Queer Possibilities in Teen Friendships in Film, 2000-2009

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to determine how representations of dyadic teen homosocial bonds and relationships in film lend themselves to queer possibilities. Looking at teens in film across genre, certain *types* of dyadic homosocial relationships emerge: the best friendship, the antagonistic teen girl friendship, the boys friendship within a wider homosocial milieu, and friendships which fit these types but include gay and lesbian characters. I ground the research by establishing a record of the films released theatrically in the UK between 2000 and 2009 with teens as primary characters, and develop a qualitative and textual analysis of dyadic homosocial relationship types which illuminates their queer possibilities as well as the modes of denial and compensation which may accompany the threat those queer possibilities represent.

As it investigates the policing of gender and heterosexual norms in teen homosocial relationships in key texts such as *Aquamarine* (Allen 2006), *Superbad* (Mottola 2007), *Thirteen* (Hardwicke 2003), *The Covenant* (Harlin 2006), *Evil* (Håfström 2003), and *My Summer of Love* (Pawlikowski 2004), the research here expands teen film studies, and applies queer reading practices to an often under-analysed segment of film. It also contributes to gender studies, as the findings here point to the ways that boys continue to be tied to physicality, violence, and athleticism, while girls continue to be tied to mirrors, masquerade, and manipulation. The move to include a variety of genres allows a consideration of how genre-specific tools of analysis, such as those developed in relation to the teen film genre or to dyadic homosocial relationship films such as the buddy film and female friendship film, can be productively mobilised *across* genres. Issues such as denial of homosocial desire through displacement, triangulated relationships, and passing heterosexual foils link these films to the history of films about homoerotic homosocial friendships.

I argue here that queer possibilities are present in a wide variety of otherwise heteronormative films. My arguments centre on structures of desire and denial within homosocial friendships, as well as to the similarities between the heteronormative representations of homosocial desire and those present in specifically gay and lesbian narratives. The ways that these emerge are gender and age specific. By bringing out the denied and repressed homoerotic desires in these films, I demonstrate their existence in various forms. The thesis demonstrates that, in keeping with dyadic homosocial relationships between adult characters, in representations of dyadic homosocial bonds, the boundaries between homosocial/homosexual remains fluid in friendships between teen girls while it is much more rigidly separated in friendships between teen boys, primarily through homophobia, even in films containing gay and lesbian main characters.

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Acknowledgements

Author's Declaration

This thesis represents the original work of Katherine Hughes unless otherwise stated in the text. The research upon which it is based was carried out at the University of Glasgow under the supervision of Dr Karen Boyle and Professor Christine Geraghty during the period October 2008 to August 2012.

Chapter 1 Introduction: Queer Possibilities in Teen Relationships

This research has emerged partly from my experiences growing up in 1990s America. As a teen, I felt starved for images of openly gay and lesbian teens with whom I could identify. Certainly such images were totally absent in mainstream teen films unless serving to further heterosexual plotlines, as in *Clueless* (Heckerling 1995), or quickly recuperated to heteronormativity, as in *Cruel Intentions* (Kumble 1999). Fortunately, in my late teens I was exposed through older friends to the spat of gay and lesbian teen films which were produced on low budgets and minimally distributed in the mid to late 1990s.[1] Even outside the cinema, however, high certifications meant that these films were only available with the help of adults, and could not totally satisfy the demand for a range of images.

One of the ways my friends and I dealt with the absence of recognisable images of ourselves on the mainstream screen was to imagine that the heterocentric texts that were so prevalent actually contained covert queer desires which only we could see. This helped us to destabilise the normative images to which we were exposed, and also helped us to recognise our own desires in film and television texts. The project of this thesis has grown partly out of my experiences of searching for texts, or moments in texts, which reflected the kinds of non-heteronormative lives my friends and I were living. Certainly these practices correspond to the queer reading practices which have been a popular aspect of gay, lesbian, and queer film studies since at least the 1970s.

The project of this thesis has developed as an expansion and development of those queer reading practices. The key questions this thesis asks are:

▪ How do representations of teenagers in film lend themselves to queer possibilities?

▪ More specifically, what are the key bonds in representations of teenagers? How do these relationships present queer possibilities? Aside from the nearly

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[1] Some of these were: *Heavenly Creatures* (Jackson, 1994), *All Over Me* (Seidel, 1997), *Beautiful Thing* (Macdonald, 1996), *Edge of Seventeen* (Moreton, 1998), *The Incredibly True Adventures of Two Girls in Love* (Maggenti, 1995), *But I'm a Cheerleader* (Babbitt, 1999), and films about older gays and lesbians like *High Art* (Cholodenko, 1998), *Bound* (Wachowski & Wachowski, 1996), and *Go Fish* (Troche, 1994).

requisite heterosexual romance, what other relationships are important for teens in film?

- Looking at these relationships across genre, what *types* of relationships emerge, and how do those types dictate particular patterns of queer possibilities?

The aims of the thesis are, then:

- To establish a thorough (as possible) record of the films released theatrically in the UK between 2000 and 2009 with teens as primary characters, and then to determine through viewings the kinds of relationships present in these films.

- To develop an analysis of these relationship types which illuminates their queer possibilities as well as the modes of denial and compensation which may accompany the threat those possibilities represent.

- To consider these relationship types as they play out across genres, and to therefore expand the work done on teenagers in film – to compare relationships in films which might not fit comfortably together in order to see how their representative practices speak to each other.

This introductory chapter will next sketch the scope of the research here, before moving through the definitions of 'teenager,' 'liminality,' and 'queer' which will underpin the arguments throughout this thesis. These terms have historically been used quite differently depending on the context, so establishing the specific definitions here will be vital to making sense of this research, and will also provide a basis for the literature review which immediately follows. This chapter will finally outline the structure of the thesis as a whole.

Scope

The first step in answering the key questions of this thesis was to locate images of teens in film. This was done by gathering data from the 'In Cinemas' section of *Empire Magazine*. *Empire* is a monthly film magazine, and 'In Cinemas' covers all films released theatrically in the United Kingdom each month, offering reviews of varying lengths along with some generic shorthand and production information. To determine which films would offer images of teenagers for analysis, I read through the reviews published in the 'In Cinemas' section for each month, from January 2000 to December 2009. The data gathered,

therefore, represents an attempt at a complete record of images of teens in films released in the UK between 2000 and 2009. While the reviews published in *Empire* did not use consistent language in describing plots and characters, any use of descriptors such as 'teen', 'young', 'youth', 'high school', 'adolescent', 'coming-of-age', 'rite-of-passage', etc. was taken as an indicator of potential eligibility.[2] The data gathered in this way was then compiled into a database in which I recorded information such as release date, certification, director, keywords from the review, *Empire*'s generic descriptions, the issue of *Empire* in which the review appeared. To complement the keywords and generic descriptions, as well as to corroborate information like certification and release date, each film was also checked in the Internet Movie Database (www.imdb.com, IMDb from here on), and IMDb's first three listed generic descriptions, which tend to be more general than *Empire*'s, were added to the record of each film.[3]

Though the 'Images of Teens' chapter of this thesis will go into greater detail about the data gathering and findings, it is enough to say here that films were chosen not because they fit into the teen film genre, but simply because teenagers were primary characters. Films were then selected from this longer list based on their focus on dyadic homosocial relationships, and then divided by relationship *type*. There are films in the database which are considered quite central to the teen film genre which have not made their way into the analysis in this thesis. These include films with ensemble casts such as the teen sex comedy and American football subgenres; likewise films which focus on a singular primary character have not been included. Rather, as the research focuses on dyadic homosocial relationships, films have been chosen which focus specifically on these kinds of friendships. Though certainly queer possibilities exist in ensemble films and films about single characters, these are issues for another thesis.

Perhaps the first question to elaborate in relation to the aims of the thesis is, why teens? I certainly wasn't limited as a teenager to finding moments only in texts about teens, so why limit the research in this specific way? The thesis limits its focus to films about teenagers because the teen is a figure heavily

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[2] A discussion of many of these terms in relation to the work in this thesis as well as to genre analysis will follow in the next chapter.

[3] IMDb often includes long lists of relevant genres, usually listed in order of relevance. For this reason, only the first three listed genres were included in the database.

imbued with social meanings: as a metaphor for social relations more generally, as a nostalgic reminder of identity formation, as a rehearsal of socialisation. This is partly to do with the teenager's association with, and position vis-à-vis, identity development.

While teen films as a genre have been often denigrated by critics and dismissed as 'silly' or 'rubbish',[4] that genre has also been one of the only vehicles addressed critically in thinking about teens in film. Very rarely are teens looked at outside the teen film genre, but this research aims to do just that: to take on board the modes of analysis usually directed at teen genre films, to test how far they can be taken with films outside that genre, and to think about the kinds of commonalities and differences which emerge from an examination of teens in film across genre, nation, mode. Likewise, it will seek to expand the scope of queer readings, in thinking about how such practices can be applied to thinking about teenagers.

The specific time period chosen for this thesis, 2000-2009, is important in two ways: first, because it usefully sets the thesis up as recording teens in film after the cycle of teen films released in the late 1990s, along with the scholarly interest in the teen film which followed; second, it *limits* the thesis to recent representations. Much work[5] on representations of teenagers in film tends to focus heavily on specific aspects of the teen film genre, in particular 'canonical' films like the 1980s films written and/or directed by John Hughes and the popular American teen films of the late 1990s.[6] The scope of this thesis purposefully excludes these canonical texts in order to focus on more recent output as well as to broaden the scope of this research on teen representations to stretch across genre as stated above and outside of the popular canon.

While the mode of analysis in the thesis is not strictly one which evaluates the 'images of' teenagers, representations are the basis of the research. That being said, the thesis is uninterested in declaring the representations 'good' or 'bad' versions of teenage sexuality, but rather seeks to understand how the

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[4] See for example Martin 1994

[5] Such as Lewis 1992, Shary 2000 & 2006, Kaveney 2006, and Driscoll 2011

[6] Hughes films include *Sixteen Candles* (1984), *The Breakfast Club* (1985), *Weird Science* (1985), *Pretty in Pink* (Howard Deutch, 1986), *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* (1986), and *Some Kind of Wonderful* (Howard Deutch, 1987). Films from the late 1990s include *Scream* (Wes Craven 1996), *I Know What You Did Last Summer* (Jim Gillespie, 1997), *Can't Hardly Wait* (Harry Elfont & Deborah Kaplan, 1998), *She's All That* (Robert Iscove, 1999), *American Pie* (Paul Weitz, 1999), *10 Things I Hate About You* (Gil Junger 1999), etc.

representations work, and how they open particular possibilities within the text. A more thorough discussion of 'images of' studies follows in the literature review, but in defining the scope of the work in this thesis, it needs to be said that this is not intended as the sort of 'positive/negative images' work which can result from a representative study.

The organising principle of this thesis is a set of relationship types, whose outlines emerged during the course of the research. Examining the function and framing of *dyadic homosocial* relationships among teenage characters allows this thesis to analyse the work that goes in to maintain the boundaries of those relationships. The use of the word homosocial in this thesis is based on Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's work on men's relationships in eighteenth century English literature in *Between Men* (1985). In it, she points out that while homosocial merely means same-sex sociality, it also has obvious links with the very similar homosexual, and is defined in relation to, and as differentiated from, the latter (2). Homosocial describes, then, a range of bonds between same-sex individuals; this thesis aims to explore those bonds to think about the ways that the boundaries between categories like heterosexual and homosexual, friendship and romance, are established and destabilised in representations of teenagers.

From the larger selection of films about teens gathered for this research, only those films which focused on dyadic homosocial relationships, or which revolved around them, were eligible for analysis in the thesis. Though this may seem like a normalising step in terms of understanding desire as existing strictly between two people, such relationships are also the most likely to mirror romantic or sexual relationships. Focusing on couples also allows the thesis to attend to the narrative intensity of dyadic relationships. Within this narrower scope, several types of dyadic friendships emerged. The 'Close Relations' chapter examines the 'best friend' relationship. These relationships are found in depictions of both teen boys and teen girls, and the friendships themselves tend to be positively valued within the film. The 'Frenemies' chapter turns to relationships between pairs of girls which are both close and antagonistic, while the 'Boys' chapter looks at pairs of boys within wider homosocial environments. Finally, the 'More Than Friends' chapter looks at dyadic homosocial friendships in films which depict gay and lesbian teens. Each of these sets of relationships is defined in part by the gender of the teens, and this too is reflected in the chapter organisation.

The depictions of each type of relationship reflect the representability of particular kinds of dyadic homosocial bonds, and the similarities and differences between the representations of these relationship types will provide opportunities to explore what is possible to say in films about teenagers. This thesis will propose that these relationships exist along a continuum, similar to Sedgwick's homosocial continuum and Adrienne Rich's lesbian continuum; these ideas will be expanded in the literature review to follow this chapter.

Definitions

This thesis arose, then, from an interest in images of teens in film and a sense of kinship with queer reading practices. But what are teenagers, how do I understand liminality, and how is queer being used here? This section will define these key terms as they will be used in this thesis.

Teens

Teenager characters are understood in this research to be aged between twelve and twenty. Academic discussions about teens in film have primarily focused on the teen film genre, and generic traits of the teen in film have been more important to these studies than strict age-related boundaries. Because the teen is understood in this research as a figure which *crosses* genres, it is necessary to restrict what is meant by *teenager* more than discussions of the teen film genre usually do. Often, the teen in the teen film genre is expanded outside of representations of the teenager proper because generic concerns incorporate films about college students and other young adults depicted in an 'extended' adolescence. Other definitions, beyond age, have also come up in teen film studies writing, including many which rely on 'a sensibility' which includes 'youthfulness' but is not limited to it, and which 'explains why neither [the] subject matter nor [the] appeal [of teen films] is confined to teenagers' (Driscoll 2011, 2). As the interest in this thesis is in a figure which cuts across modes and genres, these more vague definitions, which may fit within the teen film genre but are not necessarily helpful beyond generic texts, will not be considered here.

Why teens? First, teens are at the crossroads between child and adult, and are therefore moving through a liminal period; second, the teen years are those

during which sexuality and sexual identity should be successfully established according to heteronormative patriarchal culture;[7] and third, though heterosexual reiteration is present in films about adults as well, the majority of representations of teens are predicated on heterosexuality.[8] Why should this be? If heterosexuality is not established during the teen years, is there a danger that perhaps it won't be established at all? Films about teens are particularly apt for producing queer possibilities because of the liminality of teens. This is specifically because, in hetero texts, heterosexuality is *in the process* of being established, and the same goes for gay and lesbian texts – the process of establishing identity and practice is literally played out on screen. The process of becoming adult is made visible, and liminality is the subject and the structure of such films.

Historically, psychoanalysts have argued that teens should establish heterosexuality by moving from strong same-sex identification and attachments to cross-sex desires. According to Peter Blos, writing in 1979,

> the coming to terms with [or repression of] the homosexual component in pubertal sexuality is an implicit developmental task of adolescence. In fact, we might say that the sexual identity formation is predicated on the completion of that process. (479)

Though this argument is dated, more recent writers have continued to frame gay and lesbian teens as something definitionally different or deviant from the 'normal' process enacted by heterosexual teens.[9] What this thesis aims to argue is that, in fact, representations of the teen years are about, in large part, depicting the establishment sexuality, but that it is not as clear-cut as the adoption of *either* hetero *or* homosexual identities; it is in fact a muddled mix of relationships, whose boundaries are not as rigid as such psychoanalytic definitions assume. As films about teenagers are definitionally about the liminal years between childhood and adulthood, they are also able to depict the liminal moment when homosocial attachments are (theoretically) sacrificed for heterosexual ones; teens are, therefore, in between homosexuality and heterosexuality, as well. How, then, do these films depict 'coming to terms with the homosexual component' in the teen years and, specifically, in teen dyadic

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[7] Moore & Rosenthal 2006

[8] See Kaveney 2006, Shary 2002 & 2006, Driscoll 2011, etc.

[9] See Griffin 1993; Coleman & Hendry 1999; Moore & Rosenthal 2006

homosocial relationships? It is in these liminal spaces that this research will look for queer possibilities in films about teens.

Liminality

As can be seen in the previous section, the liminality of teen characters underpins my arguments in this thesis. Liminality is understood here as both a spatial and a temporal phenomenon, representing the time between childhood and adulthood, and also the physical threshold of a changing body. This is also an institutionally liminal period: in many school systems, for example, there is a separation between the primary school of childhood and schooling in the teen years. Laws about labour and consent change, but often full rights and responsibilities are not bestowed until the very end of the teen years: in other words, the end of the liminal period. According to anthropologist Victor Turner, the liminal period of youth is constituted by rites of passage, in which the 'process [...] becoming [...] transformation' between 'relatively fixed and stable' social positions take place (1967, 93-4). In the liminal period of transition, an individual moving through the teen years is neither a child nor an adult and becomes instead a 'liminal *persona*' who is 'at once no longer classified and not yet classified' and whose 'condition is one of ambiguity and paradox' (Turner 1967, 94-7).

Teens are moving from childhood to adulthood, but are neither. They are also moving from pre- or a- sexuality which is presumed to be pre-heterosexuality,[10] toward adult heteronormative behaviours. But again, teens are neither. They are certainly no longer pre- or a- sexual, but they are not yet able to function successfully as adult heterosexuals. This of course is also true for the establishment of adult homonormativity, although the circumstances and institutional support are not quite the same. The teen years are years of transition, of being 'betwixt and between' various states of being. This means that, potentially, teen identities and desires are amorphous, shifting, and uncertain. I would like to suggest a link between destabilised categories of identity and desire during the liminal teen years and the political project around

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[10] Childhood sexuality is, however, also associated with perversity and queer desire, which also permits the argument that teens move between a state of queerness and heteronormativity. For more on this see: Kathryn Bond Stockton's 2009 *The Queer Child or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century*, and Karen Lury's 2010 *The Child in Film: Tears, Fears and Fairytales*.

the word queer, which seeks to destabilise both heteronormativity and homonormativity. The political assertion of 'queering' a text by destabilising naturalised categories is already always possible or present in teen texts; the categories are already unstable, and therefore the potential for queerness pervades texts about teenagers.

In depicting the process of moving through a liminal state, films about teens necessarily become open to the possibilities of queer desires. The ambiguous status of these liminal personae means that such films depict the very moment of instability, the very moment of negotiation. These films may appear to move along a predetermined trajectory toward hetero- or homo-romance and sexuality, however they also depict the *moments of becoming*, of moving from pre- or a- sexuality into a normative heterosexuality or occasionally homosexual. Thus, as characters are depicted actually becoming heterosexual, or occasionally homosexual, they are shown, spatially and temporally, in between the binaries nonsexual/sexual, hetero/homo, child/adult. The ambiguity and unfixity of these moments in representations of teens provide temporary space for other kinds of identities and desires before the narrative's normalising conclusion. Part of the project of this dissertation is to determine what differences, if any, exist between representations of heterosexual and homosexual rites of passage. The instability of 'becoming,' and the in-between-ness of the liminal state, in either case, opens spaces in the narrative for queer possibilities, and for the temporary disruption of the stability of binary categories. Drawing a link between the time and space of liminality and of queerness will hopefully add to the complexity of each and to their potential for film analysis.

Queer

What does it mean, though, to refer to 'queer possibilities'? There are two distinct (though related) meanings of the word queer as used in both academic and popular discourse: as a mode of criticism which deconstructs established and normalised categories, and as an identity which aims to move beyond such categories to establish less fixed, less restrictive, less universalising identificatory practices. Indeed, queer posits 'identity as provisional and contingent' (Jagose 1996, 77), as opposed in particular to fixed and normalising

identity categories (for instance, gay, lesbian, bisexual, straight). For film studies in particular,

> queer is descriptive of the textual (and extra-textual) spaces wherein normative heterosexuality is threatened, critiqued, camped up, or shown to be an unstable performative identity. (Benshoff & Griffin 2004, 2)

This thesis is not trying to reclaim or appropriate heterosexual texts (if there is, ultimately, such a text) as gay, lesbian, or queer texts. It is, however, trying to open spaces within texts for queer moments which work against the heteronormative drive of the teenage years, and to complicate the heterocentric assumptions of teen genre film scholars. However, I am interested in disrupting not only heteronormativity, but normalising categories more generally. One of queer theory's key contributions, in fact, is the destabilisation of binary gender categories, and critical attention to the specificities of the connections between sex, gender, and desire.

In the foundational queer studies text *Gender Trouble* (1999 [1990]), Judith Butler argues that 'under conditions of normative heterosexuality, policing gender is sometimes used as a way of securing heterosexuality' (xii). This is because, she explains, normative gender and heterosexuality are linked together in regimes of power. While she does not go so far as to say that sexual practices create genders, she does point to the ways in which definitions of sexual categories are reliant on gender categories, and specifically the normative and imbalanced binary masculine/feminine. She argues that 'the "unity" of gender is the effect of a regulatory practice that seeks to render gender identity uniform through a compulsory heterosexuality' (42). Gender norms and heterosexual norms are knitted together, and are dependent on each other for enforcement.

Butler argues that gender has no fixed referent, and is 'not a noun' (33), but in fact is constituted by its own enactment; the regulatory practice of gender is performative, via constant reiteration, so that

> gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed [...] identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results. (33)

Likewise, heteronormativity, supported by and interwoven with gender norms, is also enacted through repetition and policing of its own 'logic [...] and [...] naturalized ontologies' (42). This research posits that narrative films present an interesting case, in that the regulatory practices and reiterations involved in

shaping heterosexuality and gender norms are made visible; the repetition of gender policing and of heterosexual romances enact a filmic and therefore visual version of Butler's model of performative reiterations.

This research will use not presume a queer identity of any character, relationship, or film unless it is specifically stated, and therefore queer will not be used as a synonym for gay or lesbian. Instead, 'queer' will be used primarily to identify non-normative behaviours and practices, particularly those functioning to destabilise normative categories like binary gender and heterocentric sexuality. The thesis will investigate the ways that representations of teenagers contain regulatory practices which reiterate gender and sexual norms, as well as moments of rupture; these moments of rupture are the spaces in which queer possibilities appear. Though the thesis cannot argue that films about teens are *intentionally queer*, particularly vis-à-vis queer as an identity (anti)category, it will argue, through strategies of active spectatorship, that via both containment and excess, representations of teenagers slip between regulatory reiterations and moments in which possibilities for disruption and destabilisation of normative categories exist.

Chapter Outline

This introductory chapter has outlined the origins, key questions, primary aims, and scope of this thesis. It has provided some basic definitions which will underpin the analysis which follows.

Chapter 2 of this thesis, 'Teens in Film: Genre, Gender, and Representation,' builds on this foundation in order to establish the critical context of the research presented here, in particular around teens in film and the teen film genre, and around queer reading practices. The first section, which deals with teen film studies, gives an account of the development of the field and points to the ways that teen film studies are limited by their generic focus as well as their heteronormative emphasis. The section then moves on to discuss some of the studies which do deal with gay and lesbian teens as well as films outside the genre, which moves the chapter towards a discussion of the 'images of' representational debates.

The next section of the chapter picks up on these debates to outline the history of 'images of' studies, and their particular relevance to representations of gays and lesbians. The section outlines the limits of usefulness such 'images

of' studies have, and considers whether 'representations matter'. Further, this section includes a discussion of representational histories of gays and lesbians in order to situate the way that the films in this thesis present the possibility and spectre of homosexuality, as well as to contextualise the films in the 'More Than Friends' chapter. These histories are primarily weighted with stereotypical character types for both gays and lesbians, but also with associations between gay and lesbian characters and violence, aggression, emasculation, and gender presentation.

The third section of Chapter 2 looks at queer reading practices, moving from Barthes' discussion of codes and connotation, through more contemporary queer reading practices such as Alexander Doty's readings of classic films and Clare Whatling and Andrea Weiss's discussion of star personas. This section will also consider the heavily adult-leaning nature of most queer readings with some discussion of the literature on queer children; rarely are queer readings actually aimed at teenagers. By establishing the more traditional applications of queer readings, towards adults and also towards 'classic' Hollywood texts, this section sets up the thesis to challenge and expand queer reading practices.

The fourth section will outline issues around gender performance. This starts with a discussion of the work of Mary Ann Doane, Judith Butler, and Chris Holmlund on masquerade and gender performance, and then moves on to look at homosocial relationships more closely. Sedgwick's homosocial continuum and Rich's lesbian continuum are discussed more thoroughly here, in order to set up the dyadic homosocial relationship type continuum which this thesis proposes. The section then provides a history of studies dealing with the buddy film, in order to contextualise the analysis of dyadic homosocial boys' relationships in the thesis, followed by a similar history of female friendship films which contextualises the analysis of dyadic homosocial girls' relationships. This work helps to set out particular patterns of dyadic homosocial relationships in film such as triangulation, the expression of heterosexuality through homosociality, and doubling and mimicry.

The final section of Chapter 2 will indicate the gaps in the literature discussed in the chapter, as well as the ways that the work done so far will shape this thesis.

Chapter 3, 'Images of Teens,' will unpack the data compiled for this research. This will include a discussion of some of the broad patterns which

emerge from the data compiled of the representation of teens in film, with particular attention to gender, genre, and sexuality. This overview emerges from my research on all films with teens identified by *Empire Magazine* from January 2000 to December 2009. A total of 267 films form the basis of the discussion. The discussion will also compare the data with the patterns claimed by teen film scholars as discussed in Chapter 2. The analysis of these patterns will contribute to knowledge of the representation of teenagers between 2000 and 2009.

Following these three contextualising chapters, four textual analysis chapters will move through the four sets of dyadic relationship types: the best friend, the antagonistic dyadic girls' relationship, the boys' dyadic relationship within a homosocial environment, and the dyadic homosocial relationship in films with gay and lesbian characters. The chapters cut across genres as they are organised by gender and relationship type. These chapters explain and contextualise the specific film selection before moving on to present close comparative textual analysis of a selection of films which represent the relationship type in question.

The first of these chapters, Chapter 4, is entitled 'Close Relations'. This chapter considers the 'best friend' relationships between pairs of boys and pairs of girls, and sets up the structures of constraint and excess which characterise teen representations. The narratives of these films operate structurally using sets of couples, with the primary friendship being the primary couple. All other couplings operate in relation to that primary couple. Above all else, the primary coupling is emotionally dominant, and is privileged over heterosexual couples.

The gender difference between the two sets of films is the most obvious difference, but what is also clear in comparing films about teen boys' best friendships and those of teen girls is the way that age plays into these representations. In terms of tone and of address, those films featuring teen girls' friendships focus on pre-sexual narratives, seeming to consciously address a very young audience, while those films featuring teen boys' friendships are comparatively highly sexual and address a much older audience. This raises questions about the representability of friendships between older, potentially sexual teen girls which will be taken up in the next chapter.

Chapter 5, 'Frenemies', looks closely at teenage girls caught up in antagonistic and obsessive dyadic friendships, and links these antagonisms with associations between lesbianism, violence, and subjectivity. These antagonistic

and aggressive relationships are the form that representations of sexually developing teen girls take; what does that mean for these girls? The chapter looks at gender performance and masquerade, as the primary pair on which each film focuses double each other and, within each pair, the protagonist adopts the masquerade of excessive femininity worn by her best friend/frenemy. In each of these films, however, the protagonist must eventually abandon the masquerade and the frenemy in order to reach adulthood and a more 'authentic' femininity. However this slippage between an 'authentic' and an adopted and false femininity undermine the stability of naturalised categories such as gender, and therefore call into question the naturalness of heterosexuality as a category built on gender norms. The obsessive desire for and doubling of the frenemy by the protagonist aligns these narratives with lesbian representational histories, further destabilising the heteronormativity of these narratives.

Chapter 6, 'School Friends', considers pairs of teen boys in largely homosocial groupings; both this and the 'Frenemies' chapter make particular use of the masquerade as a conceptual tool for thinking about relational gender hierarchies. Here, the primary pair of boys is set up in a hierarchy of gender which serves to masculinise the primary character in relation to his more feminised best friend; this in turn produces a heterosexual structure within the relationship. The two are then a heterosexualised couple within the larger homosocial environment which generally effectively operates without heterosexual bonds. These dyadic relationships are threatened by a predatory male or males outside the relationship and in each case the relatively masculine character must save his friend from danger; such patterns further heterosexualise the friendship, blurring the boundaries between dyadic homosocial friendship and romance. These arguments are thrown into relief by the inclusion of *The History Boys* (Hyntner, 2006); in this film homo*sexual* desire is admitted, but the dyad is excluded. The acknowledgement rather than repression of this desire, despite its ultimate condemnation, complicates the patterns in relation to the wider homosocial group outlined in the other films in this chapter.

Chapter 7, 'More Than Friends', looks at films about lesbian and gay teens and asks where and how these representations differ from the more heteronormative films which precede them in the thesis. The patterns of earlier chapters return in these films, but with a difference: queer possibilities are

definite here, because the patterns which produce such possibilities in the films discussed in earlier chapters produce actualities in these films. Gender as a structuring paradigm is of particular importance here, particularly in thinking about normalising identity categories and the connections between gender and sexuality as discussed by Butler. This chapter will also allow for some reflection on the patterns and findings of the previous three analysis chapters, particularly in thinking about how dyadic homosocial representations map onto homosexual ones.

Chapter 8 concludes the thesis by drawing together the findings of the thesis as a whole and indicating the contributions made to both teen film studies and queer film studies by its arguments. Further, the chapter will consider the usefulness and limitations of the methodologies used throughout, and will highlight some areas for further research and potential expansion of the thesis' aims.

