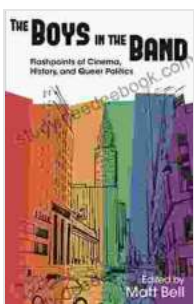


Flashpoints of Cinema History and Queer Politics: Contemporary Approaches

The relationship between cinema history and queer politics is a complex and multifaceted one, marked by both progress and setbacks, ruptures and alliances. This article explores some of the key flashpoints where cinema and queer politics have intersected, examining the ways in which queer experiences, identities, and perspectives have been represented, suppressed, and contested on screen. It also investigates the impact of queer activism and scholarship on the evolution of cinema, showcasing how these movements have challenged traditional narratives and expanded the boundaries of cinematic expression.

Early Cinema and the Suppression of Queerness

In the early days of cinema, queerness was largely invisible on screen. This was due in part to the prevailing social and cultural norms of the time, which stigmatized and criminalized same-sex relationships. As a result, filmmakers were reluctant to depict queer characters or themes in their films, fearing censorship or public backlash.



The Boys in the Band: Flashpoints of Cinema, History, and Queer Politics (Contemporary Approaches to Film and Media Series) by Stephen Vider

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However, there were a few notable exceptions to this rule. One of the earliest examples of a queer character in cinema is the character of the "fairy godmother" in the 1903 film "Cinderella." This character is portrayed as a flamboyant and effeminate man, and his inclusion in the film is significant because it challenges the traditional gender roles of the time.

Another early example of queer representation in cinema is the film "Pandora's Box" (1929), directed by G.W. Pabst. This film tells the story of a young woman who is drawn into a life of prostitution and drug addiction. The film is notable for its sympathetic portrayal of its protagonist, and it is one of the first films to depict a lesbian relationship in a positive light.

The Hays Code and the Lavender Scare

In the 1930s, the Motion Picture Production Code, also known as the Hays Code, was adopted by the major Hollywood studios. This code imposed a strict set of censorship guidelines on films, and it effectively banned the depiction of queerness on screen.

The Hays Code remained in effect for nearly three decades, and it had a significant impact on the representation of queerness in cinema. During this period, queer characters were either completely absent from films or they were portrayed in a negative and stereotypical way.

In the 1950s, the Lavender Scare, a period of anti-gay persecution in the United States, further intensified the suppression of queerness in cinema.

During this time, many gay and lesbian people were fired from their jobs, blacklisted from the entertainment industry, and even imprisoned.

The Lavender Scare had a chilling effect on the representation of queerness in cinema. Filmmakers were afraid to depict queer characters or themes in their films, fearing that they would be targeted by the government or the public.

The Stonewall Riots and the Rise of Queer Cinema

The Stonewall Riots of 1969 marked a watershed moment in the history of queer politics. These riots, which were sparked by a police raid on a gay bar in New York City, led to a new wave of queer activism and visibility.

The Stonewall Riots also had a significant impact on the representation of queerness in cinema. In the years that followed, a number of films were released that dealt with queer themes in a more open and honest way.

One of the most important of these films is "The Boys in the Band" (1970), directed by William Friedkin. This film tells the story of a group of gay men who gather for a birthday party. The film is notable for its realistic portrayal of gay life, and it is one of the first films to feature an all-gay cast.

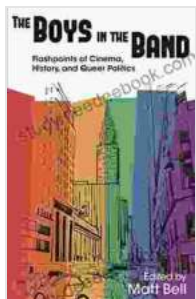
Another significant film of this period is "Dog Day Afternoon" (1975), directed by Sidney Lumet. This film tells the story of a bank robbery that is botched by two gay men. The film is notable for its sympathetic portrayal of its gay characters, and it is one of the first films to deal with the issue of homophobia.

Contemporary Queer Cinema

In the years since the Stonewall Riots, queer cinema has continued to evolve and flourish. There have been a number of important films released that have dealt with queer themes in a groundbreaking way.

One of the most influential queer films of recent years is "Moonlight" (2016), directed by Barry Jenkins. This film tells the story of a young black man growing up in a poor neighborhood in Miami. The film is notable for its lyrical beauty, its honest portrayal of black gay life, and its groundbreaking Oscar win for Best Picture.

Another important queer film of recent years is "The Favourite" (2018), directed by Yorgos Lanthimos. This film tells the story of a love triangle between Queen



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