....	187
Film and Activism	189
Queer Australian Films in the 1970s.....	191
Ubu and Independent Film.....	198
The Sydney Film-makers Co-Operative.....	200
The Women's Movement, Film and Consciousness Raising.....	203
The Gay Film Fund, 1976-1980	207
The Beginning of Gay and Lesbian/Queer Film Festivals	211
The First Gay Film Festival	211
<i>The Word is Out</i>	214
A Decade of Grief: Queer Australian Cinema in the 1980s	217
Queer Film Festivals, Pride and Mardi Gras.....	218
Gay Male Law Reform and Annual Queer Film Festivals	220
Queer Australian Film in the 1980s	223
HIV/AIDS	224
Coming Out.....	225
Feminist Filmmaking and Women's Films.....	227
Experimental Aesthetics and Ideology	230
A Pink List?	233
Burning Down the Celluloid Closet: Queer Australian Cinematic Cultures from the 1990s Onward	235
The Emergence of Queer Screen	238
Queer Australian Features.....	243
Double Trouble: Queer Australian Cinematic Diversity	246
Towards the Future: New Mardi Gras	252
Conclusion.....	253

4. INSTITUTIONAL AND POLICY CONTEXTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF QUEER CINEMATIC CULTURES IN SOUTH AFRICA AND AUSTRALIA

.....255

The Impact of Censorship and Local Film Industries on Queer Cinematic Cultures in South Africa and Australia257

 Censorship of Queer Cinema in South Africa and Australia257

 Early Cinematic Censorship in South Africa258

 Early Cinematic Censorship in Australia260

 Easing of Censorship in Australia 262

 Increasing Censorship in South Africa263

 Censorship Liberalisation in South Africa?265

 Post-Apartheid South Africa268

 Return to the Vowsers Land269

 Local Film Industries and their Effect on Queer Cinematic Cultures in South Africa and Australia275

 Subsidising Cinematic Cultures275

 Film Subsidies in South Africa276

 Film Subsidies in Australia278

 Emerging South African Funding Problems279

 Emerging Australian Queer Films in the 1970s and 1980s281

 Queer Film Funding in the 1980s in Australia284

 South African Queer Films Emerging in the late 1980s287

 Queer Australian Films from the 1990s Onwards290

 Queer South African Films from the 1990s Onwards293

 Future Funding Opportunities297

 Comparative Cinematic Analysis299

 Activism and Consciousness Raising through Queer Film and Video299

 Australia300

 South Africa302

 Queer Cinematic Hybridity through Euro-American Transfers and Mimicry305

Australia	306
South Africa.....	308
Queer Cinematic Cross-Cultural Exchanges between South Africa and Australia.....	310
Queer Race Privilege	315
Revolutionary Films and Film Festivals.....	320
Conclusion.....	324
5. QUEER CINEMA AS A FIFTH CINEMA	326
.....	
From First to Fifth Cinema.....	328
First Cinema.....	331
Second Cinema.....	333
Third Cinema.....	335
Fourth Cinema.....	339
Fifth Cinema: Contesting Internal Colonisation.....	342
Queer Cinema in South Africa and Australia as a Fifth Cinema.....	347
6. CONCLUSION	351
.....	
LIST OF IMAGES.....	360
BIBLIOGRAPHY	365

Synopsis

Australia had the world's first gay film festival at the Sydney Filmmakers Co-op in June 1976, part of a larger commemoration of the Stonewall Riots in New York City of 1969. In 1994, South Africa became the first country in the world to prohibit discrimination in its constitution on the basis of sexual orientation, whilst allowing for positive discrimination to benefit persons disadvantaged by unfair discrimination. South Africa and Australia, both ex-British colonies, are used in this analysis to explore the way local Queer Cinematic Cultures have negotiated and continue to negotiate dominant social forces in post-colonial settings.

It is rare to have analyses of Queer Cinematic Cultures and even rarer to have texts dealing with cultures outside those of Euro-America. This study offers a unique window into the formations of Queer Cinematic Cultures of two nations of the 'South'. It reveals important new information on how sexual minorities from nations outside the Euro-American sphere have dealt with and continue to deal with longstanding Queer cinematic oppressions.

A pro-active relationship between Queer representation in film and social-political action is considered by academics such as Dennis Altman to be essential for significant social and judicial change. The existence of Queer and other independent films in Sydney from the 1960s onward, impacted directly on sexuality, race and gender activism. In South Africa, the first major Queer film festival, *The Out In Africa* Gay and Lesbian Film Festival in 1994, was instrumental in developing and maintaining a post-Apartheid Queer public sphere which fostered further legal change.

Given the significant histories of activism through Queer Cinematic Cultures in both Australia and South Africa, I propose in this thesis the existence of a new genus of cinema, which I term Fifth Cinema. Fifth Cinema includes Feminist Cinema, Queer Cinema and Immigrant/Multicultural Cinema and deals with the oppressions which cultures engage with within their own cultural boundaries. It can be informed by First Cinema (classical, Hollywood), Second Cinema (Art House or dual national cinemas), Third and Fourth Cinema (cinemas dealing with the decolonisation of Third World and Fourth World people), but it develops its unique characteristics by countering internal cultural colonisation. Fifth Cinema functions as a heterognosis, where multi-dimensional representations around sexuality, race and gender are used to assist in broader cultural liberation.