This thesis investigates the policing of gender and heterosexual norms in the process of uncovering queer possibilities in dyadic homosocial relationships between teenagers in film from 2000 to 2009. As such it is of primary interest to teen film scholars, as an expansion of that field of study, and to queer film scholars, as an application of queer theories to an often under-analysed figure in film. Not only does the thesis read teen narratives queerly, but narratives about gay and lesbian characters as well. Again, this emphasises the link between liminality and queerness: teens, whether straight or gay, exist in liminal and potentially queer time and space. The move to include a variety of genres also allows the thesis to consider how genre-specific tools of analysis, such as those developed in relation to the teen film genre or to dyadic homosocial relationship films such as the buddy film and female friendship film, can be productively mobilised across genres. Because the thesis is structured by relationship type, each of these types can be extended out of the teen years, to think about how they might function, stagnate, or develop in depictions of adult relationships. Finally, the thesis uses the idea of the masquerade of gender as more than just a spectator position; rather it is understood here as an expression of (often) relational gender in film, which both questions and reinforces gender norms. This aligns the thesis with work on gender in film, and particularly that which deals 'excess,' such as the 'makeover' and muscular action films.

Chapter 2 Teens in Film: Genre, Gender, and Representation

Introduction

This chapter situates the research in this thesis in relation to academic work on teens in film and the teen film genre, as well as queer reading practices. Because I look at teens in film across genre, paying particular attention to queer possibilities, my research aims to expand and complicate work on teens in film. Likewise, employing queer reading strategies to analyse teenagers in contemporary film develops current queer reading practices in new directions. The key questions of my research have emerged from within both of these contexts. As each underpins the arguments of this thesis, this chapter will elaborate these fields in order to build the framework for the analysis which follows. I also place an emphasis on the representational histories of teenagers and of gay and lesbian characters, as these will help to situate the ways I understand and deal with teens throughout the thesis.

This chapter will, then, outline the field of teen film studies and teen representation, the representational history of gay and lesbian characters, and academic queer reading practices before moving on to put these fields into conversation through a discussion of masquerade, gender performance, and homosocial desire. Teen film studies have generally been limited to a focus on the teen film genre and on heteronormative narratives, and the first section of this chapter will outline the field and its gaps, particularly the US- and hetero-centric emphasis.

These debates lead to a discussion of representative and 'images of' studies, and in particular their relevance to representations of teenagers and of gays and lesbians. 'Images of' studies have offered a narrow approach to film analysis, and this section considers their usefulness, and whether representations ultimately matter. Following from this, the section outlines work on the representational histories of gays and lesbians in order to contextualise the ways that films in this thesis handle the possibility and spectre of homosexuality. Though these histories primarily consist of stereotypes, more specific associations have frequently been mobilised, such as with violence and aggression, emasculation, and gender presentation, and this section will address these issues.

The chapter then turns to queer reading practices, outlining work done on codes and connotation, as well as readings of classic films and star personas. Though there has been recent output regarding the queerness of children,[11] most queer readings of films are heavily adult-oriented. Queer readings have rarely dealt with teenagers, and when they do they are not specific to the teenage-ness of the characters. Even so, the patterns suggested by such methods, as well as the arguments put forward by queer film scholars regarding reading practices, make important contributions towards the aims of this thesis, so the benefits of these approaches will also be discussed.

The fourth section will review issues around gender performance, masquerade, and homosocial relationships. Work on masquerade and gender presentation, when set alongside the work on homosociality, help set up a framework for the continuum of dyadic homosocial relationship types proposed by this thesis.

Finally, I will indicate the gaps in the literature, as well as the ways that the existing work shapes this thesis. By weaving together the disparate contexts outlined in this chapter the conclusion provides the basis for the research undertaken in the thesis.

Teen Film Studies

Teen film studies have primarily focused on the teen film as a genre, and one which takes heterosexuality as one of its central tenets. This section will review the central texts around which this field has been established.

The earliest sustained study of teenagers in film is David Considine's 1985 *The Cinema of Adolescence*. Considine's primary concern is with what he sees as unfair representations of teenagers across cinema, though his focus is largely US-based, with a few European exceptions. Part of the origin of this concern with the image of the teen is the vulnerability of teenagers to media images: 'the adolescent is still in a stage of identity development,' he argues, and is therefore 'susceptible to [cinema's] influence and manipulation' (1985, 3) in ways that adults are not.

In addition to producing the first sustained study of teens in film, Considine's primary contribution is his thorough approach. He includes films from the 1930s onward, thematically covering such topics as schools,

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[11] See Karen Lury's *The Child in Film* (2010), for example

delinquency, sex, and, importantly, homosexuality. Though he perhaps naively paints an increasingly accepting and positive portrayal of gay and lesbian teens (though he primarily focuses on gay teens in this section), and even more naively predicts a continued increase in this acceptance and in gay and lesbian representation more generally, the sustained coverage of this topic in the first place sets Considine apart from his immediate heirs in teen film studies.

Thomas Doherty published a study of the marketing and production histories of what he calls 'teenpics' in his 1988 *Teenagers and Teenpics: The Juvenilization of American Movies in the 1950s*. Doherty takes quite a different approach to Considine as well as the teen film scholars who would follow, arguing that the genre peaked in the 1950s, and everything to follow (up to 1988) is derivative. Doherty's primary contribution is primarily to posit that teenagers are the primary intended audience for *all* films made after the 1950s, so that even 'adult films' are actually aimed at teens. This is important in showing that the study of teens in film is textually based and totally separate from the study of teens as an intended audience. It also points to the integral relationship between teens and film. Ultimately, however, Doherty's work itself is not heavily text-based, and is even more US-centric than Considine's work, foreshadowing the general trend of studies to follow.

Jon Lewis' 1992 *The Road to Romance and Ruin: Teen Films and Youth Culture* specifically states his intention to study films *about* teenagers. Lewis labels these films a genre, 'teen film', but quite broadly states that 'genre, as it is used here, begins with the text, not with industry intent or with target audiences' (1992, 2). Though Lewis claims to be interested in teen film 'as the principal mass mediated discourse of youth' (2) he shows very little interest in the films themselves. Lewis refers to very few film studies texts, relying mainly on cultural studies and youth studies work, and focusing more on 'youth culture' than on film. He discusses various behavioural traits and tendencies which, he explains, occur frequently among teenagers (Lewis 1992, 7-8). Lewis divides his study into 'themes' such as alienation, delinquency, gender and sexuality, consumption, style, and nostalgia, and focuses primarily on American teenagers. For Lewis, however, these themes are not generic, and his loose definitions make it difficult to pin this down as a thorough or even coherent cultural history. Perhaps the biggest problem plaguing Lewis' study is the attitude he takes toward teenagers, and representations of teenagers. Unlike Considine's

generous if slightly patronising concern, Lewis' tone throughout is 'pessimistic and occasionally condescending' (Shary 2002, 23), as Timothy Shary has contended.

In his *Generation Multiplex: The Image of Youth in Contemporary American Cinema* (2002), Timothy Shary takes a vastly different approach from Lewis. The forward to *Generation Multiplex* is by David Considine, immediately indicating a return the kinds of concerns introduced by *The Cinema of Adolescence*. Shary is primarily interested in producing a thorough history and examination of the teen film genre, which even his title claims as quintessentially American, from 1980 to 1999. The thoroughness of his approach is reflected by the inclusion of his 'Filmography of Youth Films, 1980-2001' as an appendix, and though he does not state the source of this definitive list of 'youth films', he does describe the list's boundaries by arguing that generic analysis cannot be applied only to the most well-known examples nor a random sample; instead he argues for 'a generic methodology in which all of the available films within a genre, and its respective subgenres, are addressed, since this is the only way to ensure complete knowledge of a genre' (15).

Rather than selecting examples thematically, as Lewis did, Shary instead identifies, among 'all the available films', five subgenres: 'Youth in School', 'Delinquent Youth', 'The Youth Horror Film', 'Youth and Science', and 'Youth in Love and Having Sex'. However, what is slightly troubling about his thoroughness of approach and broad generic analysis is the placement of *all* American films featuring teens into one large genre, 'youth films', which is subsequently, according to Shary, broken into subgenres. This highlights some of the problems which arise from such a generous *generic* definition. As Susan Berridge (2010, 35) has pointed out, the conflation of all teen-centred categories in film and television threatens to erase the much more vast differences, some generic, between films which feature teens in favour of shoe-horning them all into one giant genre. Certainly there is justification for studying all films which feature teens, however it is less clear that the presence of the teenager as a central character is enough to constitute a 'genre'. These concerns are further confused by Shary's later volume *Teen Movies: American Youth on Screen*, published in 2005 as part of a genre series; the US-centricity of the genre is once again emphasised in his title. In this book, Shary largely restates his earlier arguments, this time referring to teen cinema rather than youth films. Here again a

conflation occurs, which works against the kind of specific and rigorous scholarship Shary seems to be calling for.

One example of an extremely truncated generic definition is offered by Roz Kaveney's 2006 *Teen Dreams: Reading Teen Film and Television from Heathers to Veronica Mars.* According to Kaveney, teen films are films for and about teens which have arisen as a 'creative response to the 1980s John Hughes films and to a lesser extent other films that appeared at roughly the same time' and take place 'in and around High School' (Kaveney 2006, 3). Kaveney's work is a popular publication, which might explain the ease with which she carves out her own idiosyncratic definition and dismisses elements of the teen film genre which many other scholars find important. Kaveney also widens her discussion to include television. Though Berridge (2010, 33f7), as a television scholar, has criticised this inclusion as cursory and lacking in media specificity, similar arguments can be made from the point of view of a film scholar. Though Kaveney is correct to note some overlap in terms of thematic concerns and crossover stars, generically speaking teen television and teen film are markedly different.

Kaveney's assertions are the most extreme example of the different boundaries that scholars have drawn around their studies. Her definitions and terminology are inconsistent with the rest of the literature; though certainly she agrees with other scholars regarding the American-ness of the genre, she dismisses many films that other scholars have long included in the teen genre by saying that films and television programs from before the 1980s 'form a part of the folk memory of what it is to be a teenager,' but are not included in her definitions of the current genre configuration (Kaveney 2006, 4).

Interestingly, a further demarcating factor for Kaveney has to do with the representation of friendship and sexuality in teen films. Aside from the definition above, Kaveney also asserts that teen films have

> a free-floating atmosphere of sexual chemistry, much of it having to do with same-sex interactions that do not as a rule involve actual sexual activity, but clearly involve a level of romantic and sometimes erotic emotion that is not adequately described by terms like homosociality and bonding. (Kaveney 2006, 8)

She even goes so far as to discuss the homophobia which accompanies such queer possibilities, yet maintains that teen films are heterocentric and have 'no axe to grind' (6) in producing the kind of subtext described above.

Unfortunately, Kaveney does not link these arguments to broader arguments around teens, sexuality, and homosociality; nor does she reference histories of academic queer reading. She does self-reflexively refer to fan-fiction and popular reading practices, but then concedes that she may be 'engaged in perverse imaginings about films that are entirely innocent in their representation of exclusively heterosexual teenagers' (8). This is, of course, the kind of heteronormative argument which has been levelled against academic queer reading practices. What is important to note here is that Kaveney recognises both the heteronormativity of the genre (even as she defines it) and the queer possibilities extant in representations of teenagers.

Stephen Tropiano's 2006 *Rebels and Chicks: A History of the American Teen Movie* essentially repeats portions of Doherty's and Shary's work. He explains that 'by today's standards… teen films [are] films made *about* teens *for* teens' (Tropiano 2006, 11, his emphasis), effectively combining Doherty's formulation of the teen film genre as films aimed *at* teens with Shary's and Lewis' understanding of the genre being formed by films *about* teenagers. Tropiano provides a history of the development of various teen film subgenres, leading up to a discussion of the teen film genre of the 1990s which he argues is made up of a mixture of other genre elements. Tropiano himself states that he is not 'a purist' (12) when it comes to definitions of the genre and includes films which feature characters in their twenties. His book traces this broad definition of the teen film genre from the 1950s up to 2005. Though the book does include a good deal of historical research, including newspaper and magazine articles which trace the teen film chronologically, there is no indication of how Tropiano decides when a film is *for* teenagers.

For a critic who has previously written about gay and lesbian issues,[12] Tropiano makes very little comment regarding gay and lesbian representation or queer possibilities in teen films. Though he mentions that there has been an increase since the 1990s of films about gay, lesbian, and transgender teens, he does not go into any detail about these films, except to point out that 'with few exceptions […] these films were not produced by major studios', and that 'most of them are independent films that played at festivals around the world before

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[12] In *Out of the Margins: The Construction of Homosexuality in Spanish, German, and Italian Cinema* (1999), *The Prime Time Closet: A History of Gays and Lesbians on TV* (2002), and *Queer Facts: The Greatest Gay and Lesbian Trivia Book Ever* with Michelle Baker (2005)

landing a North American distributor' (2006, 258). Otherwise, the films included in Tropiano's genre are treated as heterocentric narratives.

As with the scholars discussed above, Catherine Driscoll's recent *Teen Film: A Critical Introduction* (2011) maintains that the teen film is primarily heterosexual; unlike Considine and Shary, she provides no space for a discussion of the marginalised texts which do include gay and lesbian teens. Driscoll cites Kaveney's argument that 'in teen film […] anyone can *potentially* be paired with anyone else' (Driscoll 2011, 75), along with Kaveney's emphasis on 'the importance of homoerotic possibilities in teen film' (ibid) but ultimately agrees with Kaveney that 'mainstream teen film does seem to be partly defined by heterosexual closure' (ibid). For Driscoll, this is reason enough to leave lesbian and gay teens in film alone. Unlike Kaveney, however, Driscoll rarely takes up homoerotic possibilities as her analysis of teen films progresses, focusing more strictly on the heterosexual narratives she has foregrounded.

Teen Film, like Shary's *Teen Movies*, is another overview of teen film studies and teen films which forms part of a series on film genres. Driscoll defines the teen film genre as including films which have a certain 'sensibility' which includes 'youthfulness' (2011, 2) but is not limited to it. The inexact nature of this sensibility 'explains why neither [the] subject matter nor [the] appeal [of teen films] is confined to teenagers' (2011, 2). For Driscoll, then, the teen film genre is able to encompass films with older protagonists, such as college films, and cannot be limited or defined simply representations of teenagers. Like Lewis, Driscoll argues that just as 'teenager' and 'youth' are difficult to define, so is the teen film genre. Therefore, not all films about teens belong in the teen film genre, and not all teen films are restricted to teenagers.

The concern shown by scholars such as Considine and Lewis regarding negative, inaccurate, and possibly damaging images of teenagers has been more subtly handled by Driscoll, who argues that 'this tendency to moral judgement reflects a tendency in the genre itself to take a moral tone that understands adolescence as both object of training and subject of crisis' (2011, 4). So if the genre re-produces particular *ideas* about teens, about institutions like high schools, and about the social and biological experience of adolescence, then 'this presents a problem for any *mimetic* understanding of teen film as a reflection of adolescent lives' (Driscoll 2011, 5, her emphasis). Rarely, in fictional features, are depictions able to realistically replicate the lives of

teenagers. Rather, such depictions are framed and narrativised to mobilise particular ideas about teenagers: Driscoll argues that 'teen film is less about growing up than about the expectation, difficulty, and social organisation of growing up' (2011, 66).

Beyond these primary teen film genre texts, there are several shorter studies which have contributed to the field, along with collections of essays. Some of these, such as a chapter by Adrian Martin (1994) aptly titled 'Teen Movies: The Forgetting of Wisdom' and a short article in *Cineaction* by Robin Wood (2002), both focusing on US films, are openly condescending in their approach. Martin asserts that teen movies present 'an eternal, delinquent, vacuous youth' which is 'proudly silly and superficial' (1994, 64). Wood echoes this definition based on superficiality, contending that 'one feels, at times that the films' defining characteristic […] is indeed the *suppression* of political thought' (2002, 8). In contrast to this condescension is an article in *Sight and Sound* by Stephanie Zacharek (1999), 'There's Something about Teenage Comedy'. Zacharek argues that teen comedies[13] offer insightful representations of teenagers and relationships, and observes that these films engage with stereotypes of gender and sexuality less than adult romantic comedies do.

In terms of genre definition, both Martin and Wood agree that films within the teen film genre 'share a certain number of specific concerns, thematic, narrative patterns, motifs, character relations, iconography, etc' (Wood 2002, 4). Wood, however, breaks these films down into subgenres based on the primary 'concerns'; while these largely correspond to the categories suggested by Shary and even Lewis, to a certain extent, Wood's categories are more specifically political. Wood also reflects, in agreement with most teen film genre scholars, that gay representation is nearly absent from American high school films.[14] Zacharek, for all her defence of teen comedies, does not define these films except as recent releases, and assumes their heterosexuality in the very formulation of her arguments. Her discussion revolves around the remarkable

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[13] Zacharek is specifically talking about American teen films released between 1996 and 1999, though she makes pejorative reference to John Hughes' films and earlier teen sex comedies like *Porky's* (Clark, 1982) and *Animal House* (Landis, 1978).

[14] Like Zacharek's 'Teenage Comedy', 'American high school films' is a narrower genre title than 'teen films', but aside from the restriction to high school, Wood's definitions are remarkably similar to others discussed here, and Zacharek's discussion actually covers dramas and horrors as well.

representation of relationships 'between the sexes' (1999, 20), never once introducing the possibility of same-sex desire.

Other recent articles have focused quite specifically on masculinity and films about boys' relationships in teen genre films. Calling these films 'Dude Cinema' and 'Lad Flicks', scholars have asked what sets these films apart from other representations of masculinity. Nearly all of these studies actually move beyond teenagers to address young or immature (or in other words, pre-marital homosocial heterosexuality) masculinity more generally, and frequently align this immaturity with teen or youth film genres. Though Hansen-Miller and Gill in 'Lad Flicks', for example, address films which include but are not limited to films about teenagers, they state that the films involve characters who experience an extended adolescence, sometimes well into adulthood, which is posed as a problem of immaturity that must be solved in the film. David Greven (2002) posits that films about teen boys' relationships reflect changes wrought by feminist and gay rights movements, but are also reactionary, showing 'a deep hostility to these changes' (14). Greven further argues that 'teen comedies depict intense same-sex intimacies that are always informed – i.e. curtailed – by the threat of homosexual ardour or eroticism' (15). John Troyer and Chani Marchiselli (2005) agree, pointing out that 'because dudes always appear in such mimetic pairs, their relationships are loaded with erotic implication' (266). Further, they argue, 'double entendres allude to the homoerotic potential of masculine intimacy' (270). In fact, according to David Hansen-Miller and Rosalind Gill (2011), 'lad flicks' depend 'upon dynamics of intense heterosexual male bonding, paired with explicit homophobic humour' which serves 'to disavow and deflect the homoerotic potential' (44). All of these points echo Kaveney's assertions regarding the homoeroticism rampant in teen films, and suggest a strong basis for the arguments which will be presented in this thesis. These issues of homoeroticism and homosociality will be returned to when this chapter turns to the homosocial continuums of Adrienne Rich and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick.

Most critics seem to agree on the American-ness of the genre. Though Considine used a few British films to contrast against the American-ness of the rest of the films discussed, Shary and Lewis rely strictly on American releases. Other scholars, like Rachel Moseley (2002), have asserted the American-ness of the teenager more generally, which is echoed by Kaveney in particular, and by Driscoll's focus on films in the English language, which, she concedes, are

primarily American. In fact, the very existence of a collection of essays, discussed below, specifically aimed at expanding academic discussion to 'global teens' shows the American and/or Western bias of teen film studies.

While the majority of academic attention to teens in film has been directed at the US-centric teen film genre, there have been a limited number of studies which have looked beyond this genre. This has largely been to grasp at issues such as gender, race, class, sexuality, and nation which cut across the teen film genre and suggest issues beyond the scope of the genre. Certainly such work remains informed by teen film genre studies, but is not restricted to it.

By their own account, Timothy Shary and Alexandra Seibel's *Youth Culture in Global Cinema* is the first collection of work specifically on youth in global cinema published in English (Shary & Seibel 2007, 3). The collection consists of a variety of approaches and of films and filmmaking contexts, many of which do not fit neatly within the teen film genre outlined above. Strangely, though Shary and Seibel, and the majority of their contributors, use the term 'youth' more frequently than 'teen', in his introduction to the volume Shary's definition of 'youth' does not specifically differentiate it from 'teen': he says

> we employ the terms "youth" and "young adult" rather interchangeably, and conceive these populations to generally be between the ages of 12 and 20. [...] "Teen" and "teenager" are terms that we use only when referring specifically to teenaged characters. (Shary 2007, 5f1)

The definitions offered here do not in fact appear to be different from each other, and it is unclear where the distinction is being made.

Aside from their countries of origin, Shary says that 'international youth films' only differ from 'US teen films' in that the former 'deal with topics of politics and religion' as well as 'with tensions around cultural and national identity' (2007, 4). This contention calls to mind the arguments discussed above regarding the American-ness and superficiality of the teenager, but does not reference these, making it difficult to discern whether this US-specific genre definition is the basis of Shary's arguments for differentiation. Shary and Seibel appear to want to separate the American teen from 'global youth' but do not do so convincingly. That this slippery definition of terms is not further explained detracts from the book's project, despite its important contributions.

Further, as argued by Rosalind Sibielski (2009), the use of 'global' in the framing of the volume, and the insistence on a 'global youth culture at large'

(Shary & Seibel 2007, 5), are each problematic. Using a phrase like 'global youth culture at large', assumes that such a singular thing exists. Certainly this assumption sits at odds with the work of the contributors, who, as Sibielski points out, 'almost uniformly insist on the national and cultural specificity of the films they discuss' (2009, 3). Indeed, in a brief review of the collection, Driscoll argues that 'no clear opposition between teen and youth or Hollywood and foreign is maintained' (2011, 150), which dilutes Shary and Seibel's contention that such terms must be differentiated.

Though the selection of films does move beyond strictly US productions, several films are repeated within the contributions, which

> further narrows the scope of cinematic representations of youth discussed in the anthology from a handful of geographical regions to a handful of films produced within those regions. (Sibielski 2009, 3)

Therefore, though Shary and Seibel have included appendices listing over seven hundred global youth films (though this is, they admit, incomplete), first by nation and then by theme, this operates more to indicate the amount of work possible for scholars interested in pursuing films about youth beyond the US than as an indication of the breadth of the book's scope (Shary & Seibel 2007, 287-312; Sibielski 2009). Further, the list covers films released between 1931 (*Mädchen in Uniform* (Sagan)) and 2005, and their method of determining this list remains unclear.[15]

Many of the films in the volume have previously been the subjects of study, though most frequently the youth of their characters has not been emphasised in the same way. More typically, these films would be the subject of analysis based on what they had to say about the 'nation' or about particular gender relations, sexual orientation or class conflicts. Certainly the contributions make this clear, as they attend to these specifics in addition to the focus on the youth of the characters. What the volume contributes, then, is the opportunity to take analyses of these particular films out of the usual academic contexts and place them side by side, so that the focus on youth provides a different productive framework.

Catherine Driscoll also offers a discussion of 'the internationalization of adolescence' (149), and its relationship to the teen film genre as a concluding chapter of her *Teen Film* book. In thinking about why Shary and Seibel might

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[15] Many films released after 2000 appear in the database compiled for this thesis, though some in the database do not appear here, and some films in their list do not appear in my database.

insist on the separation of 'teen film' from 'youth film', she notes that of the films listed by Shary as examples of important films about international youth, 'many are films with children or adolescents in them without being concerned with the themes and questions that cohere teen film as a genre' (150), though all are films which 'raise the question of maturity and the liminal processes of coming-of-age' (ibid). Further, Driscoll insists that 'teen film made outside the US, or across the borders of the US, is not *about* cultural specificity or difference to any greater degree than' (151) films made within the US. In other words, US teen films are as political and as culturally specific as the 'global youth film' which Shary and Seibel tout, and some 'global youth films' are also or actually teen films. This is a valid but not terribly far-reaching argument, but justifies an exploration of teenage representation which is not limited to either US films or films made outside the US.

Another limited but more convincing argument is Driscoll's expansion of these points to provide an example of a film which fits into (her) definitions of the teen film genre, but which is quite specifically *not* American. She only gives one example, *Trainspotting* (Boyle, 1996), as proof that the teen film genre is not *strictly* American; she states that though the film is not about teens, it does not state the ages of the characters and its 'generically adolescent' (153) themes justify its inclusion within the genre. Yet this does not mean that all films about teens fit within the teen film genre; while her concern is to show the ways that understandings of the genre might be more flexible than critics have allowed, she has really only expanded the definition so that it is able to incorporate non-US films and/or films which are not strictly about teenagers.

While the issue of international/non-US/non-Western representations of teenagers has not received perhaps as much attention as it could, gendered analyses have been given more substantial treatment. Most if not all of the work done pushes across and beyond the teen film genre. These studies locate spaces where genre and gender intersect, but do not limit themselves to films which fit into the teen film genre.

Together, Murray Pomerance and Frances Gateward have edited two collections which deal with gendered approaches to images of youth. The first, *Sugar, Spice, and Everything Nice: Cinemas of Girlhood* (2002) contains essays dealing with largely US and Western-centred representations of girls, while the second, *Where the Boys Are: Cinemas of Masculinity and Youth* (2005), deals

with representations of boys but expands considerably beyond US productions. Both collections deal with some teen films, but neither is restricted to teenagers as such, and neither is restricted to any one genre. While both collections deal primarily with images of teens, both 'girlhood' and 'masculinity and youth' are categories which stretch the age boundaries to include children and young adults.

While *Sugar, Spice, and Everything Nice* covers issues familiar to the teen film genre, including discussions of John Hughes and teen film character types, it also includes historical discussions of girlhood on screen, alongside discussions of race and sexuality, and even including analysis of experimental independent work such as Sadie Benning's short films. Throughout, however, few chapters discuss films which are not US productions. One particular preoccupation which continually crops up throughout the collection is the issue of agency, aggression, and resistance; many chapters deal with images of girls who seduce and kill, and the regulatory strategies that films employ to deal with these non-normative femininities. I will return to a discussion of these preoccupations in the final section of this chapter.

The similarities and differences between the section divisions in *Sugar and Spice* and the three found in *Where the Boys Are* provide interesting gendered contrast. While there is a more inward focus on regulation and resistance in the discussions of girls, there is instead a focus on boys' relationships to others and to their environments. The preoccupation with sexuality in discussion of girls is not present to the same degree in discussions of boys, and likewise the figure of the teen boy or young boy seems to be not as restricted as the figure of the girl is to Western/US-centred images. Indeed, many of the chapters focus on representations of boyhoods from international productions and non-Hollywood film industries, including films from England, Scotland, India, Martinique, France, and Japan. Like *Sugar and Spice*, a chapter is devoted to a marginalised and experimental independent filmmaker as well.

In a book-length gender-focused approach to images of teen girls, Sarah Hentges (2006) proposes that films depicting teen girls coming of age are a genre unto themselves, which she calls 'girls' film' (2006, 3). Her book, *Pictures of Girlhood: Modern Female Adolescence on Film*, traces the themes found in this proposed genre, particularly around race, class, sexuality, coming of age, and empowerment. Hentges argues that the 'girls' film' genre 'primarily grows out

of teen films' (8), but she is also conscious that it looks beyond mainstream films to include independent productions as well, unlike most studies of teen films. Though Hentges frames her discussion of 'girls' films' as a set of texts which fall within teen film, she does not define teen film, except to say that it is 'intimately connected to consumption' (8), which is a reflection of teen culture more broadly. Hentges divides teen films into the two categories, mainstream and independent, because she sees different kinds of representational possibilities emerging from the films in each category. While mainstream teen films are restrictive, repetitive, and aimed at making money, Hentges sees independent films as being more open to experimentation and variation; the difference is ideological as much as economic. This division within the teen film genre, the inclusion of non-Hollywood films, and her specific concerns with the negotiation and empowerment of girls differentiates Hentges' work from other teen film scholars.

Discussions of gay and lesbian teen representations have been marginalised by most teen film scholars. They have, however, been somewhat more visible in work which looks at films outside the genre. David Considine, as discussed above, dedicated an entire chapter of his book to representations of gay teens,[16] in which he indicated his hopefulness that such representations were less homophobic and increasing in number. Nearly twenty years later, Timothy Shary, offers something of a corrective to Considine's optimism: he observes that it was not until the 'mid- to late 1990s' that films about teens 'would be confrontational about [...] sexual orientation' (Shary 2005, 89). Even so, Shary admits that those confrontational films, released in the 1990s, only amounted to a 'handful' (2005, 98) of representations of gay and lesbian teens.

The collections edited by Frances Gateward and Murray Pomerance include essays about transgender teens, queer children, experimental queer teen videos, gay and lesbian representation, and homoeroticism in homosocial relationships. Timothy Shary and Alexandra Seibel's *Youth Culture in Global Cinema* includes three essays in the section 'Coming-of-age Queer'. Susan Driver's contribution to *Youth Culture in Global Cinema* identifies films which provide 'portrayals of girls' amorous relations with each other' (2007a, 242) as a subgenre of youth

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[16] Considine focused entirely on representations of teen boys, however, which limits his contribution somewhat.

films; she calls these films 'queer girl romance films' (ibid).[17] Both Driver's chapter and Scott Henderson's 'Youth, Sexuality, and the Nation: *Beautiful Thing* and *Show Me Love*' unfortunately both repeat the use of the film *Show Me Love*. As the discussion of gay and lesbian representation is limited already, this narrow selection of films serves, to echo Sibielski's point above, to diminish 'the scope of cinematic representations of youth discussed in the anthology from a handful' (Sibielski 2009, 3) of films about gay and lesbian teens to even fewer.

Sarah Hentges, too, gives space to discussions of lesbian representation. Interestingly, she places this within a discussion of empowering same-sex relationships more generally.[18] Of these films, Hentges argues that representations of lesbian sexuality are not necessarily empowering, and that 'a truly empowering vision of sexuality is complicated, which is one reason why it is so difficult to find truly empowering narratives surrounding sexuality in the mainstream' (2006, 231). Independent features are able to more fully consider empowering possibilities, Hentges argues, and in particular are financially and ideologically freer to explore gay and lesbian narratives.

Ultimately, no study of the representations of teens in film can ignore the presence, and in fact dominance in academic writing on the subject, of the teen film. This genre is defined inconsistently, but is generally predicated on the presence of particular character types and a selection of themes or subgenres. The teen film includes images of teenagers, but is not limited to them when generic concerns are invoked. These generic markers include particular character types, narrative structures, relationships and relationship types, iconography, and a fun or light-hearted 'sensibility'. Some studies have insisted that teen films are specifically *for* teens as well, but unless conducted as marketing and audience research, these studies rarely give any evidence for the real or intended audience of the teen film genre. Though scholars have not totally agreed on a common mode, most assert that teen films are primarily comedies.

Oddly, these definitions serve to displace the figure of the teen who is ostensibly at the centre of the teen film genre; some scholars even choose to

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[17] The three films Driver discusses are *Show Me Love* (Moodysson, 1998), *All Over Me* (Sichel, 1997), and *The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love* (Maggenti, 1995), though she also mentions *Lost and Delirious* (Pool, 2001) and *Heavenly Creatures* (Jackson, 1994).

[18] She too discusses *All Over Me*, *Show Me Love*, and *The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love*, *Lost and Delirious*, and *But I'm a Cheerleader* (Babbit, 1999). These appear to be the core set of (English-language) films about lesbian teen girls, particularly as far as criticism goes.

use the term 'youth' to avoid limiting themselves to teenagers proper. Certainly most convincing is the contention that teen film is 'about' *ideas* of the teen rather than the reality of teenagers, so that the social issues involved in the genre are of interest more than any attempt at realism, much less any artistic merit or style of the films. Indeed, few scholars of the teen film genre focus on style, reflecting Driscoll's assertion that 'teen film is generally thought more interesting for what it says about youth than for any aesthetic innovations' (2011, 2). Though the teen film genre is certainly interesting for what it can tell scholars about cultural understandings of teens, the many exclusions from studies of the genre are also interesting in their own right. In particular, they point to the fact that the teen film genre is not the sole repository for images of teens, and therefore not the only genre to have something to say about teenagers. For this reason, studies which have expanded to cover films typically considered outside the genre have often done this in order to focus on a particular figure: for instance, Hentges' study of images of girls, and Driver's study of romances featuring queer girls.

Heterosexuality is a primary concern of both teen films *and* scholars of teen films. Representations of gay and lesbian teens are most often limited to films and discussions at the margins of the genre and the study of the genre, and therefore a gap remains not only in thinking about representations of gay and lesbian teens, but also in thinking about how heterosexuality and queer possibilities might co-exist in narratives about teens. In order to trace images of teenagers, and the narrative possibilities provided for teenagers in film, studies need to look beyond the confines of the genre.

'Images of' Teens

While this thesis is not *strictly* a piece of 'images of' research, it depends in no small measure upon this strand of scholarship. In particular, much of the impetus for the research presented here is the relative dearth of representations of lesbian and gay teen characters in film; and is based in the political interest in disrupting the sense that heteronormativity rules representations of teens on screen. The methodology here is not that of an 'images of' study. Other scholars have provided brief histories and some of the findings are discussed above.[19]

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[19] See for example Considine 1985; Shary 2002; Kaveney 2006; Hentges 2006

This thesis argues that images matter, and adopts queer reading strategies which have been developed as a way to 'correct' a dearth of recognisable images of lesbian and gay characters in mainstream film. Disrupting the heterocentric and heteronormative studies of images of teens in film is important in countering the assumptions of most scholars that heterosexuality underpins the teen film genre and the images of teenagers more generally. So to establish why it matters to adopt this disruptive strategy within a presumably heteronormative film genre, this section will outline some of the debates around representation in order to trace the emergence of the consensus that images matter.

'Images of' studies were largely politically motivated responses to the social and political oppression of particular groups, which sought to link the representation of those groups in media and social discourse to the legal, cultural, and often physical forces mobilised in that oppression (Dyer 2002 [1993]). Feminist scholars such as Molly Haskell and Marjorie Rosen provided extensive studies of the ways that women had been represented up to the early 1970s, with updates in later editions (Haskell 1987 [1974]; Rosen 1973). Donald Bogle wrote a landmark study of images of African Americans in film which has been updated several times, paying particular attention to 'types' of characters (Bogle 2003 [1973]). Bogle's research moved beyond the strict 'images of' cataloguing by focusing on the potential for resistance within performance, though ultimately he remained concerned with types and stereotypes. Vito Russo, in his study of representations of homosexuality, *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies*, also structured his work via typology (Russo 1987 [1981]). Generally, these 'groundbreaking extended studies' of images of various groups 'were concerned primarily with identifying and critiquing the recurrence of stereotyped representation in Hollywood films' (Smith 1997, 3). Those stereotyped representations were deplored for their origins in mainstream (white heterosexual able-bodied middle-class male) culture's ideas about marginalised groups. Labelling such images negative and inauthentic, critics called for positive and 'true' representations to replace what had come before, either through changes in mainstream filmmaking or through independent filmmaking on the part of the oppressed groups.

Limitations to this approach quickly emerged. The emphasis on positive/negative and authentic/inauthentic images 'can lead to [...] *essentialism*' (Shohat & Stam 1994, 199, emphasis in original). Indeed, both

positive and negative images 'suppress contradiction and are thus static' (Becker, Citron, LeSange & Rich 1981, 26). Further, Valerie Smith has argued that these studies focus on Hollywood at the expense of other filmmaking, assume agreement regarding what *is* positive and negative, are not nuanced, and disregard the intersectionality of identity and experience (1997, 3). Often what marginalised groups have in common is their experience of oppression; this is the basis of political activism and coalitions, but to assume to know how a whole group will respond to or value particular images, or even how those images will be read across the group, is to essentialise and to cut off the agency and differences among group members. Likewise people can belong to multiple groups at any one time, and identities frequently shift; not only will readings change from one person to another, but no one person's readings are likely to be consistent. Positive and negative are relational, and there is no singular positively valued image (Shohat & Stam 1994, 203).

Despite these limitations, however, scholars have defended the need to pay attention to representation. Shohat and Stam argue that just because 'films are only representations does not prevent them from having real effects in the world' (1994, 178). This is in part, Dyer points out, because 'how we are seen determines in part how we are treated; how we treat others is based on how we see them; such seeing comes from representation' (2002 [1993], 1). To ignore or abandon representational studies completely is also to abandon, at least in part, the politics behind them. Radner and Stringer argue that 'to fail to question the models of femininity that cinema produces and circulates would be to subscribe to a postfeminism that posits the second wave modalities as outmoded and unnecessary (2011, 3)'. So the need for 'images of' studies has not disappeared, even if it has been tempered by criticisms of the initial forms of such studies. Radner and Stringer point out that, in their very recent collection of feminist film studies work,

> the relative homogeneity exhibited by the protagonists (most are "white", young, thin, and middle-class) of the films considered by this volume [...] demonstrates that cinema continues to rely upon established stereotypes in generating popular narratives. (2011, 4)

So tracing the 'images of' particular groups remains important, but new strategies are needed to prevent the essentialism and political limitations which restrained the usefulness of previous studies.

Both Dyer and Shohat and Stam offer solutions to this issue, based on an alteration of how representations are defined, and how they make meaning. Dyer observes that 'representations are presentations, always and necessarily entailing the use of the codes and conventions of the available cultural forms of presentation' (2002 [1993], 2). This understanding acknowledges that viewers and consumers use the 'cultural (including sub-cultural) codes available to them' (Dyer 2002 [1993], 2) to read representations, so that no readings will be identical, and each informed by the specific position of the reader. Shohat and Stam take this further, citing poststructuralist theory which 'reminds us that we live and dwell within language and representation, and have no direct access to the "real"' (1994, 179), so that images 'do not so much refer to or call up the world as represent its languages and discourses' (1994, 180). Dyer inserts a warning here about seeing the world as nothing but simulacra, arguing that 'representations here and now have real consequences for real people' (2002 [1993], 3). Even so, those consequences result from the fact that representations are referring 'not directly [to] reality itself but other representations' (2002 [1993], 2). If representations 'determine' how we see ourselves and others, then 'representations delimit and enable what people can be in any given society' (Dyer 2002 [1993], 3). In this way, representation 'constitutes the very social grouping that it also re-presents' (Dyer 2002 [1993], 3). Dyer and Shohat and Stam, then, advocate attention to discourses: what representations say, what they are able to say, and what they allow to be said.

Richard Dyer's 1977 collection *Gays and Film* outlined some of the themes involved in dealing with gay representation such as stereotypes, camp sensibility, and gay and lesbian investment in cinema. Vito Russo's *The Celluloid Closet*, published four years later, concerns itself with cataloguing images of gays and lesbians, but focuses most heavily on images of gay men. Russo, echoing Dyer's earlier arguments, points out that the history of representations of gay men has been dominated by stereotypes, in particular that of the 'sissy', or feminine-acting man, which threatens the 'myth of male superiority' (1987 [1981], 5). Meanwhile, he argues, lesbianism has been invisible both culturally and on screen. Further, the most common stereotype of lesbians, the tomboy, is easily recuperated to heterosexuality, and the masculine woman does not betray, he claims, that myth of male superiority. Russo provides a

comprehensive survey of the representations of gays and lesbians in mainstream, primarily Hollywood, cinema, concluding that

> the history of the portrayal of lesbians and gay men in mainstream cinema is politically indefensible and aesthetically revolting [...] Gays have always been visible. It's *how* they have been visible that has remained offensive for almost a century. (Russo 1987 [1981], 325)

This *how* is the subject of Russo's study. Nearly twenty years later, Sean Griffin and Harry Benshoff published *Queer Images: A History of Gay and Lesbian Film in America* (2006) as an expansion of and response to Russo's ground-breaking work. They define queer in their book as a way to 'acknowledge and describe [a] multiplicity of sexualities' (Benshoff & Griffin 2006, 2) including but not limited to straight, gay, and lesbian.

Griffin and Benshoff trace the changes in gay and lesbian representation since Russo's study; interestingly they cite a decrease in palpable homophobia except in 'horror films and teen comedy,' both of which, they argue, 'still raise queer bogeymen' (2007, 262). Horror films, in particular, 'dwell on homoerotic situations and queer monsters/killers hungry for sweet young boys' (2007, 262). Teen comedies, on the other hand, provide a constant homoerotic threat:

> Comedies such as *American Pie* (1999), *Road Trip* (2000), *Dude, Where's My Car* (2000), *Boat Trip* (2002), *American Wedding* (2003), and *Eurotrip* (2004) seem literally obsessed with gay male sex, as cute young men are literally made the butt of jokes about anal probes, the ingestion of other men's bodily fluids, and 'unwanted' gay advances. Even genre parody films [...] continually raise queer spectres but do little to quell or deconstruct them. (Benshoff & Griffin 2007, 262)

Images of teenagers, however, also exist on the opposite end of the spectrum of representation in what Benshoff and Griffin term the 'young love' film. These films, which include the 'queer girl romance films' discussed by Driver and Hentges alongside narratives involving teen boys, 'generally provide "positive" and realist images of gay men and lesbians coming out or falling in love' (Benshoff & Griffin 2007, 270). Particularly in relation to the homophobic treatment found in teen comedies as above, these films 'are especially important for young queers who may not see themselves reflected in any other mass media' (Benshoff & Griffin 2007, 270).

Susan Driver outlines several of the components which set these relatively 'positive' representations apart from other images. She points out that unlike mainstream teen film genre narratives, 'no single story line or visual representation structures the experiences of queer girls on the screen' (2007a,

242), which she attributes to the subtleties of the films. The modes of production (low budget, usually unknown directors and actors) and the infrequency of these kinds of films being produced mean that there is little consistency of form or convention. These factors also contribute to the lack of a set structure or style for representing gay and lesbian teen desire, and the absence of a primary analytical tool for interpreting films which represent gay and lesbian teen desire. As Driver points out, most analytical tools for dealing with representations of gay and lesbian characters have been developed to address adult subjects (2007a ,243). Teenagers carry significantly different meanings from adults, and therefore representations of gay and lesbian teens demand different analytical strategies.

Indeed, teens are frequently associated with the concept of liminality; teenagers are understood as liminal figures that embody the transition between childhood and adulthood. Susan Driver has argued, however, that the concept is problematic when talking about representations of gay and lesbian teens. Though she agrees that 'like many teen film genres, queer girl films involve movement along a boundary separating childhood from adulthood that pivots around first sexual experiences' (Driver 2007a, 242), Driver argues that this does not mean that liminality and indeterminacy should be invoked. If teens are 'becoming', she argues, then how can they definitely identify as queer, gay, or lesbian? How can they claim an identity if they mark the space between identities? Though she concedes that 'naming the sexual orientations of girls in films must not be taken for granted' (245), Driver is caught up in the conflicting social, political, and academic uses of the term queer.

As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, queerness itself is an indeterminate, unfixed category, which suggests liminality and resists the foreclosed boundaries of normative identities such as straight, gay, and lesbian (Jagose 1996). Driver's argument that liminality precludes the possibility of queer identified youth, therefore, is convincing only when thinking specifically of queer as a fixed social identity category. However, Catherine Driscoll has argued that

> if adolescence locates (as yet) unfixed sexual identities, it can only with difficulty be assigned a gay or lesbian identity, and if it may be labelled 'queer,' then it is only insofar as all adolescence would be queer. (2002, 160)

In this formulation, both 'queer' and 'adolescence' are *concepts* which reflect understandings of and representations of teenagers, rather than reflecting the realities of teen lives. It is a limitation of Driver's arguments that she fails to acknowledge her conflation of representations of teenagers and the experiences of real teenagers. This thesis strives to separate the use of the term queer from the social description of identity categories. Therefore, I will use 'gay and lesbian' to define and describe identities and behaviours, and 'queer' to describe the liminal, unfixed, disruptive moments and possibilities between characters and within narratives.

Certainly, theorising teenagers as liminal is complicated when confronted with actual images of gay and lesbian youth, because it potentially undermines their struggle to maintain a marginalised identity in a homophobic and heteronormative world. It risks reinforcing the idea that queer experiences and desires are a stage in the development of adult sexuality rather than a permanent and mature identity of its own (Gove 1996). In thinking about representations of teenagers, however, the actual experiences of teenagers are not the focus, and liminality is used as a way to denaturalise and undermine heteronormative *understandings* of and representations of adolescence.

In conclusion, if adolescence itself is liminal and therefore can be understood to be queer, and if narratives about teenagers then draw liminality into their structure, then it becomes clear that representations of teenagers in film provide a space rife with queer possibilities. Disrupting the heteronormativity of representations of teens helps to disrupt the discursive heteronormative imperative of adulthood.

Queer Reading: 'Manhandling the Text'

This thesis will use textual analysis and queer reading practices to look at teenage friendships on screen. The analysis will be framed by work on buddy films and female friendship films, as well as the structures of desire along the homosocial spectrum laid out by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adrienne Rich. First, however, it is necessary to frame each of these as existing within queer reading practices. This section will give a brief overview of how this thesis will understand queer reading strategies as textual analysis.

First, I will turn to Roland Barthes' discussion of textual codes and reading practices as a frame for the development of queer reading practices. 'To

interpret a text,' according to Barthes, 'is not to give it a (more or less justified, more or less free) meaning, but on the contrary to appreciate what *plural* constitutes it' (1975, 5). This thesis proposes to do just this: to argue against the idea that film texts are 'univocal, possessing a true, canonical meaning' (Barthes 1975, 7) and therefore attest to the plurality of meanings and sources of meaning within film texts. Alexander Doty echoes this, as he doesn't see queer readings as 'any less there, or any less real, than straight readings of classic or otherwise "mainstream" texts' (2000, 2). When faced with the kind of scarcity of representation discussed above, queer readers have historically attempted

> to "queer" straight culture by asserting that there is a queerness at the core of mainstream culture even though that culture tirelessly insists that its images, ideologies, and readings were always only about heterosexuality. (Creekmur & Doty 1995, 3)

This thesis, then, will use this strategy to disrupt the heteronormativity of films about teens and scholarly writing about teens.

Within each film text, there is a plurality of codes and meanings. This includes generic codes, which in themselves constitute a site of multiplicity as genres are not stable, unified categories of meaning.[20] The exact forms which meanings take are as various as the texts themselves, but there are certainly patterns and codes which work to both produce and hide the plurality of meanings. These codes include camera work and editing, lighting, narrative structure, character development or lack thereof, casting, performance, costuming, as well as the framing of the image, music, and dialogue. Any component of the film text can create or contribute to yet other possibilities for multiple codes of meaning.

Marketing, reviews, and social norms often privilege heterosexual meanings, which creates what Barthes calls 'incompletely plural texts' (1975, 6). This means that films can be advertised using trailers which contain more univocal meanings than the film text itself, influencing the meanings available to the viewer. Reviewers, too, can easily influence how a viewer interprets a film, setting up certain expectations and understandings. Additionally, heteronormative social values contribute to a viewer's ability or willingness to recognise the multiplicity of codes within a particular text; the viewer's context

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[20] See for example Rick Altman's discussion in *Film/Genre* (1999).

merges with the film text to limit or expand the plurality available to that viewer.

Reviews have shaped the corpus of films used in my research, and so the work here relies on the recognition of interpretive codes. I also use social norms and values as evidence to a certain extent, especially as they shape the context of my research for this thesis, and as they shape the viewer/researcher who 'approaches the text [as] already … a plurality of other texts, of codes which are infinite' (Barthes 1975, 10). Advertising and reviews can, additionally, influence the consideration of the film text as a whole entity, which, according to Barthes is actually impossible 'for as nothing exists outside the text, there is never a *whole* of the text' (1975, 6). Texts and viewers only exist within the context, codes, and discourses of which they are constituted, and cannot make meaning outside of them.[21] This thesis is interested in particular codes within film texts, in taking the film in parts, 'step-by-step,' and thus allowing 'everything [to signify] ceaselessly and several times' in order to build up 'a gradual analysis of a single text' (Barthes 1975, 12) in the context of other texts within its temporal and topical corpus. Therefore, this thesis will be using textual analysis, the marking and breaking apart of the text in order to trace not only particular meanings but also the construction of meaning. 'The work of the commentary … consists precisely in *manhandling* the text, *interrupting* it. What is thereby denied is not the *quality* of the text … but its "naturalness"' (Barthes 1975, 15, all emphasis his).

There are perhaps as many ways of reading queerly as there are queer readers, but there have certainly been trends and key debates in the development of queer reading practices in film studies. Many studies have been directed at 'classic' Hollywood texts which are assumed to have heteronormative 'intended meanings'. Queer readings of these texts therefore presumably *do* something to the heteronormative meanings in order to create space for queer possibilities and readings. Clare Whatling, in *Screen Dreams: Fantasising Lesbians in Film* (1997), argues that 'there is no such thing as a lesbian film,' insisting instead that invested viewers 'lesbianise' (5) a particular film text, and that texts allow viewers to cross identify so that a heterosexually identified woman might be able 'to take pleasure in lesbian representations or

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[21] Again, this is not to say that representations do not have real consequences, only that codes only exist in a loop of interpretation and discourse.

to identity with them in the film' (6). In contrast to this viewer-activity approach, in which Whatling says she performs her 'own reading of the text against its ostensible meaning' (Whatling 1997, 12), Alexander Doty states in *Flaming Classics: Queering the Film Canon* (2000) that he does not see himself as 'reading against the grain'. Instead, Doty wants 'to position queerness *inside* texts and production, and to think of queer reading practices as existing *alongside* straight ones' so that 'any text is always potentially queer' (2000, 2, emphasis added). Doty's approach here moves away from other mobilisations of queer reading strategies, including his own earlier work, which involve 'queering' a text. He distances himself from this strategy because he says 'it implies taking a thing that is straight and doing something to it' (2). As Doty does not 'see queer readings as any less there, or any less real, than straight readings' (2), he therefore does not see this process as appropriative; rather it works much in the way outlined by Barthes above, as a 'manhandling' of the text, bringing forward the various codes within.

But why call these 'queer readings'? Caroline Evans and Lorraine Gamman (1995), in 'The Gaze Revisited, or Reviewing Queer Viewing,' state that they 'would argue against the idea of an essentially gay or lesbian gaze,' as proposed by Whatling, although they also 'do not want to make the case for the "queer gaze" either' (45). Instead, they would 'make the case for identifications which are multiple, contradictory, shifting, oscillating, inconsistent and fluid' (1995, 45). This argument makes way for textual possibilities which defy boundaries and categories. The proposed gaze fits definitions of 'queer', in keeping with the fluidity and anti-essentialism of the concept. Certainly there is a case to be made against anchoring the gaze in any one identity category, and therefore locating *a* queer gaze is potentially problematic; however identifying multiple and shifting gazes as queer is a different matter.

Doty's work looks at a selection of films which he locates within the 'canon' of classical Hollywood films. His analysis provides evidence in these texts of both heteronormative and queer possibilities. Doty's awareness of the multiplicity of possible subject positions and his flexibility of movement beyond his own 'positioning […] as gay or feminine' though also not 'fully within the other remaining gender and sexuality labels, including "straight"' (9) aligns Doty's work with a concept of queer which is able 'to describe those complex circumstances in texts, spectators, and production that resist easy

categorization, but that definitely escape or defy the heteronormative' (7). This is not to say that queer excludes heterosexual or 'straight' as potential subject positions, identities, or cross-identities. Instead it rejects the normalising and naturalising of these positions and narratives. Indeed, Doty warns against 'assuming that all characters in a film are straight unless labelled, coded, or otherwise obviously proven to be queer' (2-3).

Some scholars have combined this queer mode of analysis with studies of representations of gay and lesbian characters and narratives. For instance, Benshoff and Griffin's *Queer Images* traces queer possibilities and subtexts within presumably hetero texts alongside a history of gay and lesbian representation. As such, Benshoff and Griffin discuss a film like *Bend it Like Beckham* (Chadha, 2002) as though it were as queer a story as *Camp* (Graff, 2003) or *But I'm a Cheerleader* (Babbit, 1999). This is in direct contrast, of course, to other representational studies such as Driver's.

Representative studies are an important response to the recent increase in gay and lesbian characters and narrative production, but do not answer for those characters and narratives which are not 'labeled, coded, or otherwise obviously proven to be queer' (Doty 2000, 3). In analysing the latter, queer readings are based on narrative possibilities, structures, and incoherence. Most importantly, perhaps, are the ways that queer readings are analytically positioned. In his seminal article 'Anal Rope', D.A. Miller outlines narrative 'connotation' which 'can't help appearing doubtful' or 'debatable,' so that this 'dubiety, being constitutive, can never be resolved' (1991, 124). According to Miller, any heteronormative and/or homophobic attempt on the part of producer, critic, or audience to deny connotations of non-heterosexuality 'ends up attesting not just to the excesses of connotation, but also to the impossibility of ever really eliminating them from signifying practice' (124). Miller explores the idea of connotation in a discussion of the film *Rope* (Hitchcock, 1948), a film which was under the watch of the 'production code […] which strictly forbade the display and even denomination of homosexuality' (1991, 123) so that any reference to it was consigned to a connotative register.

Production code era restrictions on depictions of sexuality echo in the certifications-based strictures for films aimed at teen audiences. For example, in the United States, any rating above a PG-13 theoretically limits the audience to 18 years and older, severely cutting potential profits. Though the

certifications in the United Kingdom may leave less of a market gap, restrictions still register a potential loss of profit. As Doherty has argued that teens are targeted as the ideal film audience, it remains important for films to be able to market to that audience. Alexander Doty argues that in mainstream films, 'coding of […] texts […] can often yield a wider range on non-straight readings because certain sexual things [can] not be stated baldly' (2000, 1). In order to comply with restrictive guidelines, many more overt sexual relations and situations are confined to codes which rely on connotation. This is true even in the case of heteronormative narratives which do not feature explicitly gay or lesbian characters. For example, 'most often, romance, in mainstream girls' films, is presented without any reference to a sexual relationship or a developed or developing sexuality' (Hentges 2006, 42) so that the sexual aspects of these romantic relationships exists only on the level of connotation and coding. Thus mainstream films assume an audience which is already able to read the connotations and codes embedded in film and narrative language.

If queerness is already 'inside texts' and every 'text is already potentially queer' (Doty 2000, 2), even when they are not 'labelled, coded or otherwise obviously proven to be queer' (3), then there must always be something legible within film texts beyond the privileged heterosexual and heteronormative codes; Evans and Gamman argue that 'while there might be consensus on the denoted meaning, there is always ambiguity in the realm of connotation' (1995, 46). Though audiences may already be trained to read these codes, they are also taught by heteronormative and homophobic social strictures to only pay attention to heterosexuality, and to deny the connotation which cannot be eliminated. The continued existence of homophobia and pervasive heterosexism means that to recognise and value the non-heteronormative characters, relationships, and narratives which are unspoken but prevalent in film texts is necessarily a politically situated act. Though gay and lesbian viewers may be more easily conscious of the level of connotation in film texts, as argued by many critics,[22] that does not mean that connotation and queer meanings are not also available to hetero audiences.

In conclusion, there are two approaches to thinking about queer reading practices; the first assumes the queerness lies in the reader, the second understands the queerness to be in the text. Certainly in thinking about the

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[22] Dyer 1984; Babuscio 1984; Whatling 1997; Doty 2000; Stein 2005; Dennis 2006

multiplicity of codes which exist in any one text, a shifting set of possibilities emerges from the text itself, meaning that there is an extant 'queerness' within texts. However, viewers also bring particular contexts and preferences to texts which interact with the multiplicity of meanings in ways that influence the readings which develop at any one time. The approach I will adopt will privilege the queer narratives which exist 'alongside straight ones' (Doty 2000, 2) in the text, while at the same time considering the ways that those narrative possibilities are presented, denied, or privileged. Though her argument is problematic at times, Roz Kaveney's assertion that there is a 'free floating atmosphere of sexual chemistry' in

> same-sex interactions that do not as a rule involve actual sexual activity, but clearly involve a level of romantic and sometimes erotic emotion that is not adequately described by terms like homosociality and bonding (2006, 8)

provides a model of sorts of multiple, shifting, and contradictory codes and representations of teen relationships and sexuality which this thesis will investigate.

Gender Performance

One way this thesis will analyse the multiple and contradictory codes in films about teens is through an examination of gender performance. Heterosexuality is premised upon normative and naturalised gender roles, so that the interruption of the 'natural' status of those gender roles destabilises heterosexuality itself. Heterosexuality is also predicated upon a binary opposition with homosexuality, so that the interruption of the boundaries of that binary also threatens the stability of heterosexuality (Butler 1990). Keeping this in mind, there are four models for analysing gender performance which inform my approach. These models provide the framework for thinking about how gender functions in representations of teens. The first involves the presentation of gender as a masquerade, which works to naturalise the gender presentation of particular characters through comparison with the excessive and unnatural gender masquerade of an/other character(s). The second model reflects thematic preoccupations in representations of teen girls, particularly the issue of aggression in representations of women and its links to lesbianism, due to its assignment of subjectivity and agency to female/feminine characters. The third model is that of homosocial continuums, which provides a model for thinking

about the destabilisation of the binaries heterosexual/homosexual, same-sex friendship/romance, and homosociality/homosexuality. The last model reviews the work done in film studies which specifically deal with same-sex friendships, in the buddy film and female friendship films. The patterns identified in this literature will provide a basis for analysing representations of teen same-sex friendships.

Initially used within film studies to think through identification, desire, and the female spectator, the term 'masquerade' was used by Mary Ann Doane to describe how 'a woman might flaunt her femininity' or 'produce herself as an excess of femininity' (1982, 81). This is because, Doane claims, women's relation to cinema, and to the camera, differed from the position of men which had been theorised up to that point.[23] Women are unable to gain enough distance from their own image on screen because their image is the object of the gaze and distance is necessary for either identification or desire. According to Doane, the female spectator is so close to the image of woman that her relationship with the image is narcissistic, which functions to 'negate the very distance or gap specified […] as the essential precondition for voyeurism' (1982, 78). In order to become the subject as opposed to the object of the gaze, a certain distance is needed between the female spectator and the objects on screen.

Doane and others[24] have claimed that to create this distance, women are able to identify trans-sexually, taking on a masculine subject position. However, to deny this cross-sex identification, and to reclaim femininity, women then take on, according to Doane, excessive femininity, wearing their femininity as a kind of masquerade which 'in flaunting femininity, holds it at a distance' so that 'womanliness is a mask which can be worn or removed' (Doane 1982, 81). This then creates the distance necessary between the female spectator, and the woman-as-object on screen. It also destabilises the naturalness of 'womanliness' in its ability to be adopted and discarded; it is for this reason that excessive femininity is both suspect and productive.

The concept has also been used to discuss representations of men. Chris Holmlund used the term to discuss the relational masculinity between men in

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[23] See for example Mulvey 1975 & 1981, Neale 1982

[24] Mulvey 1981

buddy films starring Sylvester Stallone. In Stallone's buddy films, Holmlund argues, the Stallone buddy is

> so like Stallone I call him the Stallone clone [...] I do not just mean he looks, talks, and acts like Stallone. In these films, Stallone and the clones are very fond of each other, so for me, "clone" evokes the butch clone, the homosexual who passes as heterosexual because he looks and acts "like a man". (Holmlund 1993a, 214-5)

Stallone and the clone not only present a masquerade of their masculinity, but also of their heterosexuality. Further, the Stallone clone masquerades specifically as Stallone, mimicking his masculinity and heterosexual associations both on and off screen.

Judith Butler, however, criticises the idea of the masquerade as ultimately illogical, as 'it would appear to reduce all being to a form of appearing, the appearance of being, with the consequence that all gender ontology is reducible to the play of appearances' (60). Further, she argues,

> masquerade suggests that there is a "being" or ontological specification of femininity *prior to* the masquerade, a feminine desire or demand that is masked and capable of disclosure, that, indeed, might promise an eventual disruption and displacement of the phallogocentric signifying economy. (60, her emphasis)

As Butler has already argued that there is no 'prior' ontology of gender, that it in fact performatively constitutes itself, this second consequence of masquerade is difficult to accept. However, returning to Holmlund's use of masquerade to denote *relational* genders which create a hierarchy of desirable, normative gender, the masquerade becomes a useful tool for thinking about binary gender in relation to itself. The masquerade both hides and reveals the work involved in policing gender norms by allowing one character to embody the gender norm or ideal, and requiring another character to measure up. Though this moves closer to the 'play of appearances' issue marked by Butler as overly simplistic, it also allows for the analysis of and disruption of naturalised gender norms in relational, homosocial narratives.

In films about teen girls, the masquerade is often invoked in the narrative trope of the 'makeover'.[25] In this narrative trope, a hierarchy of gender is set up from the beginning, primarily via what Gilligan calls the 'made-under' (2011, 269). Certain signifiers, such as 'poorly-fitting, unstylish, "unfeminine" clothing, unkempt hair, heavy brows, glasses, and a prevailing disinterest in cosmetics'

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[25] This has been cited by several scholars, including Moseley (2002) and Sarah Gilligan (2011).

(269), indicate that a girl is insufficiently feminine, and in need of a makeover. This works, however, as Gilligan argues, first by making the girl up excessively, to make her 'more feminine', and then (though, Gilligan warns, not in every case), 'made-under' once again to bring the girl back in line with 'natural' or authentic femininity. This second 'make-under' does not bring the character back to the original lack of femininity, but reduces the excess, and therefore the threat of the masquerade of excessive femininity. These relational gender performances simultaneously destabilise and reinforce naturalised gender.

The disruption of naturalised gender attributes such as passivity and lack of subjectivity in women also threatens to destabilise the gender binary, and by extension heteronormativity. The representational association between women's physical and sexual aggression and lesbianism has developed within discourses of nationhood and modernity from which normative notions of gender and sexuality have also emerged (Duggan 2000). The particular kinds of subjectivity involved in both physical and sexual aggression do not fit within those normative notions of femininity, which results in aggressive women being aligned with the non-normative, as crazy, criminal, and lesbian (Birch 1993, Hart 1994, Duggan 2000, Smelik 2004).

Lynda Hart (1994), in her study *Fatal Women: Lesbian Sexuality and the Mark of Aggression*, argues that 'if desire inevitably confirms masculinity, so does crime. Masculinity is as much verified by active desire as it is by aggression' (x). Hart reasons that, therefore, 'the desiring subject as confirmation of masculinity to some extent depends on the presupposition that women cannot perform acts of aggression' (x). Women are therefore not eligible for the masculine subjectivity which allows for the expression of both desire and aggression within normative gender roles. When women do perform acts of aggression, then, Karen Boyle argues that this becomes symbolically attached to sexuality, 'for both desire and aggression require an activity and subjectivity which women are denied' (2002, 36). Further, in fact, female desire and aggression are linked to the figure of the lesbian because 'lesbian desire, by definition, position[s] women as desiring subjects,' while 'female desire, by its very existence, [is] marked as aggressive' (Boyle 2002, 36).

Further cementing the associations between insanity, violence, and lesbianism are an array of fictional film and television representations. Like descriptions of 'real-life' female killers, fictional or fictionalised killers in films

are often visibly masculine. Even so, as Chris Holmlund argues, masculinised female bodies are recuperated for the male gaze, as the female killer film 'always considers the display of female bodies to be more important than the portrayal of female violence' (1993b, 134). Films like *Basic Instinct* (Verhoeven, 1992) are quite explicit about the link between violence and lesbianism, while other films toy with 'a murmured fear of lesbianism' which 'lurks beneath the general discomfort with violent women' (Holmlund 1993b, 149).

Anneke Smelik turns to a set of art films about female violence released in the early 1990s[26] whose primary characters are teens. These films 'connect adolescent female bodies and violence' and also connect 'lesbian desire and pathology, same-sex love and bloodthirstiness' (Smelik 2004, 71). Smelik admits that 'the burning question here is whether the films perpetuate the stereotype of the man-hating and murderous lesbian' (71). Rather than defend these representations as breaking with stereotype, Smelik argues that they provide 'unsurpassed levels of complexity' (72) in relation to discursive associations, and enable the characters to move beyond the traps and burdens of stereotypes and positive images.

As aggression in women implies subjectivity where there should be none, the aggressive woman destabilises the naturalised order of sex, gender, and desire by calling into question the ideas of gender which support this heteronormative teleos, and is thus linked with other positions which exist outside of the acceptable and the normal such as lesbianism.

One particular threat to the heteronormative binary heterosexual/homosexual is embodied by the dissolution of that division. Adrienne Rich and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick have each proposed the existence of a continuum of homosocial relationships which question the boundaries between the two apparently oppositional terms. Rich's 1980 piece 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence' is directed at disrupting the heterocentric assumptions of women writers and feminist theorists. Rich argues that these writers are complicit in enforcement of compulsory heterosexuality and simultaneously erase or deplore lesbianism as a viable option for women. In order to unsettle heterosexuality as the primary or only option, then, Rich suggests rethinking women's relationships. She introduces the 'lesbian

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[26] *Sister My Sister* (Meckler, 1994), *Fun* (Zelinski, 1994), *Butterfly Kiss* (Winterbottom, 1995), and *Heavenly Creatures* (Jackson 1994)

continuum', which expands the term 'lesbian' to 'embrace many more forms of primary intensity between and among women' (648), and is not totally definitionally reliant on genital sexuality. Instead, it is conceptualised to 'include a range – throughout each woman's life and throughout history – of woman-identified experience' (648), and, Rich argues, this suggests that women's friendships with other women function as the primary and lifelong bonds in women's lives, even in otherwise heterocentric literature.

Rich's conceptualisation of a lesbian continuum which is not totally dependent on sexual activity has been criticised heavily by lesbian feminists. This is in part because it was seen as reinforcing 'the stereotype of women as emotional or sensual rather than actively sexual' (Cameron 1990, 36), and denying the sexual activity specific to lesbian identity and practice. These debates coincided with debates around identity and desire in female spectatorship. As 'some lesbian feminists insist on the absolute centrality of sexual practice to lesbian identity' (Cameron 1990, 36), Rich's continuum was considered insufficient as a descriptor of women's relationships. However, as a framework for theorising the ways that women's close relationships, whether sexual or not, slide across a continuum in terms of centrality and importance to their lives, and in particular as a pointed criticism of compulsory heterosexuality, Rich's work stands despite the criticisms of the 1980s.

In *Between Men*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick picks up on Rich's ideas. She aims to 'hypothesize the potential unbrokenness of a continuum between homosocial and homosexual' (1985, 2) for men. To frame her discussion, Sedgwick points out that 'the diacritical opposition between the "homosocial" and the "homosexual" seems to be much less thorough and dichotomous for women, in our society, than for men' (1985, 2). In fact, Sedgwick combats the criticisms of Rich's discussion by arguing that 'at this particular historical moment, an intelligible continuum of aims, emotions, and valuations links lesbianism with other forms of women's attention to women' (1985, 2). Sedgwick's concern in *Between Men*, however, is the existence and position of a similar continuum for men. She argues that such a thing exists, but in our society is structured by homophobia and by the disguising of the continuum itself. Historically, however, this was not always the case; the example of ancient Greek patriarchy, in which 'the continuum between "men-loving-men" and "men-promoting-the-interests-of-

men" appears to have been quite seamless' (1985, 5) provides an obvious contrast to the more contemporary situation which Sedgwick outlines.

Sedgwick is more specific with her formulations of the homosocial continuum; like Rich, she is not arguing that sexual activity underlies all male social connections and behaviours, but that there are similarities in the structure of 'men's relations with other men' from which certain 'generalizations' (1985, 2) can be made. She calls that structure 'homosocial desire': though she is not using 'desire' to refer to an emotion so much as 'the affective or social force, the glue' which binds and 'shapes an important relationship' (1985, 2). This closely echoes Rich's arguments that women's bonds structure the relationships in their lives and are the more permanent or important of their relationships. While Sedgwick is not arguing that this bond, which she calls desire, is strictly sexual, she is suggesting that the dichotomy is not so clear and so easily differentiated between sexual and non-sexual relationships. In fact, she uses the term desire to 'mark the erotic emphasis' in order to make visible the 'unbrokenness' of the male homosocial continuum which she proposes (1985, 2). Ultimately, she argues, despite the deployment of homophobia to mask the continuum of homosocial desire, the example of Rich's lesbian continuum and of the Greek patriarchal continuum both demonstrate 'that the structure of homosocial continuums is culturally contingent, not an innate feature of either "maleness" or "femaleness"' (1985, 5).

Drawing on Rich and Sedgwick, I also want to propose a set of continuums as a way to structure my discussion of teen friendships in film, and particularly as a way to point to the homosocial desire, in the sense of primary or elevated dyadic homosocial bonds, which structures such relationships. I will limit those continuums to teenagers, looking at the way that dyadic homosocial teen friendships in film actually shift across the spectrum, though still in fundamentally gendered ways. The thesis will be structured by gender, but this is not to say that there are no other factors at play; factors such as race and ethnicity, nation, and genre all contribute to how friendships are represented.

The aim of using a continuum here is to expose the way that the boundaries between same-sex friendship and romance or homosociality and homosexuality may not be as rigid as they appear – in other words, Sedgwick's 'unbrokenness'. Here the continuum moves from platonic heteronormative friendship (although heteronormative gender formations often involve intense homophobic

homosocial relationships, as argued by Sedgwick) to genital sexuality. Genital sexuality is not a simple issue when discussing teenagers, particularly as discourse about the teen is often entangled in discourse around childhood sexuality, exploitation and consensus. In fact, in discussions of homosocial relationships, genital sexuality is not the key attribute. This is echoed in both Rich and Sedgwick's formulations; though sexuality forms one end of the spectrum, it is the functions of the spectrum as a whole, and the slippages along it in teen narratives which are most important to this thesis.

Several subsets of film studies take on the concept of homosocial continuums and apply them to films about friendships. These studies trace the ways that such friendships are able to transcend homophobic border policing of the hetero/homo binary, even as they also enact that homophobia. Critical discussions about men's same-sex friendships on film, focusing on buddy films from the 1960s onwards, as well as the analysis of female friendship films of the 1970s onwards, provide frameworks which I argue are relevant for an analysis of teenage friendships in film.

Commonalities between buddy films are many, but there are a few key characteristics which relate specifically to the creation and maintenance of the boundary between homosociality and homosexuality. Robin Wood (2003 [1986]) argues that first, and certainly foremost, is the presence of a primary male-male relationship, which includes intimacy, emotions, intensity, and which is often combined with a marked lack of heterosexual interactions. Indeed, as Joan Mellen summarizes, 'the buddy film included an explicit rejection of a relationship with a woman and suggested to men that love and understanding are best provided by other men' (Mellen 1978, 531). Robin Wood argues that 'the basic motivating premise' of the buddy film 'is not the presence of the male relationship but the absence of home' (2003 [1986], 203) by which he means, ultimately, the heteronormative nation. The male relationship is taken for granted as the basis of the genre he is trying to define; 'the emotional center, the emotional charge' (Wood 2003 [1986], 204) lies in these relationships.

Jack Babuscio (1975) argued that 'buddy love' exists in male friendship films which are fraught with tensions that betray both the fragility and rigidity of the boundaries between homosociality and homosexuality. He identifies a *type* of relationship existing across different genres, and is much closer to my approach than Wood's. In 'The Buddy Politic' Cynthia Fuchs (1993), adds that

representations of 'the exciting troubling relation between two male bodies' (1993, 194) will both 'deny and fulfill' (ibid) their homoerotic promise, oscillating between threatening homoeroticism and repressive homophobia. David Greven observes that this kind of oscillation is the legacy of 'a homosocialized and homosocializing society that depends on bonds between members of the same-sex but also rigorously polices against any erotic dimension to those bonds' (2009, 29). Such depictions of close same-sex friendships both define and defy the limits of acceptable relationships. Representations of teen same-sex friendships exhibit this tendency even more clearly, as the boundaries of teen relationships are understood to set the pattern for 'mature' (homosocial but heteronormative) adult development.

Chris Holmlund explains that the presence of a sexualised woman in Sylvester Stallone's films serves the purpose of defusing homoeroticism, arguing that the presentation of

> binary oppositions of gender betray the nervousness which underlies masquerades of masculinity: desire between men, the overt enjoyment of another man's body and especially of his penis, must be denied. (Holmlund 1993a, 222)

Passing and undeveloped heterosexual encounters embody this denial, working to assuage anxieties rather than further the plot. Verbal or physical homophobic violence can also operate to mediate homoeroticism, or else the presence of a 'real' homosexual (often highly stereotyped) can act as repository for homophobia or homosexual signification' (Babuscio 1975, Wood 2003 [1986]).

Cynthia Fuchs argues that in cop-buddy movies of the late 1980s and early 1990s, the threat of homosexuality is effaced by 'recuperating racial otherness' (1993, 195). Indeed, the relationship between men in these films has been written about in terms of racial difference as much if not more frequently than it has in terms of homoeroticism or implicit homosexuality.[27] Tasker, however, echoes Fuchs in arguing that for many of these films, 'racial difference is complexly bound into anxieties about homoeroticism and gay male desire (1993, 36). Other differences, such as class (Tasker 1993, 106), or visible/physical differences can likewise be used to shift focus from the potential or implicit threat of homosexuality, and in these cop-buddy films and other action-buddy

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[27] See for example Donalson 2006, Artz 1998, Guerrero 1993, Ames 1992, Cohan & Hark 1997, Tasker 1993, etc.

films, as argued by Ames (1992), the threat can also be diffused via physicality and violence.

Finally, it has frequently been noted that death, separation, and/or destruction seem to be the only resolution of these stories (Babuscio 1975; Wood 2003; Fuchs 1992; Creed 1995). Because the realisation of the homoerotic desires presented in these narratives is hetero-logically impossible, one of the buddies must die, or their relationship must be destroyed in some other way. According to Babuscio, films present male friendship as a heavily policed relationship which rigidly reinforces the boundaries it simultaneously threatens to dissolve. Wood takes Babuscio's arguments a step further and echoes Miller in contending that 'by finding it necessary to deny the homosexual nature of the central relationship so strenuously, the films actually succeed in drawing attention to its possibility' (Wood 2003 [1986], 204). As the male bond leads to 'unresolvable' (Fuchs 1993, 195) outcomes, the action is frozen or destroyed. Babuscio argues that this death or destruction must be enacted so that the 'relationship is preserved, perhaps forever, in its pristine state' (Babuscio 1975, 24).

In a discussion of the new spate of 'lad flicks' which have emerged since the late 1990s, Hansen-Miller and Gill point to the evolving role that homophobic denial plays in male same-sex relationships. Noting, interestingly, that this genre 'can be thought of as a hybrid of "buddy movies", romantic comedies, and "chick flicks"' (2011, 36), Hansen-Miller and Gill argue that 'lad flicks' rely 'upon dynamics of intense heterosexual male bonding, paired with explicit homophobic humour' (44). The homophobic humour, they observe, is both intense and 'almost hysterical' (45), marking the crisis in masculinity which they claim underwrites the whole genre, and working, in a way similar to the violent homophobia of earlier buddy films, to 'disavow and deflect the homoerotic potential' (44) of the film. Though this homophobia is not violent, it is clear that heteronormative masculinity still requires a repression or denial of any homoerotic aspects of homosocial relationships. I argue that this is particularly true when discussing the transformative teen years, in which sexual identity is being established and therefore, with the exception of explicitly gay, lesbian, or queer narratives, any deviation must be heterosexually corrected before the narrative finishes. The anxiety over teen sexual identity and behaviour means that it remains imperative for the films in this thesis to deny homosexual

possibilities which exist within friendships, creating a situation similar to the 'lad flick' in its telling protestations.

The characteristics of the buddy film have provided a common framework for discussing the emergence of what has been called the 'female friendship film' from the 1970s onwards. However, there are crucial gendered differences in how these characteristics play out when the narratives in question are about women's relationships. This is partly to do with socialised gendered behaviour, and partly to do with the matrix of representation and representability associated with women in film.

For many critics writing about the female friendship films which emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, the extant critical writing about the buddy film provides an apt approach. Melanie Leigh Nash (1994) describes female friendship films as 'a generic hybrid of the woman's film and the male buddy film' (1994, ii). Many of the characteristics outlined in the buddy film literature are applicable to female friendship films, particularly those regarding the primacy of the same-sex relationship which constitutes the emotional core of the film. As such, heterosexuality is frequently put on the back burner, or rejected altogether. Men, when present, are used to provide a heterosexual alibi for the women, or else to provide a neat heterosexual resolution for at least one of the women – after the destruction of the women's relationship. The biggest differences between the female friendship film and the male buddy film, however, are both generic and gendered.

Karen Hollinger (1998) argues that these two film categories have less in common than has typically been asserted. Hollinger points out that though the films are all about same-sex friendships, the buddy film actually 'fits comfortably within the larger confines of the action/adventure genre' (1998, 1) whereas 'the female friendship film is more accurately described as a recently developed subgenre of the woman's film, a multifaceted film genre with a long cinematic history' (1998, 1-2). Basing her arguments in literary genres, Hollinger is able to reframe the female friendship film as being quite centrally about women and their relationships, rather than being related in key ways to representations of men's relationships.

The two types of female friendship films outlined by Hollinger which are most relevant to this chapter are sentimental and erotic female friendship films.

Hollinger describes sentimental friendship films as consisting of relationships which

> are close, emotionally effusive, dyadic same-sex unions. They are conventionally presented as nurturing and psychologically enriching partnerships that also exhibit a fervent passion that is reminiscent of heterosexual romantic love. Sentimental female [friends...] relate so intensely that their friendship acquires many of the signs of a love affair. (Hollinger 1998, 7)

The only distinction which Hollinger makes between the sentimental friendship film and the erotic female friendship film is 'the suggestion of a lesbian sexual relationship between the two friends' (Hollinger 1998, 7). She argues that, though homoromance and homoeroticism exist within sentimental friendship films, only characters in erotic friendship films physically act on the desires and underlying sexual connotations. Even so, she finds it difficult to truly distinguish between these two categories, as she then adds that 'although erotic female friendship films often contain at least one scene of explicitly lesbian lovemaking' (Hollinger 1998, 7), this is not always the case. Rather, 'they sometimes take a more ambiguous form that renders them almost indistinguishable from representations of sentimental female friendship' (ibid) so that they could be either 'very close friends' or 'lovers' (ibid), or both. This indeterminacy returns to the discussions above regarding the operations of the lesbian homosocial continuum proposed by Rich.

There has been a rather heated debate over this particular distinction between critics Teresa de Lauretis and Jackie Stacey, as Hollinger notes. This debate centres on whether female characters and female spectators identify with female characters, an identification which is understood to be non-sexual and narcissistic, as well as or as opposed to desiring other females in female friendship films. Stacey has argued that the combination of identification and desire in female friendship films blurs the boundaries of friendship and lesbian representation, and provides a site of desire on the part of the female spectator directed toward another woman (Stacey 1987). In response, de Lauretis has warned of the political dangers of eliding the two, arguing that the political particulars of lesbian sexuality would be erased in such a formulation , and that the instances Stacey describes are not of desire, but of intense (heterosexual) narcissistic identification (de Lauretis 1991). Hollinger positions herself somewhere in between by claiming that, generally, lesbian films focus on desire while female friendship films focus on identification. 'Yet,' she maintains,

> the very existence of ambiguous lesbian films like *Fried Green Tomatoes* [Avnet, 1991] and female friendship films with homoerotic overtones like *Julia* [Zinnemann, 1977] suggests that the break between the two categories of films is not as decisive as de Lauretis claims. (Hollinger 1998, 177)

Given the dearth of explicit teenage lesbian representations, recognising this ambiguity broadens the possibilities presented by teen girls' friendships.

Though Yvonne Tasker reminds us that 'it is not the case that the portrayal of female friendship *necessarily* involves the suggestion of lesbianism' (Tasker 1998, 153, her emphasis), she argues that lesbianism and female friendship exist in a closed same-sex space, and often involve narratives which are not defined by, and even exclude, men and heterosexuality. So it is the case that narrative structure and content as well as the intimacy of the relationship itself all help to blur the lines between same-sex friendship and romantic relationships, and make it difficult to discern, particularly in films which are sexually non-explicit, the boundaries of the relationship. In these films, many of the romantic or sexual connotations come across through editing, characters' mutual looking, and (any) physical contact; as Hollinger argues, 'all of these visual markers of suggested homoerotic desire can just as easily be interpreted, and certainly are by many viewers, merely as indicators of admiration and affection between friends' (1998, 163). In other words, the boundary between friendship and desire for women's friendships appears to be less easily 'threatened' and more ambiguous than that between men's friendships as discussed above.

Beyond the textual qualities of female friendship narratives, Barbara Creed argues that it is the representation of women's bodies themselves which calls heteronormativity into question. The closed same-sex world is built on narcissism, imitation, doubling, and sameness, which applies to both same-sex friendships as well as lesbian relationships. In this way, then, Creed argues, 'all female bodies represent the threat or potential – depending on how you see it – of lesbianism' (Creed 1995, 87). The typical representational practice in either mainstream lesbian films or female friendship films, as well as teenage girls in film, involves acceptably feminine women. Creed explains that the use of this feminine body across the spectrum of representation in same-sex relationships 'is potentially as threatening – although not as immediately confronting – as the stereotyped butch because she signifies the possibility that all women are potential lesbians' (Creed 1995, 101).

Ultimately, according to these scholars, what differentiates the representations of women's friendship from that of male buddy films is that whereas men's close friendships have sub-textual connotations of homosexuality which threaten heteronormativity and must be denied, women's close friendships are often indistinguishable from lesbianism. For teenagers of both genders, the liminality and blurred borders of friendship and romantic or sexual relationships are indicative of this transitional period from childhood to adulthood. According to psychoanalysis, the liminality of the teen years is representative of a developmental phase. Freud identified this phase as pre-heterosexual, and many critics have drawn on Freud's work to analyse film depictions of literal (teenagers) and figurative (immature adults) adolescent relationships. This developmental model helps explain why, for teenagers, the emphasis in teen friendship films is placed on growing out of these relationships, rather than destroying them.

Barbara Creed argues that 'the liminal journey of the tomboy – one of the few rites of passage stories available to women in the cinema – is a narrative about the forging of the proper female identity' (Creed 1995, 96), and indeed it is the process by which this proper gender identity is established which is so often depicted in films about teenage girls' relationships. Yvonne Tasker further points out that in 'narratives of heterosexual romance, female friendship is something to be left behind and, implicitly, to be grown out of (Tasker 1998, 151). Female friendship is understood as an important part of the development of a heterosexual femininity, but must be passed through and left behind.

Hollinger cites this critical discourse in her discussion of *Personal Best* (Towne, 1982), one of the first films to represent a lesbian sexual relationship without condemning it outright. Hollinger points to the ways that the film falls into patterns set out in the representation of lesbian relationships, observing that the relationship of the two female protagonists 'is presented as a stage in their development toward adult heterosexuality' (Hollinger 1998, 141), and that further, it is made up of equal parts 'childlike play and maternal nurturance' (Hollinger 1998, 143). The primary issue here, in a film which has been both lauded and criticised for its representation of an explicit lesbian relationship, is that it furthers

> a heterosexist message that views lesbianism as an inadequate adolescent stage in women's psychosexual development toward a more satisfying and fulfilling heterosexuality. (Hollinger 1998, 143)

If close female friendship is a phase and must be sacrificed for heterosexual success, which Tasker observes is 'a process that suggests an opposition between the two' (Tasker 1998, 151), then female friendship films end up signifying 'a concomitant sense that friendship between women is not only a source of strength but [is also] at least potentially lesbian in character' (Tasker 1998, 151). Further, Tasker argues, 'the lack of distinction between the signifiers of female strength and of lesbianism becomes apparent' (Tasker 1998, 152) in films such as *Thelma and Louise* (Scott, 1991), where the combination of the strength, independence, and fierce friendship of the two titular characters does not serve to alienate them from the viewer, but rather insists on identification. Lynda Hart uses Robin Wood's model to discuss *Thelma and Louise* as a 'buddy film', stating that 'since *Thelma and Louise* seems to do little more than substitute female characters in the conventional male roles, we might expect that the censored subtext of the film is lesbian desire' (Hart 1994, 69). The infamous end of this film, the two kissing and driving off a cliff after an escalation of crime and violence, is the perfect illustration of a film whose narrative can no longer repress its homosexual undercurrents, resulting in the destruction of the threatening relationship.

Gender roles and performance are intimately connected to representations of sexuality and sexual identity. This section has outlined the ways that analysis of heteronormative representation can be shifted to highlight destabilisations of the system in which heterosexuality, as a 'natural' position built upon difference and naturalised binary genders, exists in opposition to homosexuality. Through attention to relational hierarchies of both genders, which destabilise gender as a natural category, and representations of aggression in teen girls, which remain associated with lesbianism in their depiction of girls' subjectivity, this thesis aims to initiate disruptions of normative gender categories, which open queer possibilities within the narrative. Further, by introducing gendered homosocial continuums for the relationships represented in the films discussed here, the thesis intends to show the ways that boundaries between homosociality and homosexuality are both fluid and reinforced. The patterns of analysis outlined by studies of the buddy film and the female friendship film provide helpful frameworks for mobilising analysis around those continuums.

Conclusions: Positioning the Thesis

Teen film genre studies frequently refer to the homoeroticism extant in teen friendships; there is, however, a serious lack of expansion of this observation within discussions of the genre. I intend to begin to fill in that gap by looking at intense same-sex teen dyads. Likewise, studies of teens in film have been dominated by discussions solely centred on the teen film genre. This thesis aims to discuss how genre factors into representations of teenagers, as well as how the figure of the teen might shift across a wider variety of genres.

My aim is to queer teen friendships in particular ways. This is in part a reaction to the relative lack of accessible representation of gay and lesbian teens in film, and in part a development of the contention that the teen years are queer, given the common understanding and representation of these years as liminal and consisting of transitory identities. The disruption of assumptions of heteronormativity in representations of teenagers is a strategy aimed at bringing queer possibilities within those representations to the fore, interrupting and exposing the policing of boundaries between homosociality and homosexuality.

What, then, is the corpus used for this thesis? How are films chosen for analysis, and where do they fit in the larger picture of representations of teenagers in film from 2000 to 2009? The next chapter will address these issues, explicating the patterns of data collected in the database compiled as the basis of the research in this thesis.

Chapter 3 Contextualising the Teen in Contemporary Film

The films chosen for detailed analysis in the chapters to follow emerged from a corpus of films gathered for this thesis in 2009. This chapter will outline my research design and the process of creating the database of films which form the basis of this project, and will then explicate the data, which will help to contextualise the textual analysis in this thesis. The findings of this chapter set up the general patterns found in representations of teenagers, particularly around genre, gender, and lead character types. These categories help to situate the films which have been chosen for detailed analysis in several ways. First, the findings here make clear that the films discussed in later chapters do not necessarily fit within the dominant patterns. While it may seem obvious to focus on the dominant modes of representation, this type of analysis has been done before, as discussed in the previous chapter. Second, the findings show some of the restrictions that a genre-specific analysis places on teen film studies. Many of the perceived patterns are not as dominant as scholars have assumed. Therefore, the detailed analyses in the chapters to follow are able to set a variety of films together, some of which do fit the dominant patterns, and some of which do not, to see how different representational approaches can produce compelling dialogues about teens in film.

Research Origins and Design

To begin answering the questions set out in this thesis, I had to locate films with teenagers. This is not as simple as it sounds, particularly as I did not want to focus solely on US-centric teen films. Certainly, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, genre is a major consideration when looking at representations of teenagers, but to limit discussion to films within the teen film genre meant that I would essentially be restricted to analysing the same films as every other teen film scholar. In order to look at teenagers more broadly, then, I decided that a wider selection of films was necessary. This would also, hopefully, paint a fuller picture of the teen in film, rather than the narrower focus of the teen film genre.

The next question, then, was *how* to identify all films featuring teenaged primary characters within a particular time period. As my research is based in

the United Kingdom, it made sense for reasons of access as well as positioning the research to limit the selection to films released in the UK. Several film magazines promise to review every film released in the UK; for the purposes of this thesis, both *Sight and Sound* and *Empire* were initially consulted. I chose to focus on a decade of films in order to allow room for some broader patterns to emerge. At the time I began my research, few films made after the surge of teen films in the 1990s[28] had been discussed academically, so I chose to start my corpus just after that cycle, looking at films reviewed and released between January 2000 and December 2009. In that way, the films included would be both relatively unexplored, and could be positioned as responses to and developments of the images of teens which had been so popularly and widely discussed in the 1980s and 1990s.

Starting from my position in mid-2009, I consulted a sample year of both *Sight and Sound* and *Empire* to test the efficacy of the research design. Would combing reviews of films produce results in terms of teen characters? Would either magazine be more helpful? In looking through all the 2000 issues of both magazines, several interesting issues emerged. First, though both reviewed the same films, *Empire* was more likely to use shorthand generic indicators. *Sight and Sound*, on the other hand, did not always indicate the age of characters. This difference in content could certainly be in part attributed to perceived differences in the audiences of each magazine, and differences in tone between the BFI produced and academically inflected *Sight and Sound* versus *Empire*'s position as a popular film magazine. I decided that for the purposes of this research, the populist tone would aid me more; the more frequent generic shorthand was useful in concisely presenting attitudes about teens and films about teens. After the sample year, I used *Empire* as the basis of my selections.

By reading through all reviews in *Empire*'s 'In Cinemas'[29] section looking for generic and descriptive indicators which would mark any films as about teenagers or featuring them in primary roles, I compiled as complete a list of

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[28] This cycle includes films such as *American Pie* (Weitz & Weitz 1999), *She's All That* (Iscove 1999), *Scream* (Craven 1996), *I Know What You Did Last Summer* (Gillespie 1997), *10 Things I Hate About You* (Junger 1999), *Cruel Intentions* (Kumble 1999), *Can't Hardly Wait* (Elfont & Kaplan 1998), *Bring It On* (Reed 2000), and *The Faculty* (Rodriguez 1998). Such films are heavily discussed in teen film genre studies; articles such as Robin Wood's 2002 'Party Time or Can't Hardly Wait for That American Pie' in *Cineaction* and Stephanie Zacharek's 1999 'There's Something about Teenage Comedy' in *Sight and Sound* make the prevalence and cultural weight of this group of films clear, as well as the discursive grouping itself.

[29] Initially called 'Reviews' and then 'Now Playing', the section is now called 'In Cinemas'.

films as possible. There was a huge variety of phrases and descriptors which flagged films for inclusion. For example, something as straightforward as Empire's review of *The Hot Chick* (Brady 2002) which states that the film is poorly made 'even by the unexacting standards of gender-bender and *high school comedies,*' (Errigo 2003, 56) and goes on to explain that the main character is a 'teen queen' (ibid), indicates both a genre and a character type which are teen-specific. Other kinds of indicators, such as the description of *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (Cuarón 2004) which simply states that, 'now 13, Harry Potter and chums are back off to Hogwarts' (Kennedy 2004, 29), place the film's main characters within the eligible age group for inclusion. Other reviews were less clear about the position of the teenage character(s) within the film. The review of *The Children* (Shankland 2008), implies a central role for its teen character by placing her as imperative to narrative progress: 'meanwhile, rebellious teen Casey is a step ahead and tries to warn of the threat at hand' (Smith 2009, 78). Her centrality is not explicit, but the ambiguity of the review's language meant that the film was included in the database, despite being ruled out for further analysis[30] after viewing due to the character's isolation from other teens and marginalisation within the narrative. Gus Van Sant's *Paranoid Park* (2007) was described using several indicators in its review: 'Van Sant's low-key, experimental high school drama is an affecting rites-of-passage tale, told with bold style and quiet integrity' (Wise 2008, 68). Here, both 'high school drama' and 'rites-of-passage tale' indicate the centrality of teenagers to the narrative. Finally, some reviews did not use the specific language described above. In the case of *Herbie Fully Loaded*, the review referenced actress Lindsay Lohan's recent role in the teen movie *Mean Girls* (Waters 2004). The comparative reference to Lohan's previous, and preferred, performance implied that this would be a film with a similar sensibility, centred on teen characters, based on its teen film star. Upon viewing, *Herbie* was also excluded from further analysis due to the stated age (early twenties) of Lohan's character.

Though ultimately I am interested specifically in teenaged characters, aged thirteen to nineteen, many films are included in the database because *Empire* reviewers use broader discursive definitions of teenagers and teenage-ness. This

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[30] Films ruled out for analysis are still included in the 267 films in the database and therefore are still present in the quantitative analysis in this chapter, but do not return for more in depth discussion in later chapters.

means that *Empire* reviews include characters who are college-age or older through generic associations with the teen film and with teen film stars.

Certainly this is a doubly subjective process, relying on the reviewer's interpretations and descriptions of each film, as well as my own interpretations of each review. As such, the database compiled for this research reflects not only data about the films in question, but discursive ideas about teens which circulate in popular media. From each *Empire* review, I extracted film titles, director's names, UK release dates (if listed), *Empire*'s generic keywords,[31] UK certifications, and the issue of *Empire* in which each review appeared. This data was then supplemented by further and comparative research via the Internet Movie Database (IMDb). From IMDb, I included US certifications, release dates and UK certifications when these were missing from *Empire*'s reviews, and IMDb's own generic keywords. IMDb's genre keywords were much broader and more precise than *Empire*'s as they are used for categorisation rather than description; the keywords on IMDb make films searchable via genre, whereas *Empire* uses genre as shorthand in reviews. Some examples of IMDb genre keywords are: comedy, romance, horror, drama, mystery, fantasy, adventure, and sci-fi. From the combination of *Empire*'s and IMDb's genre keywords, reviews, and descriptions, I assigned a few of my own keywords to each film to help sift through films which contained similarities of focus and tone. My own keywords included things like the types of relationship present in the film, such as teen groups, girls' relationships, boys' relationships, and sibling relationships; particular preoccupations of the films, such as race, class, setting, country of origin; and some genre indicators such as horror, adventure, sport, and coming of age.

The result of my research was a database consisting of 267 records. While this provides plenty of scope for quantitative patterns, it is important to remember that those records are based specifically on *Empire*'s reviews, so any patterns derived from the research will be speculative to some extent, and derived from discourse around the teenager and teen film rather than specific to real teens or even representations of biologically teenaged characters. Some data, such as certifications, are as reliable coming from *Empire* as anywhere else, while data such as genre keywords are more subjective and specific to

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[31] These are taken straight from the reviews, and therefore are both imprecise and snappy, as seen above in the discussion of how individual films were chosen for inclusion in the database.

Empire. Though the quantitative extrapolations from this data are important in situating the films chosen for detailed analysis in this thesis, the primary focus of the research here is in the qualitative textual analysis of a much smaller group of films. My findings, therefore, are suggestive rather than statistically significant. By moving from the larger corpus to a smaller group of films, I was able to narrow the focus of the analysis and to attend specifically to the aims of the thesis, rather than to dominant patterns in the corpus as a whole. As a result, while this chapter deals with the quantitative analysis of the corpus, the remainder of the thesis focuses more specifically on small groups of films.

As the purpose of the database, in part, was to provide a wide corpus from which to select films for more detailed study, it was important to begin sifting through the films as soon as possible. While still gathering data from *Empire*, I conducted preliminary viewings of films which represented as much variety from the corpus as possible. During these preliminary viewings, I took notes on character types, setting, narrative structures and concerns, and on representations of friendships. I also made notes about potentially queer moments, which could be returned to productively.

Based on patterns which emerged from these initial viewings, certain films were flagged for repeated viewings. Interestingly, films which might otherwise seem to have little in common in terms of tone, genre, or production frequently offered similar representations of teenage relationships. These initial viewings also provided the opportunity to discount films from inclusion in further analysis, particularly those which focused on singular characters, on teens' relations with families and with wider communities rather than their peers, on children and young adults rather than teens specifically, such as *Herbie Fully Loaded*, as discussed above. As the initial corpus, based on *Empire* reviews, was rather unwieldy, closer viewing allowed me to pare down the larger corpus to those films focusing specifically on teenage *relationships*.

Certain patterns emerged from initial viewing which suggested that perhaps the richest area from which to draw queer possibilities was in close friendships between teenagers. As representations of homosocial bonding, they allowed me to think through the depiction of ostensibly platonic same-sex relationships between teenagers, and to examine the mechanisms for differentiating these from romantic and sexual relationships. Several things came across in my initial viewings in terms of relationships. First, a great number of the films focussed on

either a singular character, or else groups of characters with no dedicated focus on relationships between characters. A much smaller group of films, on the other hand, emphasised dyadic teen relationships centrally, and these typically fell within three categories: close friendships, antagonistic relationships, and romantic relationships. With these preliminary findings in mind, I proceeded with my viewings, to determine whether these categories held up across the broader corpus, and to see how they played out across genre and a variety of narratives. Certainly there is variation within the relationship types, but as my viewing continued, patterns began to emerge in the small group of films which centred on and developed relationships between teen characters. These patterns will be explained more fully below, and will shape the remainder of the thesis.

I have stated the way that my own viewing pleasures have shaped this research as a whole in the introductory chapter, but it should be said that my viewing pleasure likewise influenced my initial viewing practices, as well as the films which were flagged for reviewing. This chimes with other writing on queer reading projects, as personal investment is a key part of the queer reading process. Scholars like Alexander Doty, Richard Dyer, and Clare Whatling have attested to this, and have made convincing arguments regarding the importance of positioning oneself as an *invested* reader of film texts (Doty 1993 & 2000, Dyer 1984, Whatling 1997).

The following sections will lay out some of the findings which emerge from the database compiled for this thesis, in particular focusing on representative patterns which are relevant to the friendships, gender, and genre of teenagers in film.

Findings

The 267 films which form the basis of this research were all cinematically released in the UK between January 2000 and December 2009. According to figures from the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC),[32] there were 5,626 films submitted for cinematic release during this period. This means that the selection represented by this thesis is less than 5%. Even so, many of the films included by the BBFC in their annual reports would not be covered by *Empire*, as

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[32] All BBFC data obtained from PDF downloads of annual reports, available at
    http://www.bbfc.co.uk/classification/downloads/.

the magazine's coverage is not as broad as that of the BBFC. The next several sections will present some of the findings of the data collected for this thesis, and will, when possible, compare these findings to the figures representing all films released in the UK which are available via the BBFC. This will allow this chapter to situate images of teenagers within the broader scope of films released in the UK during the time period covered by this research.

Classification

All but one film[33] included in the database were classified by the BBFC for release in the UK. The classifications of these films differ in small but interesting ways from the broader figures offered by the BBFC for all films released during the same decade [See Figures 3.1-3]. In particular, while 9% of all films classified by the BBFC were given a 'U' rating, only 3% of films about teenagers were given a 'U'. Likewise, there are fewer 'PG' ratings among films about teens at 16% rather than 20% for films more generally, though '12' ratings are roughly the same, coming in at 25% in films about teens and in all films more generally. By far the vast majority of films classified by the BBFC during this decade were given a '15' rating, and this is reflected among films about teens as well, though a higher percentage of films about teens achieved this rating than among films more generally. There were likewise more '18' rated films about teens than there were among films more broadly during this decade.

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[33] *Bad Spelling* (Zilbermann, 2006)

All Films Certified by BBFC 2000-2009 by Year

Figure 3.1

All Films Classified by BBFC 2000-2009

Figure 3.2

UK Certifications of Films in Database

■ U   ■ PG   ■ 12   ■ 15   ■ 18   ■ Unknown

0%   3%

14%

16%

25%
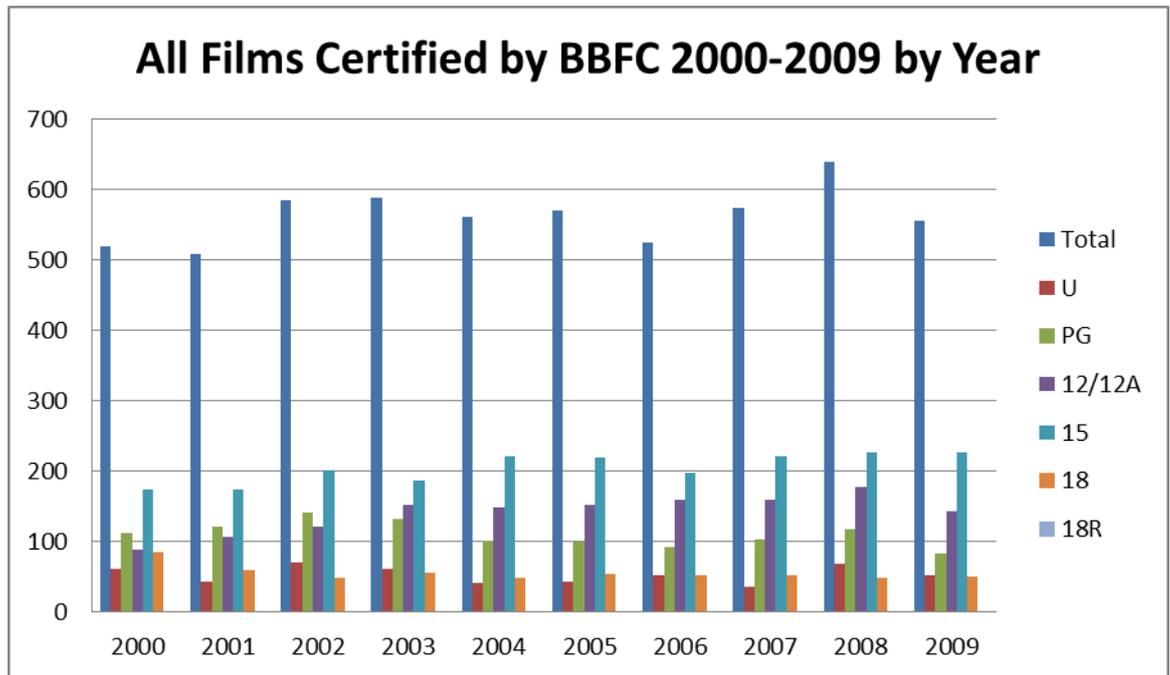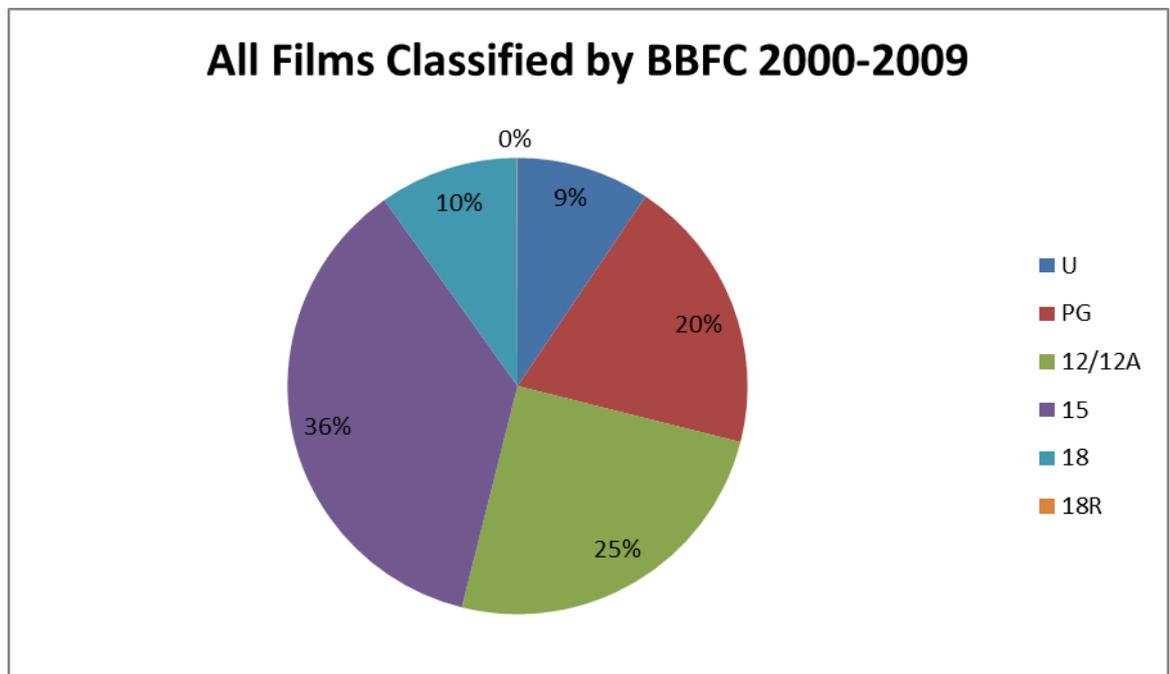
42%
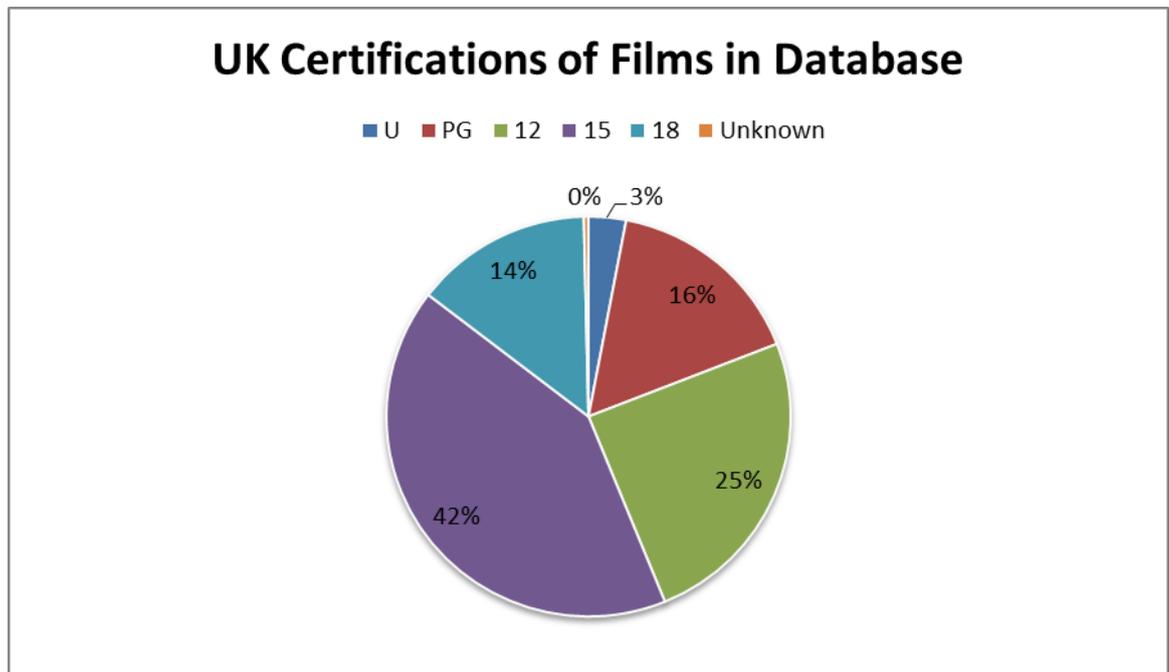
Figure 3.3

So, broadly, films about teenagers receive higher classifications than the statistics show for all films released. As can be seen in Figures 3.2 and 3.3, the differences are slight but indicate the shift from a more general audience and subject matter to a specific age group and, presumably, more 'adult' content. The very slight differences reflect, at least on the surface, Thomas Doherty's arguments that all films are generally aimed at teenagers, as does the heavily weighted lower end of the classification scale – that 90% of all films classified by the BBFC are '15' and lower is telling. The shift towards older classification categories between films in general and films about teens, too, reflect the arguments of scholars who claim that teens want to see material which is above their age group. Though there is not a direct correlation between films about teens and films aimed at teens, it indicates some possible impetus behind the shift toward older certifications.

Another possible explanation is that films about teenagers are given quite strict certifications, particularly as there is concern that *images* of teens doing or saying certain things might influence *real* teenagers to adopt that behaviour. This reflects one of the primary purposes of the BBFC, which is to protect children from inappropriate images,[34] as well as popular and scholarly research

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[34] http://www.bbfc.co.uk/about/mission-statement/

into the effects of images of violence, sexuality, and language on real children and teenagers.[35]

All in all, the differences are most marked in the 'U' and '15' certifications. This reflects the slight but overall noticeable shift from general content toward older material among films about teenagers.

Genre

As discussed in the previous chapter, there are particular modes and genres which have been associated as overlapping with the teen films genre. Specifically, comedy and romance have been the modes most associated with the teen film, while genres like sex comedies and romantic comedy have been frequently linked with representations of teenagers. These generic associations set up particular expectations of films about teens, though this is primarily in relation to the teen film, as differentiated from films about teens more generally. Even so, there remains, according to teen film scholars, an expectation of frivolity and superficiality in representations of teenagers.[36] This section will review the findings based on genre which have been derived from the database.
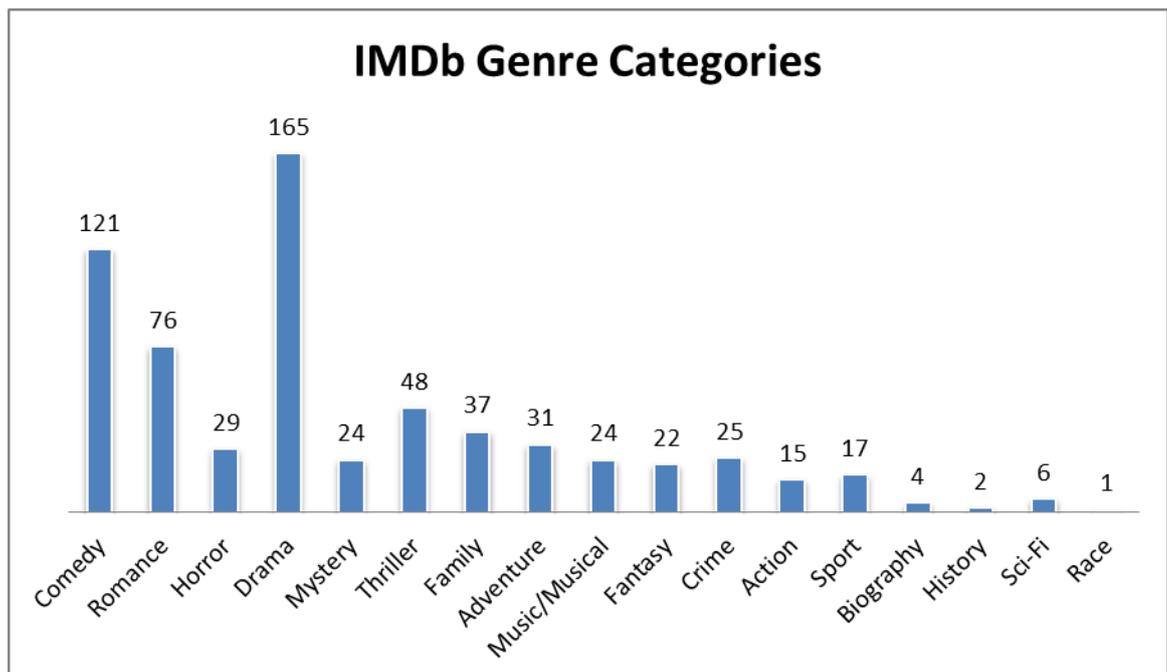
Figure 3.4

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[35] For example, see http://archpsyc.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/abstract/46/4/376; http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/119/6/e1219.full

[36] See, for example, Martin 1992, Kaveney 2006, and Driscoll 2011.

The two sources of generic information for the films in the database were reviews in *Empire* and genre keywords on IMDb. The information provided by these two sources was quite different in both form and purpose, however. The reviews in *Empire* were descriptive rather than exact, making it difficult to use the data gathered to gauge categorical patterns. They were, however, much more useful for getting a sense of tone in the discourse around teenagers in film more generally. In many cases, these descriptions match the frivolity associated with teens in film as mentioned above. For example, *Empire*'s review of *Not Another Teen Movie* (Gallen 2001) voices an appeal to 'those who are thoroughly sick of the excrescence of teenage flicks which has clogged up the very pores of our multiplexes like so much adolescent sebum over the last decade or so' (Smith 2002, 122). In other cases, the sense that films about teens are generally superficial is used to praise more serious or 'better' films, as in the review of *Blue Gate Crossing* (Chih-Yen 2002), by claiming that while 'adolescent relationships are a subject which are seldom tackled with any great realism' (Dawson 2004, 33), *Blue Gate Crossing* manages to do this well.

The categories listed on IMDb are very general, and many of the films have several broad categories listed. *All the Boys Love Mandy Lane* (Levine 2006), for example, is listed as horror, mystery, romance, and thriller, while *Brick* (Johnson 2005) is listed as crime, drama, and mystery.[37] Figure 3.4 shows the various categories which were listed for the films in the database, as well as the number of films categorised within each. Based on this data, each film was assigned on average 2.3 different genre categories by IMDb. This shows the hybridity of teen films, as well as their reach beyond simply comedy and romance. However, the majority of films have been labelled comedy, romance, and/or drama (Figure 3.4). Though there are fourteen other categories listed in the database, these categories, which are as much narrative modes as genres, have vastly higher numbers than others such as Biography (four films), History (two films), and Race (one film).

Interestingly, IMDb does not mention teen film as a genre in these categories. Over half of the films in the database (165 out of 267) are labelled 'Drama' by IMDb. Clearly this is a significant category for films about teens, with Comedy (121 out of 267) and Romance (76 out of 267) not far behind. The

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[37] *All the Boys Love Mandy Lane*: http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0490076/, *Brick*: http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0393109/, both accessed 26 April 2012

Empire reviews, meanwhile, attach the word 'teen ' or 'teenage' to other generic keywords, such as 'Violent Teenage Drama,' 'Teen Road Trip,' and 'Teenage Football-themed Comedy', in 91 out of 267 reviews. This, too, then, is a substantial generic marker for the films in the database. It is not, however, the only genre under which films about teens fall; in fact not even a majority of these films have been generically labelled 'teen' by *Empire*. So while *Empire* may assign similar genre categories to IMDb such as 'drama' or 'romance', its specificity also allows it to demarcate more specific genre categories such as the teen film.

Leading Characters

Historically, gay and lesbian characters have been far more prevalent as supporting characters within the milieu of film narratives than as leading characters.[38] However, in thinking about the broad strokes of representational practices, the lead or primary characters of films are able to provide relatively more well-rounded depictions. Relationships, representations, and queer possibilities among lead characters are far more significant in terms of screen time, attention to relationship and character complexity, and narrative drive. I have chosen to focus on lead characters in this thesis, therefore; certainly a study of supporting characters in representations of teenagers would be a fruitful piece of future research, but is beyond the scope of my research here.

Interestingly, the largest grouping of lead character types (90 out of 267) in the corpus is made of ensembles or other types of films with no lead characters. This is a notable finding in terms of representations of teenagers, showing concretely the tendency to place teens in narratives surrounded by peers; films set in high schools, for example, often don't have a stand-out lead role, as teens are positioned as *becoming* individuals, rather than already existing in that more mature state. Teens are frequently represented as groups, and placed in situations, as in horror films and thrillers, where the group must work together or be murdered, as in, for example, *Final Destination* (Wong, 2000). This finding also echoes arguments that teens in film frequently function as a microcosm of society, as argued by scholars like Jon Lewis (1992). The group dynamic, in such microcosms, is used to represent larger social workings. However, while these

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[38] For further discussion see Dyer 1984 and Russo 1987 [1981]

are the dominant patterns, they most often do not focus on the intensity of close teen friendships in any detail, and therefore do not lend themselves to an analysis of the dynamics of dyadic friendships.

Lead Characters

■ Single Female Lead ■ Single Male Lead ■ Female Couple
■ Male Couple ■ Hetero Couple ■ No Lead/Ensemble

21%
34%
19%
12%
6% 8%
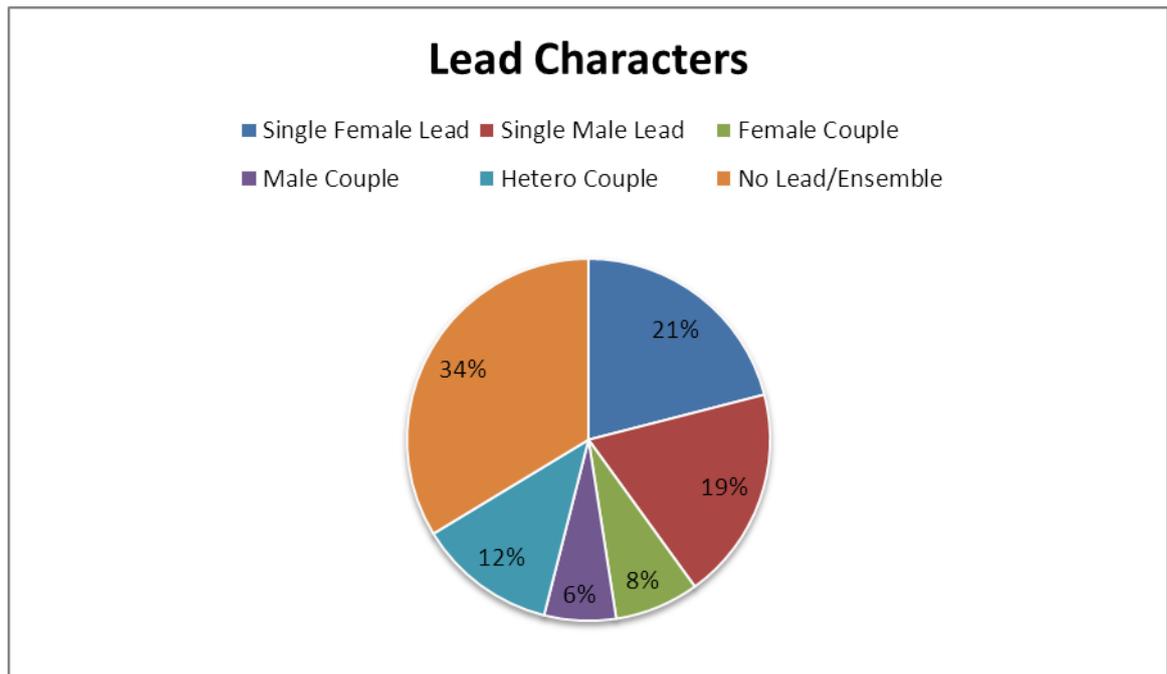
Figure 3.5

In order to differentiate between the various types of lead characters within the corpus, I devised five primary categories: single female lead, single male lead, female couple, male couple, and heterosexual couple (Figure 3.5). This is based largely on Karen Boyle's similar categorisation of lead character patterns in her study *Violence and Gender in Contemporary Cinema* (1998).[39] My findings show that single male leads and single female leads make up the second and third biggest groupings within the corpus. Female lead characters (56 films) are slightly more frequent than single male characters (51 films), and female couples (20) are slightly more frequent than male couples (17). This is particularly interesting in relation to findings in similar queries such Boyle's. Her findings show a higher number of single male leads and multiple male leads within her corpus. The difference, then, between her findings, which are based on films with adult and child characters as well as teenagers, and my findings specifically in relation to teen characters suggest a shift in representational

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[39] Boyle's study looks at representations of violence and gender in film and examines films in the Box Office Top 20 showing cinematically in one British town between July 1994 and June 1995 in order to situate the relationship between violence and gender in *popular* film, specifically. Similar demographic content analyses include: Dale 1970 [1935]; Haskell 1974; Guerrero 1993; Bazzini, McIntosh, Smith, Cook, & Harris 1997; Escholz, Bufkin, & Long 2002.

patterns. Her findings also show that fewer than ten percent of films in her corpus had no leads at all; this is in particular contrast to the 34% in my corpus.

The differences between Boyle's corpus and mine could be a result of the shift from adult characters to teen characters, but the data does not allow me to rule out changes in filmmaking in time, either. While her study focused on one year's film output, mine looks at ten years of output, and though her year of study falls within five years of the start of my own, it is also possible that filmmaking practices shifted in terms of marketing and production to include more female characters. Boyle's work also looks specifically at popular films, attending only to films which made it to the Top 20 in the UK box-office between July 1994 and June 1995 (1998, 111), while my own corpus covers all films, not just those with the broadest appeal. This could certainly account for the differences in gender representation, as male characters have traditionally been understood as appropriately unmarked enough to appeal across all audiences.

Films featuring couples were not as plentiful as either ensembles or films with single leads, but together make up 26% of the corpus. Heterosexual couples are the largest portion of this grouping, at 12%. Surprisingly, again, female couples led more films than male couples, at 8% and 6% respectively. As the aim of the thesis is to look at relationships among teenagers in film, these films led by couples form a significant part of the corpus, despite their small numbers. Even so, these lead character patterns do not necessarily dictate a film's selection for the textual analysis portion of this thesis. That selection is based on a number of other factors as well, particularly relationship type, genre, and the level of attention aimed at relationships which contain queer possibilities. The following section will outline the relationship types I have identified and developed in this research, and will indicate how this set of categories shapes the thesis.

Relationship Types

As discussed in the Introduction, in this thesis I propose a spectrum of homosocial relationships among teens in film. Along that spectrum, I have identified several specific relationship *types* which are privileged in the films in my corpus. Some of these types allow for different kinds of queer possibilities based on generic expectations, while others, such as groups and ensembles,

reflect a lack of focus on dyadic relationships, much less homosocial relationships. The types I have identified in the films included in the database are: buddy/best-friends, heterosexual romance, gay or lesbian romance, sibling/familial relationships, a singular lead character, ensembles, and antagonistic friendships. Within each category there are subcategories and varieties, for example there are ensemble films which both do and do not include emphases on individual relationships. Figure 3.6 demonstrates the number of films which contain each relationship type.

The figures I have drawn from the database regarding primary relationship types emerge quite differently to the related figures in the genre and leading character analyses. Where IMDb cited 76 romances, I found 38 romantic relationships, and where I identified 37 films with either a male or female couple, I found 27 with a buddy relationship, and nine with an antagonistic friendship. Ensemble films might depict a dyadic relationship which dominates the narrative, or several, or none, but I have categorised these all together. What these figures show most prominently is the dominance of single characters and ensembles in narratives about teenagers. This means that the films which are eligible for analysis here, which deal primarily with dyadic teen relationships, are much rarer and do not necessarily fit within dominant narrative patterns.
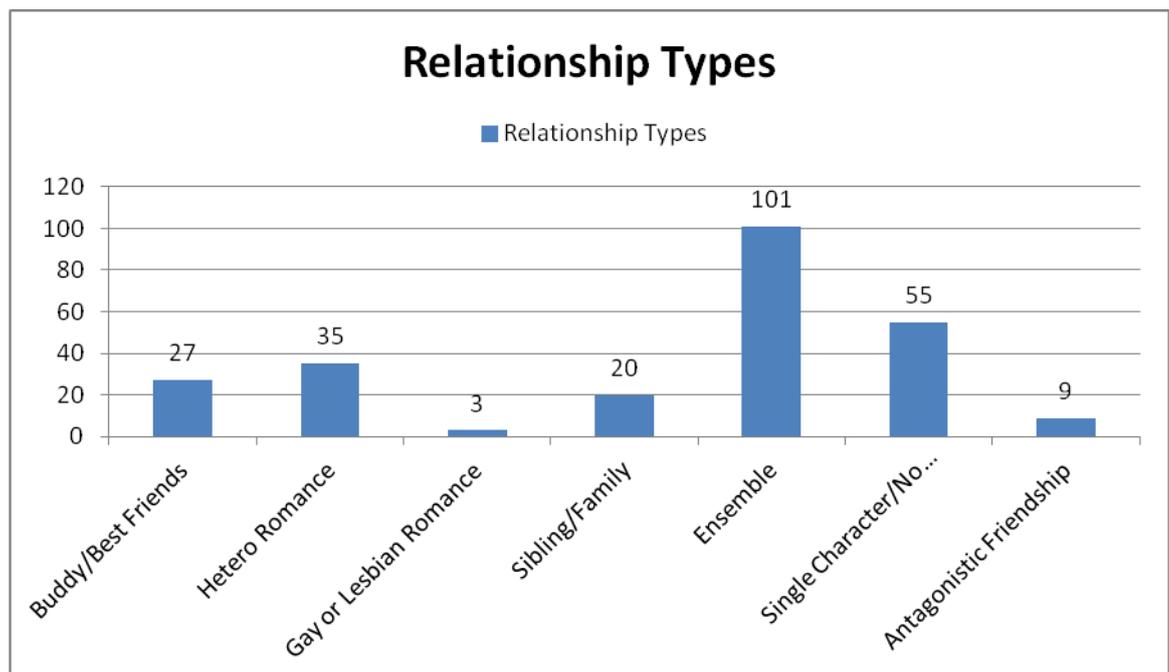

Figure 3.6

Alongside the lead character categories, these relationship types help to narrow down the selection of films to be discussed in the remainder of this thesis. Likewise, combined with generic indications, they help to map out the narrative norms and patterns for representations of teenagers. Close friendships such as buddy relationships, best friends, and frenemies are relatively infrequent within the corpus, at least in terms of relationships which are the focus of the narrative. This narrows the selection of films for analysis considerably. Close friendships are integral to the project of interrogating the boundaries of homosocial continuums, so despite their relative rarity within the corpus, they play a large part in the analysis of this thesis.

Certainly the large numbers of single lead characters, 107, help to explain the large number of singular character narratives categorised here; those films which focus on a singular character often do so at the expense of focusing on relationships specifically, so that the character's personal journey or growth takes precedence over the development of relationships. For example, a film like *Hallam Foe* (MacKenzie 2007) dedicates itself to the experiences of the main character, Hallam (Jamie Bell). While Hallam could be considered quite a queer character for his penchant for disrupting heteronormative behaviour, the narrative pays much less attention to his relationships with others, and in fact he has little to no contact with other teens throughout the film.

Likewise in ensemble films, while there may be space to look at relationship types, the lack of screen time means that these relationships may not be able to develop beyond superficial or straightforward friendships and romances. Some of the films considered in the following textual analysis chapters are ensemble pieces, but more often these films do not provide narrative space to the development of teen relationships. For instance, an ensemble like Disney's *High School Musical* (Ortega, 2006) could be considered queer on several levels, and heavily hints that a supporting character is gay, without ever saying so. However the film is too focused on the development of the formulaic plot and the musical numbers to dedicate any of the narrative to individual relationships, especially not intense homosocial teen friendships.

This section has primarily indicated both the importance of relationship types to the project at hand as well the infrequency of the types this research focuses on in terms of the larger corpus of teen representation. The next two

sections will focus on other points which will help contextualise teen representation more fully.

Setting

Teenagers are most frequently associated with high schools or educational settings, to the point that Kaveney (2006) considers a high school setting to be a part of the very definition of the teen film genre. My research offers a slight corrective to these assumptions, while simultaneously confirming the frequency of educational settings.

Certainly educational and other institutional settings are found in a large number of films, but so are family or home settings, and public settings such as road trips, teens in the city and suburbs, and films with no one dominant setting. Films with multiple dominant settings have been counted in each relevant category, but as often as possible only a single dominant setting has been counted. The data can be seen in Figure 3.7.

Surprisingly, while films set in educational institutions are frequent, public and family settings are actually more frequent. Though there are limited categories represented here, they serve to break up the assumptions which
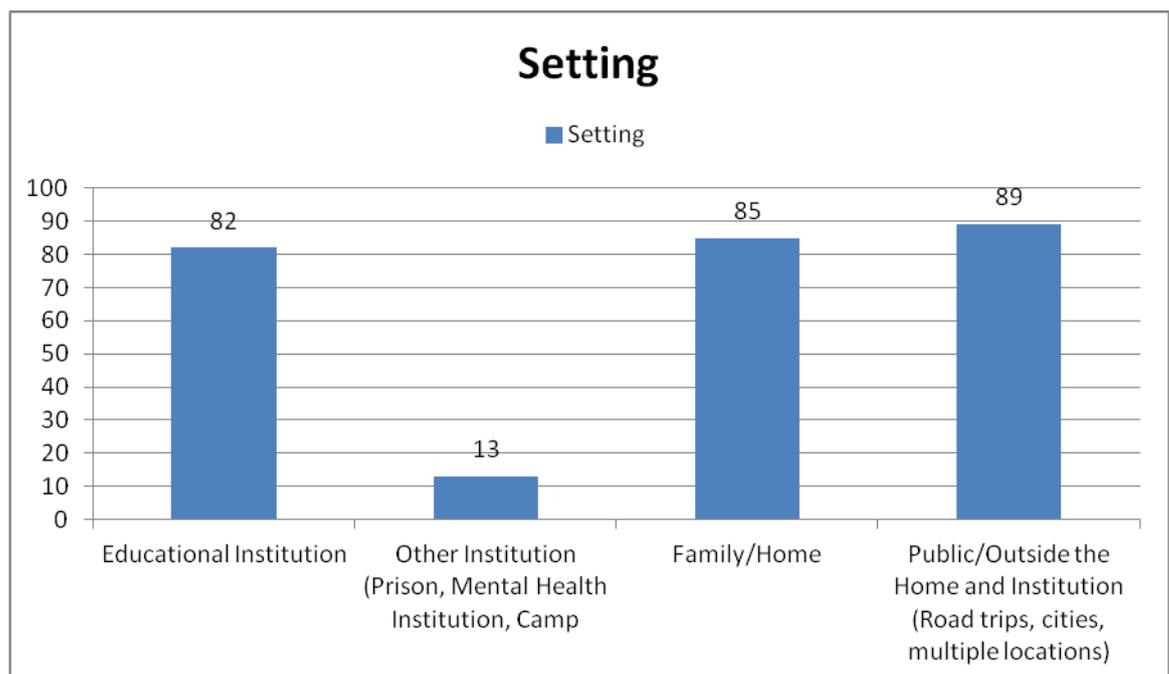
Figure 3.7

associate teens with school. Likewise, teens are not often discursively associated with the home, unlike children; again, they are more often associated with

institutions and are also assigned a liminal status outside the home and not yet in public. However, 85 films featured a home setting, three more than those set in educational institutions. Public (outside the home and outside of institutions) settings dominate, as they are featured in 89 films, though statistically this compares fairly evenly with both home and educational and other institutional settings. Interestingly, surprisingly few films (seven) do not involve parental figures in some form.

Of the 267 films in the corpus, 164 are from the US. Though this may not guarantee a US setting, the majority of those films are set in the US. This means that the majority of films about teenagers are from and/or set in the US, however it is not a large majority, so that 38.5% of films about teens are made outwith the US. Despite the insistence of teen film scholars that teen film is a US based genre, the large number of films from outside the US shows how limiting such genre definitions can be.

Though genre expectations and assumptions mean that teens are associated with institutional settings, the data in Figure 3.7 shows that this is not as strictly the case as writers like Kaveney have assumed.

Demographics

At stake at the heart of this project is gay and lesbian representation. This section looks briefly at this and at race, as representational issues which contextualise the corpus.

Films with Gay and Lesbian Keywords, based on UK release dates
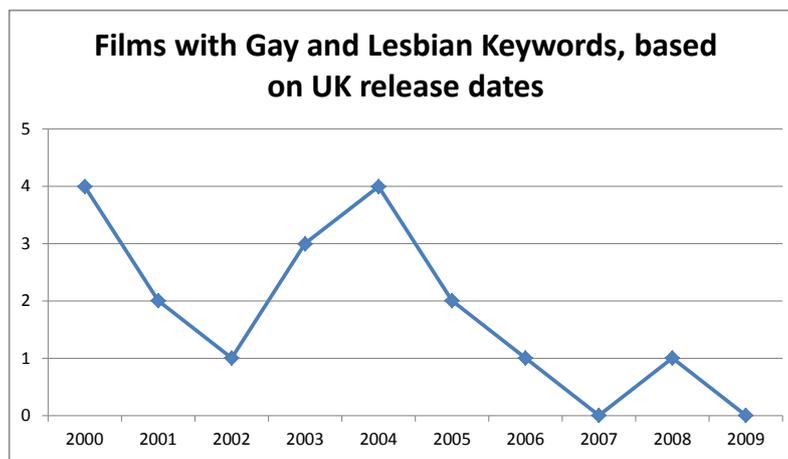
Figure 3.8

Figure 3.8 shows a chart of the films whose *Empire* reviews indicated gay or lesbian[40] subject matter (activity if not identity) by year of release. Though many scholars[41] have argued that lesbian and gay representation is on the rise in teen films, the peak of these films, in 2000 and 2004, is four films per year, minimal by any standards. These figures shows peaks early in the decade and a marked decrease from 2004 onward.

The issue of race is a complex one, particularly when dealing with teenagers, who are, as indicated in the literature review, often understood as white, middle class, straight Americans in teen film genre studies. Further, as this thesis deals with an international corpus, it is difficult to discuss race in terms of majority and minority populations. A film like *Blue Gate Crossing* depicts Asian characters, but the film was made and set in Taiwan where these characters are part of the majority ethnic population. Ultimately, consideration of these complex issues is important, but beyond the scope of this research.

Conclusion

There are a variety of patterns which play out across the corpus compiled as the basis of this research. Films with teenagers as lead characters represent a

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[40] Very few characters in the database are bisexual or transgender, and especially in the case of bisexual characters, even fewer are indicated in reviews.

[41] See for example Shary 2000 & 2005, Shary & Seibel 2007

minimal part of overall film output, and their BBFC classifications roughly follow the model of films more generally with the exception of a slight increase in 15 and 18 ratings and a slight decrease in U and PG ratings.

Teens in film are found in a variety of genres, and are most likely to be found in dramas, followed by comedy, and then romance. Despite the emphasis placed on the teen film by scholars as discussed in the 'Teens in Film' chapter, the teen film genre does not make up the majority of narratives about teens; rather, there are a wide variety of genres represented by teen narratives, and their concerns are not limited to comedy, romance, and high school.

Single lead characters and ensembles make up the vast majority of lead characters in films about teenagers, with female, male, and hetero couples representing much lower numbers. Surprisingly, teen girls are more often both single lead characters and homosocial couples than are teen boys, representing a marked deviation from data gathered by Boyle (1998) and others. This leads on to the infrequency of buddy/best friend/frenemy relationships within the corpus. Despite the dominance of singular characters and groups in the corpus, I focus in the rest of this thesis on films which do not fit the dominant patterns. This project aims to analyse dyadic homosocial teen relationships, and must therefore look outside the dominant patterns for examples.

The films chosen for detailed textual analysis do not fit the dominant patterns of singular characters and groups outlined above, but rather focus on teen friendships. Even so, these films have also emerged from the patterns which have been outlined above, and can be understood to fit within discourses around teens in films alongside those films which have not been chosen for analysis here. In the chapters that follow, I will focus on the relationship types, as I have identified them, which contain dyadic homosocial relationships among their lead characters. These are buddy relationships and best friends, antagonistic relationships, and friendships which include gay and lesbian characters. These kinds of dyadic relationships can also be found within some of the ensemble films, and these have been included in the following chapters as appropriate. The remainder of this thesis will focus on films which provide opportunities to interrupt the boundaries along the homosocial continuums I have proposed.

Chapter 4 Best Friends: Gender and Teen Homosocial Bonds

> To draw the "homosocial" back into the orbit of "desire," of the potentially erotic, then, is to hypothesize the potential unbrokenness of a continuum between homosocial and homosexual. (Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, 1985: 1)

This chapter isolates the teen best friend relationship in films. I will argue here that in terms of both the context and content of these films, these relationships often cross into romance and even sexual attraction and behaviour. This argument chimes with and draws on critical work done on buddy films and female friendship films, as discussed in the literature review, but applies that work specifically to teenagers. As established in the introduction, teens are liminal figures, occupying a space between the child – 'other' and 'un-human' according to Karen Lury (2010) – and the adult subject. This chapter will apply analytical frameworks developed for film representations of adults to the case of teenagers, in part to investigate the way that the liminality of teens plays out in depictions of dyadic homosocial friendships.

Of the 267 films in the corpus established in the previous chapter, 27 films involved best friends as the primary relationship. These films fit primarily within two genres, according to IMDb: eighteen are comedies and eighteen are dramas (many overlap several genres). There are also seven romances, two crime films, two music films, two family films, and one each of horror, sport, and fantasy films. The high numbers of comedy and drama films corresponds roughly with the patterns seen across the database as a whole, while the smaller numbers of the other genres also echo the numbers seen in the rest of the corpus. The films also match the corpus as a whole in terms of UK certifications. Fifteen of the films were given a 15 certification, seven received 12 or 12A certifications, two are PG, and three were assigned an 18 certification. One interesting pattern to emerge from this selection of films, however, is that the large majority were released before 2005: 22 of the 27 were made between 1999 and 2004.

This chapter will deal with films whose primary focus resides in the depiction of close friendships. As such, it will look at a small number of films from within the group singled out above; it will for the most part exclude ensembles and films whose focus is broader than the primary friendship. For the purposes of this thesis, which aims to untangle the often inexplicit possibilities

of queerness in representations of teenagers, this small selection of films will exemplify those which blur the boundaries between friendship and sexual attraction and/or romance. Films about boys who are best friends are able to take certain measures in order to simultaneously acknowledge and deny the possibilities of homoromance, homoerotics, or homosexuality. Films about girls who are best friends, on the other hand, operate within a representational system in which girls' close friendships are indistinguishable from homoromance, so that the boundary between friendship and romance doesn't have to be policed in the same way as boys' relationships.

It will be fruitful to use a framework built from discussions of (primarily) adult relationships for a number of reasons: first, they will provide a start for an analysis of the structures and histories of 'border control' in terms of same-sex relationships in film, and particularly the way that these have been represented and understood in different genres and genders. Second, while critics have identified progression over time in terms of the lessening of homophobic policing of the boundaries between homosociality and homosexuality in films which depict adult relationships (though this is certainly debatable), the anxiety with which teenage sexuality and relationships are burdened means that for most films looking for mainstream audiences, these homophobic boundaries remain necessary to enforce. This boundary policing will turn up repeatedly in the plot structures and particular devices of denial and displacement which will be outlined via the critical discourse of both buddy films and female friendship films. Finally, the liminal status of teenagers in terms of their sexual identity and behaviour and their possible relationships means that narrative closure, at least in the films discussed in this chapter, produces a different kind of 'future' from that outlined for adult representations; impossible choices for adults, or regressions to adolescent psychoanalytic 'phases', are recuperated much more easily for teenagers.

Films with teen characters are frequently[42] coming-of-age or rites-of-passage films, and as such depict both the struggles and challenges of becoming an adult subject, as well as the elusive *becoming* itself. Though certainly film representations of adults have made clear that adults, too, are in a constant state of becoming, teenagers in film are frequently understood in contrast to both adults and children – they resent adults for their maturity and children for

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[42] 88 of the 267 films in the database

their immaturity – as they move from the latter towards the former, as though each, adulthood and childhood, are relatively stable states between which the teen oscillates. Therefore, though adult buddy films and films about adult female friendship have consistently been narratives of a '*temporary phenomenon*' (Babuscio 1975: 24) which 'end in death, madness, self-destruction or disillusioned breakup' (ibid), film teens, for the most part, do not need to die in order to signal the impossibility of the union, or to preserve the 'pristine state' (ibid) of the relationship. They merely need to grow up.

The first section of this chapter will focus on three films, *Superbad* (Mottola, 2007), *Duck Season* (Eimbcke, 2004), and *Y tu Mamá También* (Cuarón, 2001), which are interesting because of the way that they each approach the subject of close male friendships and the ways these relationships overlap into romance and attraction. Though the films differ quite widely in terms of form and genre, each of these films both acknowledges and denies the possibilities of homoromance and homoerotics. They are explicit about the romantic and/or sexual possibilities of these relationships but use a series of mechanisms of denial and displacement in order to repress these possibilities.

The second section of this chapter will address films about teen girls' friendship. Films depicting a relatively positive portrayal of close relationships among teen girls are even less frequent than those about teen boys, an issue which will be explored more fully in the next chapter. This second section will analyse three films which focus on teen girls' friendships: *Aquamarine* (Allen, 2006), *Confessions of a Teenage Drama Queen* (Sugarman, 2004), and *Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants* (Kwapis, 2005). This selection of films is different again from the selection of boys'films, in that they each involve relationships between teen girls on the youngest end of the teenage years, and all fit easily within the teen film genre framework. In part the similarity of these films exposes the dearth of films about girls' relationships outside of mainstream representational practices. It also reflects the shortage of films depicting positive relationships between older teen girls, for whom heterosexual sexual and romantic experimentation is more acceptable than close same-sex friendships, or else same-sex friendships are subsumed by heteronormative narrative focus. Compared to the explicitness regarding homoromance and homoerotics in boys' films, these girls' films are unable to explicitly recognise the homoromance

between their main characters, in part due to the indistinguishability of friendship from romance in films about girls' relationships.

Boy Buddies

In films about teen boys' relationships, one of the ways that denial of homosexuality is enacted is through a heterosexualising triangulation. These cases present two boys, whose relationship fits many if not all of the characteristics of the buddy film outlined above, and their attempts to achieve heterosexuality, as filtered or processed through their own relationship. Several examples of these films actually meld the buddy film characteristics with those discussed by Holmlund and Greven, in which there is a dominant protagonist and another, echoistic protagonist (Holmlund 1993a; Greven 2009). As in Holmlund's arguments, this second protagonist is the 'clone', in both the sense of a clone as a straight-acting gay man, and in the sense that this protagonist strives to imitate the dominant one. Whether the boys fit the dominant and 'clone' model or are just buddies, they also have a relationship with at least one female character. Their relationship with this female character is filtered through their relationship with each other, so that 'the bond' between the boys in this 'erotic triangle' is 'even stronger, more heavily determinant of actions and choices' (Sedgwick 1985: 21) than the bond between the boys and the female character. The three films in this chapter frequently use this triangulated pattern, but in *Duck Season* and *Superbad*, this pattern is then squared by the addition of a fourth character, so that the two boys are alternately coupled off: with each other, and with other characters, which serves to emphasise their position as the primary couple within the films.

Though it is unlikely that these films would be associated with each other in any other context, the three films which this section will discuss bear striking similarities and create rich dialogue with each other. Despite their many differences, these films – *Duck Season*, *Y tu Mamá También*, and *Superbad* – are all primarily about the intense friendship between two teen boys. Each film takes these relationships just beyond the limit of heterosexual homosociality; and each does so via a triangulated relationship between the two boys and a female character. In their own way, each of these films recognises the blurred and fragile boundary between friends and lovers, between friendship and romance, between 'brotherhood' and love, as the relationship between the pair

of boys in each of these films is given more importance, intimacy, and love than any heterosexual relationship represented.

The moments of border crossing between friendship and romantic love become moments of crisis in the relationship. Narrative closure finds these friendships split, the boys going their separate ways. The only case in which this nears the destruction and death exhibited by buddy films, however, is *Y tu Mamá También*. This could be for a variety of reasons, as will be discussed below, but seems primarily to be a result of, first, how far the narrative allows the boys to go beyond heterosexual behaviour, and second, how old the boys are – the film depicts what seems to be the last moments of their teenage years, and at film's end they are, essentially, adults. For both *Duck Season* and *Superbad*, on the other hand, the boys are younger teens – very young in the case of the former – and the threat of homosexuality is dissolved by a peaceful separation, which is subsumed under the guise of growing up.

Beyond the age differences between the teen boys in these three films, there are several other factors which set them apart from one another. Though both *Duck Season* and *Y tu Mamá También* are productions from Mexico, their style and tone are vastly divergent. *Duck Season* is primarily a single-set piece, taking place almost entirely within the apartment of one of the main characters, with few outside shots. *Y tu Mamá También*, on the other hand, is a highly digressive road film, which follows its main characters across the country. *Duck Season* uses slow pacing, black and white film, and a static camera which further differentiates it from *Y tu Mamá También*'s vivid textures, fast pace, often hand-held camera work, and omniscient voiceover. *Superbad* is further still from either of these films, as it is an American comedy produced by a major studio, using mainstream filming conventions. It fits quite conveniently within the teen film genre, and more specifically, the teen sex comedy; it very rarely moves beyond the established Hollywood style, preferring to focus on the narrative and the punch lines rather than calling attention to its form.

The approach taken toward narrative and primary characters varies with each of these examples, as well. *Superbad* sympathises with the two boys somewhat, but the boys' quirks are indulged only so long as they are funny; the comedy is nostalgic, too – though the film is set in a contemporary high school, costumes and the soundtrack consistently reference the late 1970s and early

1980s – reflecting the film's semi-autobiographical origins.[43] *Duck Season* observes its characters fondly, seeming to sit back while the two boys move through their lazy Sunday at home alone. The camera rarely intrudes but is often part of the set itself, with shots from within the walls, cupboards, or appliances in the flat. In *Y tu Mamá También,* on the other hand, the ranging camera is accompanied by a voiceover,[44] unanchored by any onscreen presence, whose slightly mocking tone both shows up the flaws of the characters as well as their secrets and their wider contexts otherwise unknowable from the visual and dialogic aspects of the narrative.

By spelling out some of the differences between the three films, I hope to indicate why examining their representation of close same-sex friendship between teen boys creates such interesting results. The styles, approaches, genres, pace, concerns, and politics of these films are quite different. It is the primary relationship at the centre of each of these films which produces their commonalities, and the development of these relationships is what this section is primarily concerned with. The discussion here of these films will be structured as a comparison, and the section's conclusion will draw together the various strands loosened along the way.

First, a brief plot description of each of the films: *Duck Season* observes two 14 year old boys, Moko (Diego Cataño) and Flama (Daniel Miranda) in Flama's apartment on a lazy Sunday after Flama's mother has left them at home alone. As the day progresses, two strangers, Rita (Flama's neighbour, Danny Perea) and Ulises (a pizza delivery guy, Enrique Arreola), join them, and it comes out that Flama must choose between staying in Mexico City and leaving when his parents' divorce is finalised. *Superbad* follows Seth (Jonah Hill) and Evan (Michael Cera) as they scheme to have sex with girls for the first time, hoping to gain experience before they leave home for college. The film moves between high school and various parties through an approximately twenty four hour period. Finally, *Y tu Mamá También* introduces Tenoch (Diego Luna) and Julio (Gael García Bernal) as their girlfriends leave them for the summer and they are left to entertain themselves after finishing high school. They meet the

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[43] The film was written by Seth Rogen and Evan Goldberg, after whom the main characters are named, according to the DVD commentary,

[44] An uncredited Daniel Giménez Cacho

older Luisa (Maribel Verdú), the wife of Tenoch's cousin, and embark on a road trip to an imaginary beach with her.

The characters of *Duck Season* are introduced slowly, moving with the pace of the film – there is no rush to expose information, which is reflected in the observational, static camera work. Not much background is given about Moko and Flama's relationship, aside from the feeling, through practiced actions, that this Sunday alone together happens so regularly that it has become something of a ritual. This particular Sunday, however, is the last, and Moko's feelings about Flama come to the fore whether he intends them to or not. This happens through Moko's interactions with Rita, the neighbour who comes to use Flama's kitchen. The homoromance and homoerotics of his love and desire for Flama can only be activated via his more acceptable interaction with a female character.

Though the film never strictly expresses disapproval over Moko's feelings for Flama, his fear and confusion over his desires speak to the social constrictions around same-sex attraction. Indeed, the slow revelation of his desire for Flama contrasts usefully with the ease and speed in which Rita and Moko move from having just met to kissing in the kitchen. The film builds up to Moko's revelation on several levels.

Throughout the first third of the film, Moko and Flama are frequently paired together on screen (see Figure 4.1), with other characters intruding into this coupling. The boys are often seen in highly stylised two-shots, with the symmetry of the mise-en-scène further emphasising their pairing (again, Figure 4.1). As Rita and then Ulises are introduced, Moko and Flama are separated and are instead paired with the other two, Moko with Rita and Flama with Ulises (see Figures 4.2 and 4.3). In fact, Flama hardly interacts with Rita at all until the final third of the film, while Moko similarly spends little time with Ulises. When Rita is introduced, the two boys are playing video games. She rings the doorbell, interrupting their game. She asks to use the oven to bake a cake, promising it won't take long. Flama finally lets her in, but merely opens the door and walks away; he does not stay to greet her. She comes into the flat, and in her first shot with Flama and Moko, comes and stands behind the boys. The shot is framed so that the boys sit in the centre on the couch, and she stands behind them to the left side. Rita has not only interrupted their game, but stands in the frame with them, disturbing their pairing (Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.1 – Flama, left, and Moko, right, framed together in a stylised and highly symmetrical two-shot

Figure 4.2 – Moko, left and Rita, right, coupled in the frame

Figure 4.3 – Ulises, left, and Flama, together in the frame

Figure 4.4 – Rita, left, interrupts the symmetry of the shot

Rita's presence is balanced by the introduction of the fourth member of the group, Ulises the pizza delivery man. Ulises, too, is brought into the situation through a combination of food and promises of time. The company he works for guarantees delivery within thirty minutes, and when Ulises is late by thirty seconds, the boys refuse to pay him. He therefore decides to stay until they pay him for the pizza. Like Rita, Ulises interrupts the boys' plans for the afternoon, and actually divides them in his introductory shot, as he literally comes between them in the frame (Figure 4.5). Both Rita and Ulises continue to
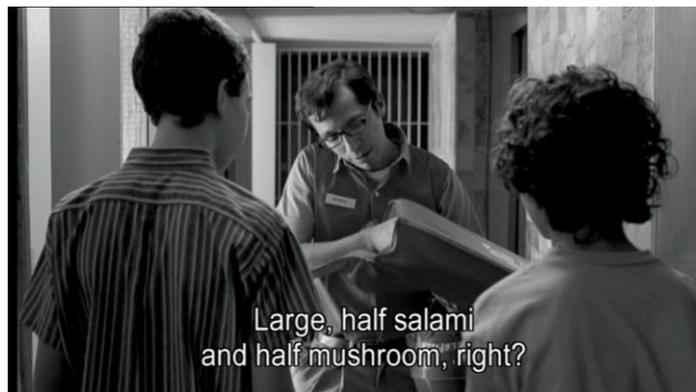
Figure 4.5 – Ulises comes betwee Flama and Moko in the frame.

divide the boys throughout the film, as Moko is paired with Rita and Flama with Ulises during the middle of the film. The various pairings throughout the film are emphasised by the static camera, as almost all interactions between the various pairs are filmed as two-shots, rather than shot-reverse-shot sequences. Only in moments of action, which are rare, does a shot-reverse-shot structure take over.

At two points in the film, Moko and Flama are framed to emphasise the way that Moko gazes at Flama. The first of these shots takes place in Flama's bedroom, shot through a mirror, as he gets dressed (see Figure 4.6). He wears a white robe, and stands in the foreground so only his mid-section is visible. Moko

lies on the bed in the background, reading a comic and listening to music. As Flama pulls up first his pants and then his trousers, we see Moko glancing over to watch. Finally Flama drops the robe, and Moko stares at his naked torso until

Figure 4.6 – Moko watches as Flama dresses

Flama catches him and asks, '*¿Qué?*/What?'. Moko quickly changes the subject from his illicit looking, pointing out that Flama has not appropriately greeted him. Later, as the boys wait for the electricity to return to the flat, the camera frames the two boys from the side as they sit on the couch. Flama is in the foreground, and Moko is out of sight behind him. Moko sits up and looks at Flama (see Figure 4.7) until, once again, Flama demands, '*¿Qué?*' Again, Moko avoids answering and grabs a handful of crisps from the bowl between them.

Figure 4.7 – Moko comes into the shot and gazes at Flama

The meaning behind Moko's gaze is made explicit as a result of his interactions with Rita. Rita coerces Moko to help her bake another cake after the first burns. In this way, Moko and Flama are divided for the central portion of the film. Once she has him alone in the kitchen, Rita talks to Moko and eventually kisses him. Moko is clearly inexperienced, and when Rita licks his ear, he leaves the room. The film cuts immediately to Moko and Flama sitting in the bathroom, with Moko recounting the experience to his friend. In this version,

however, the roles are reversed so that Moko is the aggressor, down to the smallest details (Rita had him beating eggs, but he tells Flama that Rita beat the eggs), so that even the dialogue is switched. Moko can only process his interaction with Rita in terms of his relationship with Flama; he seeks both advice and approval from his friend, who gives him cologne and sends him back in. After the scene in the bathroom with Flama, the film cuts to Moko returning to the kitchen. This time, when Moko kisses Rita, she immediately realises he is thinking of someone else. She asks him who, and the film cuts to Flama and Ulises sitting on the couch. She berates him for thinking of an imaginary blonde, but each time she asks who he was thinking about, the film cuts to a shot of Flama and Ulises. Finally, Moko confesses that he was thinking of Flama, and divulges his secret fantasies.

Later, Moko convinces Flama to let him show how Rita licked his ear (Figure 4.8). Flama resists, but eventually consents, and later shots of the boys together

Figure 4.8 – Moko shows Flama how Rita licked his ear

again on the couch show Flama looking at Moko tenderly, in a reversal of Moko's earlier gazes toward Flama (Figure 4.9). The possibility of their intimacy going any further, however, is nullified by the fact that Flama decides to leave with his mother for Morelia. The boys are thus to be separated as the narrative closes, and presumably Flama will forget about this brush with his friend's desire for him, while Moko's feelings for Flama go unresolved and unreturned. The threat of homosexuality is raised, here, through a heterosexual interaction which acts as a catalyst for Moko's repressed and confused feelings for Flama. The youth of the boys, and their eventual separation, excuses this experimentation. They both have the rest of their teen years to grow up and out of this adolescent infatuation.

Figure 4.9 - Flama gazes at Moko in a reversal of earlier looks

The pairings in *Superbad* are much more convoluted, as Seth and Evan both have a long history with each other and with Becca (Martha MacIsaac), the object of Evan's desire and Seth's disdain. It is interesting to note that, rather than both boys being interested in the same girl for the sake of rivalry and their own relationship, as in Sedgwick's formula, Seth here hates Becca because Evan is interested in her – the triangle's underlying motivations are much balder in this film. Further, the film does not restrict the clash of homosocial with heterosexual to a triangle formulation; like *Duck Season*, *Superbad* has varying configurations, including the primary homosocial couple, then the two boys paired off with a girl each, and finally another triangle involving their friend Fogell (Christopher Mintz-Plasse), who, it is revealed, represents the ultimate threat to their friendship.

Evan fears, as demonstrated by his accusations of Seth holding him back from dating girls, that his relationship with Seth has taken the place of any heterosexual relationship in his teen years. Seth recognises Evan's desire for a romantic relationship with a girl, and resents it. He expresses disdain and even hatred towards Becca every time Evan brings her up. This reads strongly of Seth's dislike towards Becca being based in both his jealousy of her and his fear that she will take Evan away from him. The film, perhaps trying to counter the gay subtext of that reading, provides a reason for this intense dislike in Becca and Seth's common past, as a way to position Seth's hatred as somehow outside of his relationship with Evan. However, the flashback segment which illustrates this back story only serves to support the reading that Seth fears that Becca will take something precious away from him, something associated with both secrecy and male genitalia.
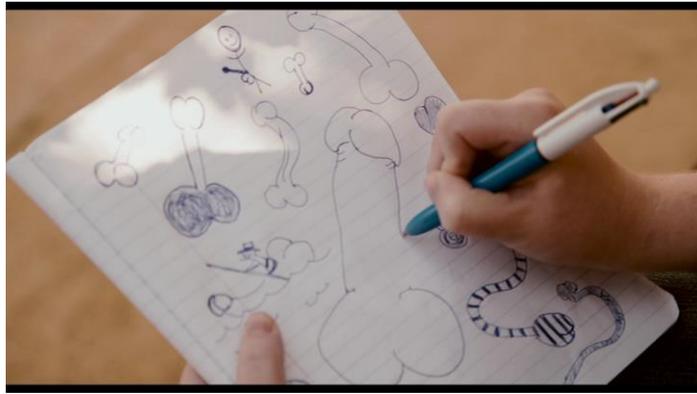
Figure 4.10 – Seth's childhood drawings of penises

Seth confesses to Evan that as a child, he had a penis obsession: he drew penises on any and every surface (Figure 4.10), saying he could not touch pen to paper without drawing a penis. A flashback shows Seth hoarding these drawings in a lunchbox, and when, in class, a drawing is knocked from his desk, a young Becca picks it up. She is horrified by the image, and reports him to the principal of the school, who further discovers Seth's secret stash in the lunchbox. His parents send him to therapy and ban him from eating any phallic shaped foods. This introduced association with drawing penises and putting them in his mouth is telling; there seems no causal link in the flashback between Seth's drawing habits and his eating habits. The film's interpretation of his drawings is linked to consumption, and his parents' reactions show their fears that Seth will carry this obsession with consuming penises and phallic objects into his adult sexual practices. What the restriction on Seth's eating and drawing habits seem to have done, however, is instead drive his obsession with penises into his subconscious, so that he now fears that Becca will somehow expose him again, and will take something (Evan) that he loves secretly and bring it into public view.

Seth may indeed be attempting to transform his desires away from Evan and towards Jules, a fourth element in the more emotionally weighted Seth-Evan-Becca triangle, and towards heterosexuality more generally. As he makes this transformative attempt, however, he maintains a strong homosocial element, and continuously links his attempts back to Evan, much as Moko links his experiences back to Flama. Every time Seth has an interaction with Jules, he runs to discuss it with Evan. When Jules invites Seth to her party, and asks him to buy alcohol for her, the scene cuts from this chat with Jules to Seth running onto the football field to tell Evan about it. He explains to Evan that if they can get alcohol for the party, he and Evan can try to sleep with Jules and Becca

when they're drunk. He says, 'we could be that mistake!' For Seth, the plan to try to have sex remains an element of his relationship with Evan, something that they do together or not at all, and something which must be filtered through their relationship. Where Evan seems comfortable actually sacrificing his relationship with Seth for heterosexuality, Seth is far less prepared, and tries to incorporate heterosexual exploits into his more important homosocial relationship with Evan.

Seth's disdain for women, and his desire to have heterosexual experience, both speak quite directly to the characteristics of the buddy film. His main concern in sleeping with women is his homosocial reputation, illustrated time and again in the film – he wants to have sex in order to be good at it, not because he desires a relationship with a woman. His obsession with exaggerated cartoon drawings of penises is an explicit expression of his phallus-oriented fantasies – he both identifies with and desires the phallus – and recalls examples from buddy films in which the homoerotics between the two buddies works through phallic symbols. For instance, in *Thunderbolt and Lightfoot*, Clint Eastwood's massive cannon is both what gives him his reputation as a superb and powerful thief, and also what allows him to finally leave his life of crime for a life with Lightfoot.[45] Seth desires this kind of phallic power and fulfilment, but his desire for the phallus is pathologised by his parents, classmates, and school authorities, and Evan is not seduced into riding off into the distance with Seth, as Lightfoot does with Thunderbolt.

There is one scene in particular which cements the homoerotic bond shared between Evan and Seth, and which helps demonstrate the kind of social stigma attached to such a bond. Culminating their night's adventure, after Seth saves Evan from the party and they escape from the cops Fogell has befriended, Seth and Evan have a sleepover in Evan's basement. This sleepover scene works on several levels to confirm the kind of relationship the boys share. They lie down together, each in individual sleeping bags, but as close together as possible in the middle of the basement floor (Figure 4.12). Seth admits that he has known all along that Fogell and Evan will live together at University, and the two resolve the fight over this which has plagued much of the middle of the film. Evan tells Seth that he can't believe he saved Evan from the party, that he carried him, and says, 'I love you, I love you man'. The two proceed to declare

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[45] For analysis of *Thunderbolt and Lightfoot* see Biskind (1974), and Wood (2003 [1986])

their love for each other, wondering why they don't say it more often, and can't proclaim it from the rooftops.

Figure 4.11 – Evan and Seth in Evan's basement

Figure 4.12 – Evan and Seth embrace, whispering 'I love you' to each other, just before the cut-away

Figure 4.13 – Establishing shot outside Evan's house, in the morning light

The camera is positioned above the two boys, looking down on them as they embrace, whispering 'I love you' to each other. The scene then cuts from their embrace (Figure 4.13) to an establishing shot of Evan's house in the morning light (Figure 4.14). This kind of editing, cutting away from an intimate scene, indicating the passing of time, in addition to the following awkward

scenes back in Evan's basement, all set this scene up to have multiple possible meanings. It is left to the viewer's interpretation as to what happened after the film leaves the boys in the basement. According to conventional Hollywood editing, the boys could easily have gone on to have sex; it is only due to heteronormative teen film strictures that we can assume they probably didn't. However, the possibility is there, and the meaning left ambiguous enough through editing that a viewer would not be amiss in making the assumption that something happened between the boys.

Interestingly, in the DVD commentary[46] during this scene, Jonah Hill mentions a *Hollywood Reporter* review[47] of the film which argues that the film would be better if it had pushed the homoerotic elements evident here to their 'logical conclusion' (Farber 2007) as was done in *Y tu Mamá También*. The other respondents in the commentary are, or at least act, shocked by this accusation, as if totally unaware of how the scene plays both conventionally as well as within the film itself. Certainly this shows that the homoeroticism of the scene is unacknowledged by the filmmakers, despite the scene's clear implications for reviewers, and as argued in this chapter. Though the intentions behind representations of teen friendships are not used as evidence in this thesis, it is remarkable to note the resistance and homophobic denial which exists both onscreen and off.

In *Y tu Mamá También*, Tenoch's cousin Luisa triangulates Tenoch and Julio's friendship, forming the only true isolated triangle in the films about boys in this chapter. She senses, and points to, the underlying tension and homoeroticism in their relationship, asking several times why they don't just sleep together. Indeed, in the end of the film, she finally acts as the means by which this happens, via a drunken threesome. Up to this point, the boundaries of their relationship have been indicated by a shower scene in which the boys compare penises. Julio walks out of the shower stall, and Tenoch stares at Julio's naked body, commenting on how ugly Julio's penis is; he compares it to a deflated balloon (Figure 4.15). Julio then enters Tenoch's stall, insisting that Tenoch 'blow it up'. The homoerotic sexual innuendo of the balloon is absurd

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[46] Featuring writers Seth Rogan and Evan Goldberg, director Greg Mottola, stars Jonah Hill, Michael Cera, and Christopher Mintz-Plasse, and, briefly, producer Judd Apatow and his daughter Maude

[47] Farber, Stephen (2007). '"*Superbad*" mostly just mediocre', *Hollywood Reporter* 7 August 2007. http://www.reuters.com/article/2007/08/08/review-film-superbad-dc-idUSN0746388520070808, accessed 10 May 2012.

enough that it seems safe for Julio to assume that Tenoch will not actually comply with his request. However, Tenoch's fascination with Julio's penis – he stares, and actually bends down to get a better look – indicates that perhaps these heterosexualising boundaries in their relationship are not as rigid as it might first appear.

...but you've got one ugly dick.

Figure 4.14 – Tenoch leans in to get a closer look

Tenoch and Julio repeatedly sleep with the same women: they compete over Luisa throughout the film, and seem more hurt by each other's sleeping with Luisa than by any feelings they have for Luisa. It is revealed that they have slept with each other's girlfriends, too, and Julio claims to have slept with Tenoch's mother. This promiscuity is excessive, and indicates that these transitory and meaningless relationships with women are understood in terms of the boys' highly privileged relationship to each other. Their rivalry over Luisa best illustrates Sedgwick's formulation of two lovers fighting over the one beloved, when they are really vying for each other's attention. It is this film which takes the repressed desire the furthest, actually implying that the two boys have had sex with each other (though on screen this only goes so far as a kiss), [48] and it is perhaps for this reason that their relationship must be dissolved.

The escalation of their sexual conquests of each other's girlfriends, cousins, and mothers, leads to a fight, and the threesome Luisa initiates could either heal or end their relationship. The nearness of adulthood for Tenoch and Julio, and their determination to lead heterosexual adult lives, means that crossing whatever blurred boundary between friendship and sex in their relationship is a decision, rather than experimentation. Ultimately, the two see

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[48] Interestingly, the editing of Tenoch, Julio, and Luisa's threesome is quite similar to that of the sleepover in *Superbad*: the film cuts from an intimate but inexplicit moment (the hug in *Superbad*, the kiss in *Y tu Mamá También*) to a neutral outdoor morning establishing shot.

each other only once after returning from their journey with Luisa, and that, we are told, is the last time. Luisa, the catalyst for their adventure, their fight, and their drunken threesome, has remained behind and died at the beach they eventually found with her, and any knowledge or evidence of what happened between the three of them died with her. Tenoch and Julio's relationship also cannot survive. In order to successfully grow into adults, as they are in the final scene, rather than the immature and irresponsible teens they have been, they must leave behind their friendship.

Though the boys in *Duck Season* only do this once, Evan and Seth in *Superbad* and Tenoch and Julio in *Y tu Mamá También* use homophobic slurs as evidential verbal violence to separate themselves from homosexuality and to act as a homophobic control over their own desires and behaviour. All three films include the word 'faggot' (or the Spanish *putito* which literally refers to a male prostitute) used both in passing and as a pointed insult. This does not ward off the threat of homosexuality in these films quite as well as Babuscio and Wood have claimed, as the boys eventually do express their love for each other, indirectly in *Duck Season*, verbally in *Superbad* and physically in *Y tu Mamá También*. Rather, it seems to serve somewhat to exemplify the kinds of social narratives these relationships are up against, and the extant pressures to avoid, deny, or repress homosexuality and homosexual desires.

Again, each of the boys' heterosexual relationships with women is fleeting, temporary, as emotionally vacuous as their friendships with each other are rich. The only well-developed relationship which emerges from these heterosexual encounters in any of these three films is between Luisa and Tenoch and Julio, and this relationship is created specifically *as a triangle*; she is ultimately fleeting in that the boys leave her behind at Boca del Cielo Beach, the relationship is only developed because the boys are alone with her on a journey across the country. This relationship can in fact be reasonably compared with Flama and Moko's interactions with Rita, Flama's neighbour. She is a stranger at the beginning of the film, as is Luisa, and she will not remain after the film, nor will Luisa. Rita provides the catalyst for the expression of desire and fantasy extant between Flama and Moko, as Luisa does for the repressed desires and fascination between Tenoch and Julio. Although *Superbad*'s Jules and Becca are less stereotyped as female characters than many in teen film history, they also carry little narrative weight, and their relationships with Seth and Evan as

objects of heterosexual flirtation are established before the narrative begins. These relationships are not elaborated as the film progresses, and they mainly serve as the foci for the boys' attempts at heterosexuality.

Though the threat of homosexuality is not displaced by race in any of these films, as discussed in the critical discourse in Chapter 2, there are certain social and visible differences emphasised by the films between the two boys which could help to subvert their desire for each other. The most obvious differentiation is between Evan and Seth in *Superbad*. Evan, played by Michael Cera, is a tall and gangly, whereas Seth, played by Jonah Hill, is a much heavier character. The physical differences between these two actors are emphasized in the opening credits, in which their cartoon silhouettes dance across the screen (Figure 4.16). In *Y tu Mamá También*, Tenoch and Julio have a stated difference
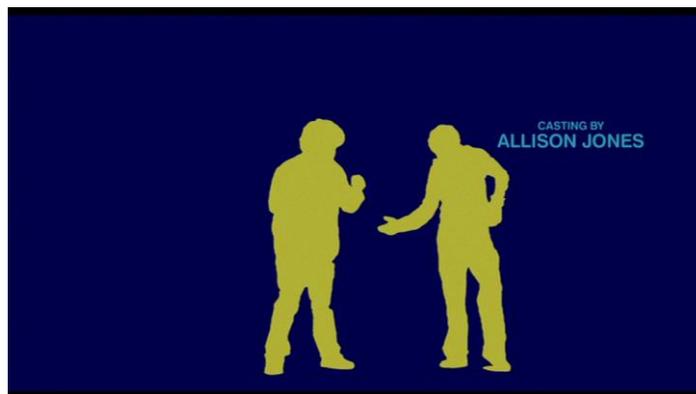
Figure 4.15 – Seth, right, and Evan, left, are visibly differentiated by hair and body shape from the beginning credits

in class position, expressed primarily through their family homes and their behaviour. The two eventually trade class-based insults, cementing the importance of this difference within their relationship. This differentiation also acknowledges, on some level, the social concerns that the camera work and the narrator present as the constant context of Tenoch and Julio's journey, though the boys seem totally unaware of it. Finally, Moko and Flama's differences are the most concealed of the three. The film is shot in black and white, which masks the fact that Flama has red hair, a fact the audience only learns late in the film. Flama's hair colour is also revealed in order to differentiate him from his assumed father, and to imply that a red-haired waiter from a family trip to Acapulco could have been his biological father. While red hair is rare in Mexico, it is certainly not unheard of, and this does not necessarily imply a racial or ethnic difference between the two boys; despite Flama's nickname (*flama*

means flame) they certainly do not appear to have been particularly aware of this difference.

Ultimately, the various attempts to displace the homosexual desire which threatens the boundaries between friendship and love in the relationships of the teenage boys in these films fail, because the films themselves incorporate varying levels of expression of the boys' desires for each other. Their desires are repressed and fraught, certainly, through the kinds of displacement and denial outlined in the buddy film discourse – despite the lack of physical violence, the films do use verbal violence and many of the other kinds of displacement such as visual or social differences – however, unlike the films described by that critical discourse, these films allow cracks in the narrative, moments of recognition of the homoerotics of these relationships. Moko admits his desire and fantasies aloud to Rita, and licks Flama's ear (under cover of showing him the heterosexual encounter between himself and Rita). Evan and Seth declare their love for each other in a scene that leaves the actions immediately following this declaration open for interpretation (though they part ways at the end of the film in the company of girls). Tenoch and Julio, it is implied, actually engage in sexual acts together (though accompanied by a woman and to the ultimate detriment of their future relationship). These are not coming out stories, they are not explicitly films about gay characters or even gay relationships – they are films which depict the blurred boundary between close friendship and romantic or sexual love, both revealing and denying the queer possibilities in narratives of teen boys' friendships.

Teen Girls, Buddies, and Female Friends

For teen girls, the indeterminacy of the boundary between friendship and erotic desire has very different effects from the blurred boundary which exists for teen boys. First, it means that there are few examples of films which focus specifically on the friendship of teen girls without also being explicitly lesbian. Frequently, films which do so are forced to call attention to these lesbian possibilities in order to then deny them.[49] The focus on teen girls' relationships, however, also tends to pathologise these relationships, marking a striking

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[49] This includes films such as *Thirteen* (Hardwicke, 2003), which will be discussed in the next chapter, *Bend it Like Beckham* (Chadha, 2002), *Bring It On* (Reed, 2000), and *Mean Girls* (Waters, 2004), which will also be discussed in the following chapter.

inability to represent close friendships between teen girls in a positive light. As this chapter is intended to analyse 'buddies' and close friends, these pathologised relationships fall outside the parameters, and will be dealt with in the next chapter of this thesis. For the purposes of this chapter, then, the films which will be examined, *Aquamarine*, *Sisterhood of the Travelling Pants*, and *Confessions of a Teenage Drama Queen*, are all depictions of close friendships between teen girls which are not demonised, and are instead relatively supportive, healthy, and close.

This array of films, while consisting of 'positive' depictions of teen girls' friendships, does not reflect the age range seen in the films about teen boys discussed in the earlier part of this chapter. This is partially because of the limitations of the selection - these films are nearly the only such films in the whole of the corpus of films about teenagers from 2000 to 2009. Of the 48 films specifically about girls' friendships, only eight do not involve antagonistic relationships between girls as their primary focus. Despite their origins in a limited sample, the selection in this chapter do exemplify the indistinguishable border between friendship and romance. The other films in the corpus which have strong teen girls as main characters tend to isolate those girls in their own coming-of-age stories[50] or else place them within a bigger group of friends,[51] rather than focusing on a single relationship. The films to be discussed in the following section, however, focus specifically on the close friendship between two teen girls.

The films chosen for this section are all depictions of teen girls who are much younger than the majority of teen representations in film. Beyond the age of the characters, though, the films themselves seem to be 'younger' in that they are aimed at younger audiences, especially in comparison with the films in the previous section. All three are rated PG in both the US and the UK, which indicates both the intended audience and the explicitness, or lack thereof, of the content of these films. Indeed, in terms of sexual explicitness, the farthest any of these three films goes in depicting sex on screen is kissing. Anything else is either unrepresented or hidden through elliptical editing and referential

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[50] For example, *Quinceañera* (Glatzer & Westmoreland, 2006), *Whale Rider* (Caro, 2002), *Real Women Have Curves* (Cardoso, 2002), *Juno* (Reitman, 2007), *Teeth* (Lichtenstein, 2007)

[51] For example, *Wild Child* (Moore, 2008), *Angus, Thongs and Perfect Snogging* (Chadha, 2008), and *Saved!* (Dannelly, 2004), which will be discussed in the following chapter. Though *Sisterhood of the Travelling Pants* is technically an ensemble film, the ensemble rarely shares screen time, and the film is actually split into individual plots involving the ensemble members.

dialogue. The studied innocence and relative asexuality of these films can be compared to a film like *Thirteen*, released just prior to the three under discussion here, in which explicit sexual behaviour and awareness, combined with anarchic and self-destructive behaviour, is presented as the 'real' experience of thirteen year old girls; this film will be further discussed in the following chapter.

Sexual behaviour in *Confessions of a Teenage Drama Queen*, *Aquamarine*, and *Sisterhood of the Travelling Pants*, on the other hand, is only hinted at and is therefore left up to the viewer to interpret how and what might have happened, and simultaneously works to even the possibilities between heterosexual and homosexual readings of these narratives. This works primarily because, though the films are ostensibly heterosexual narratives (working on the premise which Alexander Doty (2000) argues against, in which films are presumed straight unless proven gay), their emotional core lies in the relationship between the two teen girls. As in the buddy films discussed above, these relationships between the two primary same-sex characters provide the structure and narrative pull for the film, and any hetero romance is side-lined and relatively fleeting in comparison.

This works slightly differently in *Sisterhood of the Travelling Pants* than it does in *Aquamarine* and *Confessions of a Teenage Drama Queen*. In the former, the relationship in question actually makes up a quarter of the narrative, as the film is about a group of friends. However, this quarter of the narrative is also the grounding section of the film's scattered storytelling style, and is the one part of a film about girls' friendships which actually focuses solely on a friendship between girls. In this storyline, a sarcastic, cynical, and very bored teenager, Tibby (Amber Tamblyn) encounters a younger girl, Bailey (Jenna Boyd), who latches onto her and befriends her over the course of a summer. Tibby grows to care for Bailey, and is devastated when she discovers that Bailey is sick. By the time Bailey dies at summer's end, the two girls care deeply for each other, and it is only Bailey's age, at twelve or thirteen (never specifically stated in the film) which prevents this from being a romantic storyline.

On the other hand, both *Confessions of a Teenage Drama Queen* and *Aquamarine* focus primarily on the relationship between two teen girls. In *Confessions of a Teenage Drama Queen*, Lola (Lindsay Lohan) moves to the suburbs and befriends Ella (Allison Pill). Their friendship grows from a mutual

love of a pop band, and they develop a rivalry with 'popular girl' Carla (Megan Fox). It is through their relationship and their feelings for each other that the two are able to move beyond this rivalry and express self-confidence and some semblance of emotional maturity. *Aquamarine* is the story of best friends who will be split up at the end of the summer as one of them moves away. Hailey (Joanna Levesque) and Claire (Emma Roberts) befriend Aquamarine (Sara Paxton), a mermaid who has to prove to her father that love exists in order to avoid an arranged marriage. Aquamarine is able to grant a wish if the girls help her in this quest, and Hailey and Claire see this as an opportunity to prevent their imminent separation.

In both *Aquamarine* and *Confessions of a Teenage Drama Queen*, the primary teen girl couple forms a triangulated relationship with an older boy or a man. The relationships with these men are obsessive, and though these obsessions are distant and highly improbable, they do both involve personal interactions with the men in question. Though each couple displays feelings of jealousy and rivalry over the men, neither is ever in a position to act on their assumed desires. In both narratives, the admiring teen girls are paired, so that the potential sexual dimensions of the infatuation are lessened via mediation through a homosocial relationship. These triangulated relationships, as in the teen boy friendship films discussed above, work to develop and further the interests of the primary homosocial couple, rather than any heterosexual ones. Lola, for example, uses her friendship with the much older rock star Stu to repair the damage she has inflicted on her relationship with Ella, and to overcome the rivalry with Carla which has hounded her throughout the film. Hailey and Claire use their crush on and subsequent knowledge about Ray to help Aquamarine win him over and therefore aid them in their desire to stay together. Ultimately, the close friendship between the paired girls in both films is given significantly higher priority in the narrative than the relationships fostered between the pair and their idolised older man.

Interestingly, in *Sisterhood of the Travelling Pants*, Bailey causes Tibby to meet Brian, the boy Tibby dates and falls for in the film's sequel. Triangulation of this relationship, however, is not developed in the first film, and Brian remains a background character and acquaintance; no romance or interest is hinted at here (indeed, Tibby is given no heterosexual romance whatsoever in the first film). With the introduction of Tibby and Brian's romance in the second

film, however, comes even stronger evidence that Tibby and Bailey's relationship in the first film was more than just friendship. One of the main plot points for Tibby's section of the second film is her fear of commitment, which is a direct result of Bailey's death – Tibby is afraid that Brian will leave her *just like Bailey did*.

Of the three films, only *Confessions of a Teenage Drama Queen* actually ends with a heterosexual coupling. This coupling is only introduced in the concluding scenes of the film, and it is largely unsubstantiated by the narrative. This coupling works to manage and supplant the homosocial and homoromantic relationship between Lola and Ella. The coupling is between Lola and Sam, a boy who previously in the narrative is only briefly and fleetingly introduced. Generally, Sam is a background character and has little to do with the narrative's conflicts and emotional arcs. Lola's announcement of their relationship in the last scene of the film is therefore unconvincing, though it does conform to the convention of a happy heterosexual coupling as narrative closure. Further, the level of romance and sexuality shared between Lola and Sam is far less than that shared between Lola and Ella. It is the intimacy and intense emotional aspect of Lola's relationship with Ella as well as the narrative focus on their trials and reconciliations which lends itself most fully to support a reading of their friendship as romantic. If Ella's character were replaced by a teen boy, there would be no question about the kind and quality of the relationship between the two characters.

There is one telling moment which seems to crystallize the textual clues regarding the romantic nature of Lola and Ella's friendship. In this scene, Lola tells Ella a story about how her parents met and fell in love. That this story is a fantasy is indicated by the switch in style to a collaged, superimposed, cartoon look which is designed to tell a story in a pop-up book aesthetic. In the image, Lola's parents fly upwards as they embrace, with a cartoon rainbow in the background; Lola's version of idealised heterosexuality contains visual hints of homosexuality (Figure 4.17). This over-the-top cartoon style is used throughout

Figure 4.16: The fantasy is evident in Lola's story as the film cuts to cartoonish stylisation

Figure 4.17: True Love 4 Ever seen from the back of Lola's parents' heads

Figure 4.18: The shot dissolves so that Lola and Ella's heads match Lola's parents' heads, with True Love 4 Ever still emblazoned on screen.

the film as an indication of Lola's fantasy. Ella, however, does not realise that Lola's story is not true. As Lola tells the story, the camera zooms down past the heads of her fantasy mother and father as they lie in the grass, and then back up from behind to show the words 'true love 4 ever' emblazoned in the stars in a point of view shot from the position of Lola's parents, as the backs of their heads frame the shot (Figure 4.18). A match dissolve fades the back of Lola's parents heads into the backs of Lola and Ella's heads, linking the girls with the

fantasy couple, the words 'true love 4 ever', and the romance of Lola's story more generally (Figure 4.19). Lola ends the story by claiming that her father died in a motorcycle accident. As Ella comforts her, Lola puts her head on Ella's shoulder. The reasons behind this last lie are unclear, and it appears that Lola has embellished this tale solely in order to qualify this intimacy with Ella.

Aquamarine does not end with the conventional creation of a heterosexual union; it is rather the potential for but denial of this union and the privileging of another kind of relationship altogether with which the film concludes. Hailey and Claire are just on the cusp of becoming teenagers, and in the opening scene of the film, they are watching older teens interact, as though trying to observe and prepare for when they are older. The boy-craziness which Claire and Hailey display, however, is used by the film as a superficial cover for their deeper, closer love for each other, which is strong throughout the film but becomes the 'lesson' learned in the film's conclusion. Ironically, for Hailey and Claire, their ability to stay together seems to be totally reliant on the success of a heterosexual relationship. This is an interesting case which, though structurally different (the heterosexual relationship in question is outside of the girls' relationship) from the female friendship films discussed above, flouts the idea that female friendship must be sacrificed for heterosexual adulthood.

The seemingly unsuccessful resolution of Ray and Aquamarine's relationship sends a message which contradicts many of the conventions of romance and teen films: Ray hasn't fallen in love with Aquamarine in the three days since they first met. The emphasis here on the difference between lust and love along with the refusal to portray an easy and natural teleology which moves quickly from meeting to attraction to love to a lasting relationship is the first key to understanding *Aquamarine* as breaking with conventions which require heteronormative narrative conclusions. When Ray and Aquamarine kiss at the end of the film, this concluding kiss is not the kiss of true love, but rather one of attraction and interest, and in fact this kiss does nothing to resolve the driving conflicts of the narrative. Further, as Aquamarine feels she belongs in the ocean, it is clear these two will not have any kind of committed conventional relationship. The kiss does not stand in for 'happily ever after,' but instead simply communicates their mutual attraction.

The happily ever after ending, therefore, comes not out of a heterosexual love and union, but rather from Claire and Hailey's love for each other and their

love for Aquamarine. Aquamarine says she has seen love once, and it was this vision of love which has prompted her quest and idealism. The example of love she has seen turns out to have been Claire's drowned parents, an indicator that this 'love' is monogamous, eternal (or eternalised, as this instance of a happy relationship has been memorialised for the love it exuded rather than any problems that it may have had or could have had if the two had not died young), state-sanctioned heterosexuality. The second indicator that Aquamarine is searching for this particular version of love is that she is proving to her father that love exists so she can avoid marrying someone that she does not love. This creates two assumptions about the kind of love that Aquamarine is searching for: first, it insinuates that either Aquamarine's father does not love her, which is unlikely in the world of this film or else that familial love is irrelevant, which is much more likely; second, as Aquamarine is arguing that if love really exists, then she should have the right or at least the chance to find that love, it is implied that the kind of love she seeks is romantic, enduring, even marital. However, when Aquamarine has not yet found love with Ray, it is the expression of Claire and Hailey's love for her that proves to Aquamarine's father that love does exist. They exhibit their love for her by offering to give her the wish she had promised them so that she can avoid her arranged marriage, thereby sacrificing their chance to stay together for Aquamarine's happiness. Though Aquamarine is about to deny them this wish as she has not found love with Ray, suddenly she is able to stay, or at least has the freedom to choose her own future, because the girls have proven to her and to her father that love exists after all.

Though the films involving teen boys' friendships do present a certain amount of differentiation between the characters that make up the central couple, the function of the differentiation is completely different in films about teen girls' friendships. Critics, such as Cynthia Fuchs, Yvonne Tasker, and others, as discussed in Chapter 2, argue that differences in buddy films work to displace the threat of homoeroticism within the film. These can be differences such as race, class, and physical differences, and evidence of this can be found in the films discussed in the previous section. For films about teen girls and about female friendship, on the other hand, differences are presented on the superficial level of appearance and shades of gender presentation, and in the case of Bailey and Tibby, age as well. Primarily this can be seen in costume and

casting. The differentiation here has been understood by critics quite differently; as Clare Whatling has argued, the representation of lesbian desire has frequently been depicted by creating a visual difference between the women in question in order to work through 'the problem of sexual sameness' so that 'the visual display of sex/gender positioning is often complemented by a difference in hair colour' (Whatling 1997, 67) or other visual cues. Though this kind of representation and the need for difference in order to understand sexual desire is problematic in terms of the reality of gay and lesbian desire, it is still frequently used, especially in mainstream and popular visual cultures. It works in these films on a subtle level, marking differences between the teen girls so that, in a narrative which denies or suppresses its own homo- or bisexual possibilities, the girls are simultaneously recuperated into a relationship which makes sense on a heterosexual, gender dimorphic level.

Figure 4.19: Lola dressed as Marilyn Monroe

Costume design in *Confessions of a Teenage Drama Queen* further works to differentiate characters based on gender presentation, and to link to gay and lesbian cultural icons. First, it provides a great deal of character exposition. When Lola leaves New York City, for instance, she wears all black, as she is mourning the loss of her former home, and what she feels is her chance at stardom and an exciting life. When she begins school shortly afterwards, her white ensemble expresses her optimism and the fresh start she will have at the new high school. Lola's outfits and make-up are typically feminine and highly accessorised, and are used to express her changing attitudes. Her costume design frequently references highly sexualised classical Hollywood actresses such as Marilyn Monroe (Figure 4.20), and Greta Garbo, as well as later icons such as ABBA. Ella's costumes, by contrast, are subdued, and consist mainly of collared shirts and plain, sometimes khaki trousers. Carla, the girls' nemesis, tells Lola

that she thinks Ella's conservative and outdated fashion choices make her look like a 'politician's wife', but they also speak to another interpretation. Though Ella is not expressly wearing masculine clothing, the contrast between her general lack of femininity and Lola's loud, hyperfeminine fashion statements means that Ella does come across androgynously, almost in gendered opposition to Lola.

The costume choices have a host of extra-textual associations which bring further elements and hints of bisexuality or homosexuality to the film. Lola's highly feminised costumes inspired by Hollywood and popular culture icons tend to reference particularly queer cult figures. Greta Garbo and Marilyn Monroe, for example, have long been icons for lesbians and lesbian communities, and moreover rumours have swirled about their alleged non-heterosexual relationships and lifestyles (Weiss 1992). ABBA, too have a large gay following, though their associations tend to be tied to gay men much more than to women. The contrast between these highly feminine, and frequently gay-associated, costumes and Ella's low-key, tomboyish, androgynous costume design means that the two are easily paired as a heterogynous though not heterosexual couple.

Like Ella and Lola, Hailey and Claire are portrayed as having visual distinctions that work to provide the difference that heteronormativity requires within same-sex couplings; Hailey is a tomboy and somewhat androgynous, particularly compared to Claire (Figure 4.21), and is tough and angry where

Figure 4.20: Claire, left, wears feminine colour and clothing, especially as compared to Hailey, right, whose clothes are more androgynous.

Claire is vulnerable and scared. Hailey's costuming is almost unremarkable until the girls' rival Cecilia comments on it, mocking Hailey and asking why she doesn't wear 'girls' clothes.' Again, as in *Confessions of a Teenage Drama*

Queen, the viewer might not even notice the androgyny of the costuming until the 'mean girl' points it out and tries to police the gender expression of the less feminine character.

In *Sisterhood of the Travelling Pants*, Tibby is a slightly gothic, alternative dresser, with streaks of colour running through her hair. She is thus differentiated as an 'individual' from both her friends and from Bailey. Bailey is much smaller than Tibby, has mousey brown hair, and dresses in simple clothes which are neither feminine nor particularly masculine – her androgyny, however, speaks more to the emphasis of her age than to gender presentation. In other words, though she is wise beyond her years and more than an emotional and intellectual match for Tibby, she is physically presented as a child, whose gender and sexuality have yet to develop. It may be the case, in fact, that this film about teen girls is the one among this sample which uses the differences between the two characters to displace the threat of homoeroticism and same-sex romance rather than to create a heteronormative, gendered and/or visible differentiation between them.

Finally, these films present teen girls' friendships which are in fact indistinguishable from romantic relationships. In all three films discussed here, if the more androgynously coded girl were a teen boy, instead, there would be no question of these relationships being romantic if not also sexual. Heteronormativity prevents these elements from being explicit in the narrative, rather they remain possibilities. In both *Confessions of a Teenage Drama Queen* and *Aquamarine* there are key moments or plot points which illustrate this indistinguishability.

When the emotional elements of *Confessions of a Teenage Drama Queen* come to a climax, Ella finally explains exactly what Lola has meant to her:

> I was miserable until you came to Dellwood. I thought everyone's life was like mine, just doing everything you're supposed to do when you're supposed to do it, never questioning anything. The only thing I could expect when I grew up was a life just like my parents. And then, I met you. You gave me courage, Lola. Because of you, I'm brave enough to be different.

This confession, which sounds almost like a coming out speech (and, given that Ella is not heterosexually coupled in the film's conclusion, perhaps it is), results in physical contact between the two girls, in the form of a hug, but the kiss which might be expected after a speech like this is not included. In this film, the complicated, inspiring, and life-changing relationships are those between Lola

and Ella, her best friend, and Lola and Carla, her nemesis. The emotional and narrational peaks involve Lola's competition with Carla and relationship with Ella. There is an extensive amount of evidence, therefore, to support a reading of this film as one which offers a depiction of a homoromantic if not homosexual relationship between Ella and Lola.

In *Aquamarine*, the mermaid has served as a kind of avatar for the girls' desires, while at the same time discovering with them just how much they really love each other. Indeed she validates that love, insisting it is just as relevant as marital love and at the same time differentiating it from familial/parental love. Aquamarine's discovery and validation of Hailey and Claire's love for each other resolves the conflicts of the film. Aside from textual clues, the alignment of their love for each other with marital, eternal, and monogamous love rather than familial or parental love is what pushes this representation of friendship beyond mere friendship and into the realm of romance and non-heterosexuality. Further, the idea that Claire and Hailey could fall in love with Aquamarine before Ray is able to, after only three days, privileges the same-sex connections between the two girls and Aquamarine above the heterosexual possibilities the film offers. The combination of explicit and implicit indicators of the nature of Claire and Hailey's relationship should mean that this reading of the film is unquestioningly supported by the text; while the reading comes out of the text, however, the film never explicitly recognises the romantic connotations it allows.

Generally speaking, there is nothing in the text of the first *Sisterhood of the Travelling Pants* film which visually or verbally marks Tibby and Bailey's friendship as a romantic relationship mainly because Bailey is represented as a child. If, however, Bailey were two or three years older, then this relationship would certainly cross the boundary of heteronormative friendships. Further, as stated above, if Bailey were played by a boy, the assumption would almost certainly be made, *despite* the age difference, that this relationship was more than friendship. As it is, if the relationship is intended to be friendly rather than romantic, then its depiction is relying heavily on the assumed preconceptions of the viewer regarding both slight age differences and same gender relationships. It is in the sequel to this film, in which Tibby's relationship troubles stem from baggage carried forward from her relationship with Bailey, that the friendship takes on retrospective evidence of homoromance.

To conclude this section, these films about teen girls' friendships provide implicit possibilities of homosexual desire within their narratives; however these are never baldly stated. Indeed, these possibilities primarily extend out of the indistinguishability between close friendships and romance between teen girls as between the grown women discussed in the female friendship film discourse. As in *Confessions of a Teenage Drama Queen* and *Aquamarine*, even the language used in the film to describe the girls' relationships is indistinguishable from the kind of language that would be used to describe a romantic relationship. Further, while these relationships can be triangulated with a male character, in two of the three of these films, the character is older and not a reasonable romantic possibility; the shared infatuation with this figure only serves to bring the two girls closer together. Age, too is an important factor, as these three films are all examples of films which are aimed at a young teen audience. It will be fruitful to compare these films with the films discussed in the following chapter, which are aimed at older audiences but which also contain more explicit references to the homosexual elements underpinning same-sex teen friendships, and which contain, without fail, destructive rather than positive representations of teen girls' relationships. This indicates, I will argue in the next chapter, a crisis in the representability of close friendships between teen girls who are also expected to be growing out of the homosocial 'stage' and establishing themselves as successful heterosexuals.

Conclusion

In films about teen boys' relationships, visible differentiations as well as stated differences such as class and ethnicity are used to quell the threat of homoromance and homoeroticism, displacing desire onto other social issues. This is a primary concern for buddy film literature, and is reflected in the films discussed in this chapter. For films about girls' relationships, however, this differentiation exists primarily within the visible, defining femininity along superficial appearance-based axes. In these films, these visible differences serve to create the opposition needed in a heteronormative representational system based on gender differences. With this difference established, the next few chapters will further explore this gendered split in representation between boys/the social and girls/the visible as it layers over the patterns outlined by buddy film and female friendship film literature.

The expression of the liminality of these teen relationships is also gendered. Teen boys' relationships are liminal in that the boundaries between homosociality, homoromance, and homoeroticism are blurred, and these boys explicitly waver over those boundaries. Heterosexuality in these narratives is quite clear and explicit, however. For teen girls, on the other hand, liminality is presented in the actual indistinguishability of romantic narratives and friendship narratives – these are not just either or, but both. Heterosexuality in these films about girls is represented no more explicitly than homoromance. The liminal period, however, must end for all of these relationships, as the characters *in every case* are split up and/or they move on to heterosexual relationships. This contradicts the destruction detailed in criticism of adult same-sex relationships in films, and is primarily due to the liminal nature of the teenage years – these are years of indeterminacy, of developing, of homosocial, homoromantic, and homoerotic 'phases'. Growing up and/or impermanent separations replace the death and destruction of adult narratives.

Interestingly, only the films about teen boys' relationships are able to be explicit about the homoeroticism underpinning their narratives. Clearly, as in the case of *Y tu Mamá También*, these films cannot be too explicit,[52] however they are able to at least acknowledge the tensions running through them. The films about girls' relationships discussed here do not acknowledge homoromance, and instead bury it within inexplicit sexual identity and behaviour more generally. So what happens when more (hetero)sexually explicit films depict teen girls' relationships? And what happens when the homoromance in these relationships is acknowledged? These questions will make up the core of the next chapter in this thesis, which discusses the representation of teen girls' relationships as destructive, emotionally and physically harmful forces which elaborate on societal fears of both women and teenagers. The chapter will also push connections between teen girls and the visible, asking how visibility, appearance, and masquerade structure representations of teen girls. The shortage of positive, empowering representations of teen girls' relationships discussed in this chapter finds its corresponding wealth in representations of negative, threatening, and caustic relationships between teen girls. Following this next chapter, the thesis will look to representations of teen boys in broader

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[52] About homosexuality. This is despite very explicit scenes of heterosexuality.

homosocial contexts, investigating the ways heterosexuality is negotiated through that homosociality and through homosocial desire.

Chapter 5 Frenemies: Teen Girls, Aggression, and Masquerade

Whereas the previous chapter focused on best friend relationships which, for the girls, were ostensibly supportive and positive forces, this chapter aims to investigate another kind of relationship between teen girls – antagonistic or 'frenemy' relationships. Frenemies[53] are friends, who are also enemies; these relationships can be or have been very close, but are also filled with (primarily social) aggression. In the films discussed in this chapter, frenemy relationships are highly charged with love and hate, obsession and entrapment, secrets and betrayal. Though there are many films about teenage girls which depict more straightforward enemy relationships, these relationships are less interesting, because less intense, than those between frenemies. The films selected for analysis in this chapter centre on passionate frenemy relationships between teenage girls. Depictions of frenemy relationships are important in thinking about queer possibilities because of historical associations between women's aggression and lesbianism and non-normative sexuality, which, I will argue, underpin the representations analysed in this chapter.

Of the 48 films in the database about girls' relationships, 16 depict some aspects of frenemy relationships, and eight focus specifically on that relationship.[54] Among those eight films, the generic breakdown, like the selection in the previous chapter, roughly corresponds to the patterns seen in the corpus as a whole. According to IMDb, which assigns more than one genre to many of these films, six are dramas, while five are comedies, two are romances, one is a horror, and one is both a crime film and a thriller. The films generally also fit within the patterns of UK certifications, as three are 12/12A, three are 15, and two are 18; though this is comparatively fewer 15s than the corpus as a whole contains in relation to the other certifications, there are so few films that this is not significant.

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[53] According to the Oxford English Dictionary, a frenemy is 'a person with whom one is friendly, despite a fundamental dislike or rivalry; a person who combines the characteristics of a friend and an enemy'. http://www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/273014, accessed 13 January 2011.

54 *Jennifer's Body* (Kusama, 2009), *Me Without You* (Goldbacher 2001), *Mean Girls* (Waters, 2004), *Pretty Persuasion* (Siega 2005), *Saved!* (Dannelly 2004), *Slap Her… She's French* (Mayron 2002), *Thirteen* (Hardwicke 2003), *Water Lilies* (Sciamma 2007).

The six films discussed here (outlined below) represent those films which are most concentrated on the power and problems involved in frenemy relationships. In these films, the frenemy relationships and their obsessive characteristics are structured by gender performance and performativity so that one girl, the frenemy of the protagonist, exhibits a masquerade of excessive and aggressive femininity. The protagonist is fascinated by and mimics the frenemy, so that the 'journey' of each film depicts the donning and discarding of the feminine masquerade by the protagonist. The relationship between the two girls is, in each case, linked to homoeroticism, homoromance, and lesbianism, and is presented as destructive, unhealthy, and even pathological.

Particularly within US discourses around teen girls, the frenemy most often chimes with figures such as the mean girl, the popular girl, and the queen bee. She will here be referred to as 'frenemy' in order to maintain focus on the relationship at the centre of the film, and to avoid isolating the character. The frenemy herself relies on her best friend(s) and social position for her power, and would not exist without the relationships which bolster her. The second component of the frenemy relationship is the protagonist, who mirrors the frenemy as their relationship develops, and whose development of a more 'authentic' femininity compared to that of the frenemy is the driving force of each film.

For the most part the films in this chapter share broad generic markers. Though certainly there is variation in the selection, all but one are American productions, most fit comfortably within the teen film genre, and most contextualise the frenemy relationship within a larger homosocial teen girl culture. Though *Me Without You* (Goldbacher 2001) is a British production which does not include this teen girl culture and does not fit in the teen film genre, the relationship *type* depicted qualifies it for inclusion. In fact, this film provides a point of contrast in terms of US gender norms which inform the other films, as well as allowing the chapter to take into account how the frenemy relationship can function outside US teen representation.

The first section of this chapter will outline the history of representative associations between female same-sex friendships, aggression, pathology, and lesbianism, and will review the functions of the feminine masquerade. The chapter will then analyse the six films in pairs, organised by the extent of the frenemy relationship involved. The first pair is *Saved!* (Donnelly, 2004) and *Slap*

Her… She's French (Mayron 2002). The protagonists here are introduced wearing a masquerade of excessive femininity, and the films chart their gradual disillusionment with and eventual discarding of that masquerade in favour of more 'authentic' selves. Though both films focus on the obsessive relationships between the frenemy and the protagonist, they are less explicit about any underlying lesbianism, homoeroticism, or homoromance than the other films in this chapter. The second pair is *Mean Girls* (Waters, 2004) and *Thirteen* (Hardwicke, 2003). Here, the protagonists are introduced in states of relative innocence, and then, emerging from their growing fascination with their frenemy, they take on the masquerade, mirroring the frenemy, until they are forced to realise the destructive nature of their excessive behaviours and negotiate a more 'authentic' self. These two films show teen girls who are paired in their aggressive behaviour toward others as well as toward each other. While the films are very different in tone and genre, both use lesbianism not only as a way to acknowledge the narcissistic obsession between girls, but also as a way to safeguard against the full manifestation of lesbian desires. Finally, the last pair of films is *Me Without You* and *Jennifer's Body* (Kusama, 2009). The protagonists of these films toy with the feminine masquerade, but never take it up – they are, rather, in thrall to the power wielded by their frenemy. The friendships depicted in these two films are even closer and more obsessive than the others discussed above. There is also explicit recognition of the homoromance and homosocial desire between the two girls: *Me Without You* goes as far as comparing the girls' relationship to a marriage by calling the dissolution of their friendship a 'divorce,' while *Jennifer's Body* acknowledges the (previously) sexual relationship between the girls. In these last two films, the power dynamics between each pair of girls are presented as imbalanced, and must be corrected if the less pathologised girl is to grow out of the relationship and into normal 'adult' or 'mature' heterosexuality.

The conclusion of this chapter will aim to draw together the ways that violence and aggression in teen girls is seen as abnormal, crazy, and lesbian. I will consider the differences between representations of teen girls in this chapter, as opposed to the younger, more positive offerings found in the previous chapter. This chapter aims to understand queer possibilities extant in films about socially, sexually, and physically aggressive girls who threaten normative femininity and heterosexuality to such a degree that lesbianism is the

only explanation, particularly when those films posit that lesbian desire is what must be cured or resolved in order to safeguard heterosexual femininity. It will also consider the double-edged sword represented by such queer possibilities as can be found in these films which demonise, pathologise, and criminalise lesbian desires.

Masquerades, Social Power, and Authentic Femininities

This section will argue that narratives about the destructive social behaviour of teenage girls insist on a kind of obsessive narcissistic desire which, though nominally heterosexual, is rife with homoerotic undercurrents. These narratives use lesbianism or accusations of it to both acknowledge and deny these queer possibilities. As in the boys' friendship films discussed in the previous chapter, these are relationships which necessarily deteriorate because their continuation is impossible both emotionally and sexually in a heteronormative world; again, as in the previous chapter, the phase of homosocial obsessive behaviour depicted is overcome, but to the detriment of the relationship. The films in this chapter are differentiated from the boys' films in the previous chapter, however, in the same way that they are realigned with the films about girls in that chapter; appearance and visuality are privileged and are driving components of these narratives.

Both Angela McRobbie (2009) and Rosalind Gill (2007) argue that in post-feminist gender discourses, girls and women are required to focus on appearance in order to fit into the acceptable boundaries of femininity. Gill argues that 'femininity is presented as a bodily characteristic, requiring constant work – and crucially, constant expenditure on beauty products' (2007, 187). Her analysis of teen magazine discourses reveals that 'girls are advised to change' (ibid) everything about themselves 'in order to be more appealing to boys' (ibid), and furthermore the work of clothing, makeup and hair is never-ending, as they are encouraged to constantly monitor these surfaces for flaws. Focusing on their selves is encouraged only so long as it includes maintaining their appearance and their quest for boys' attentions. McRobbie concurs, contending that 'it becomes increasingly difficult to function as a female subject without subjecting oneself to those technologies of self that are constitutive of the spectacularly feminine' (2009, 60). The films in this chapter engage directly with these issues through

the use of masquerades of excessive femininity which are used by the frenemy figures and taken up to various degrees by the protagonists.

Frenemies in the films in this chapter wear the mask of femininity in order to wield power over others – both girls and boys – and it is in part this power which fascinates the protagonists. Mary Ann Doane's exploration of 'why a woman might flaunt her femininity, produce herself as an excess of femininity, in other words, foreground the masquerade' (1982, 81) is highly relevant here – girls are using their excessive femininity 'for particular gains' (82), and their masquerades are, in all cases in this chapter, shown to cause harm and present a threat not only to 'natural' femininity but to heteronormative patriarchal order. This threat is mainly held in the opposition set up between the 'natural' and 'authentic' selves which the protagonists negotiate throughout the narratives and the excessively feminine frenemy. The opposition here destabilises femininity more generally, as 'the masquerade, in flaunting femininity, holds it at a distance' (Doane 1982, 81) and therefore allows for 'an acknowledgement that it is femininity itself which is constructed as a mask' (ibid).

In destabilising femininity, then, the frenemy's masquerade also disrupts heteronormativity (as the normative teleology of sex-gender-desire) and the frenemy's heterosexuality-as-power attitudes undermine the presumed naturalness of heterosexuality. Fascination and desire between the two girls alongside the destabilisation of heteronormativity means that each of these films must deal with the spectre of same-sex desire. The films all draw comparisons between the frenemies, who never have lasting heterosexual relationships, and the protagonists, who are all either in hetero-relationships or reclaimed by the hetero-family at the conclusion of each film. Such comparisons seek to reclaim femininity as a potentially natural or authentic state of being, but all still provide a protagonist who has worn the masquerade, and taken it off, and who now can choose when and if to wear it, as a strategy. The frenemy, conversely, is unable to take off the mask, and is in fact trapped by it and punished for it.

The protagonists in these relationships are usually not presented as a straightforward victim of their frenemy; they are more often willing accomplices for at least part of the film. These protagonists use the challenges offered by the frenemies to learn their lesson about 'bad' versions of girlhood. Films presenting this struggle, then, between teen girls and their peers are also

presenting the battle between differently valued understandings of what it is to be a teen girl. Social fears about aggressive or victimised girlhoods are expressed through the protagonist's clashes with the cruel, manipulative, and power-hungry frenemy. The messages to be gleaned from these clashes are that it is not right for teen girls to be a passive victim, but nor is aggression acceptable behaviour. These girls must tone down their ambitions from reaching the level of their frenemy's manipulations, otherwise they will not develop into 'normal' women.

The frenemy, despite her cruelty, holds a fascinating power over others. In the book that inspired *Mean Girls*, Rosalind Wiseman calls this girl the Queen Bee, and argues that 'through a combination of charisma, force, money, looks, will, and social intelligence, this girl reigns supreme over the other girls' (2009, 87). The films in this chapter acknowledge this power, even comment on it, but inevitably the frenemy is punished for her various transgressions against her peers. I will argue in this chapter that part of the reason that this girl must be punished is for her 'unnatural' homosocial attachments. She relies on her relationships with other girls for her power, and often wields it without regard for the feelings of others. These films link the frenemy's homosocial attachments and aggressive behaviour to unstable and antisocial personalities. They are marked as crazy or at least close to the edge, and are shown to be unhealthily attached to their friends.

The film *Girl Interrupted* (Mangold, 1999) depicts girls, both teens and young adults, in a mental institution, and is an excellent example of this social structure, in particular the way the frenemy is coded as simultaneously fascinating, pathologised, and antisocial. Lisa (Angelina Jolie) is a sociopath, and is cruel and manipulative. She makes fast and close friends with Susanna (Winona Ryder), who revels in the freedom and self-importance of Lisa's attitude until she realises just how insane Lisa is, and how trapped in her own behaviour. Though this film is explicitly about a group of people with diagnosed mental disorders, Lisa remains an extreme figure. The dangerous fascination she holds for Susanna, and Susanna's initial unwillingness to break off the friendship despite Lisa's cruel treatment of others and explicitly unstable personality, can be found in varying degrees in the films discussed in this chapter. Indeed, many of the frenemy relationships that are presented in the films in this chapter echo this relationship's arc of giddy, addictive friendship coloured by homoeroticism

or homoromance, followed by a falling out and the need to punish the frenemy for her transgressions against other girls and against 'normal' femininity and heterosexuality.

Friends to Enemies: *Saved!* and *Slap Her… She's French*

The two films in this section, *Saved!* and *Slap Her… She's French*, position the frenemy relationship differently from the others in this chapter in that neither shows the protagonist falling under thrall to her frenemy, but rather details the deterioration of the relationship so that the protagonist wears the mask of excessive femininity at the start of each film alongside her frenemy, and gradually learns to take it off in order to renegotiate her more 'authentic' femininity. Even so, the frenemy characters in these two films are continuously aligned with the feminine masquerade, mental instability, manipulation, and over-investment in homosocial relationships. In both cases, the two girls are involved in a romantic triangle with a boy. The frenemy's façade cracks as the narratives progress, finally allowing the protagonist to escape the relationship and instigating the punishment of the frenemy for her cruelty and inauthenticity. The two girls mirror each other at different points in these narratives, but despite this doubling there are a series of visible differentiations made between the two characters, which serve to highlight their contrasting appearance and behaviour. Finally, both displace the homoeroticism and desire between the two girls with homophobic slurs and name-calling, as well as, in the case of *Slap Her… She's French*, the visual inclusion of potential 'actual' lesbians.

These two films certainly don't initially lend themselves to a comparison; *Saved!* is a rather earnest and gently satirical film, while *Slap Her… She's French* is a more slapstick attempt at subverting teen girl narratives. However, their similarities in terms of the discursive context outlined in this chapter highlight the ways that the frenemy relationship has been represented, and how it can be understood as a relationship with displaced and denied desires. *Saved!* is more ostensibly 'about' the secret teen pregnancy of a girl living in the world of born-again Christianity. Aptly named Mary (Jena Malone) finds she is pregnant after sacrificing her virginity to 'save' her boyfriend from his newly confessed gay identity. Hilary Faye (Mandy Moore) is Mary's best friend until Mary begins to distance herself due to her secret and Hilary's dogmatism, which results in the

two girls becoming frenemies. Mary makes some new friends, including Hilary Faye's brother Roland (Macaulay Culkin) and the school pariah Cassandra (Eva Amurri). Hilary Faye resents Mary's distance, new friends, and Patrick's (Patrick Fugit) interest in her, and plots to intervene, eventually causing the revelation of Mary's secret. Her plots don't go quite as she planned, however, and she soon finds herself without much of the social power she had enjoyed, unable to manipulate and control the behaviour of others.

While the characterisation of *Saved!*, for the most part, follows the patterns of teen films, *Slap Her… She's French* attempts to turn such conventions on their heads. The protagonist here is Starla (Jane McGregor), the head cheerleader, most popular girl in school, and generally a ruthless, ambitious, privileged girl who thinks she can do and have whatever she wants. While she fits the description of the frenemies in the other films in this chapter, the real antagonist of the film is Genevieve Le Plouff (Piper Perabo). Genevieve has ostensibly moved to Texas from France as an exchange student, but quickly begins taking over and destroying Starla's life, from stealing her boyfriend and her position as head cheerleader to ruining her grades and reputation, even trying to take her place in the news anchor competition. With help from Ed (Trent Ford) and her little brother, Starla is able to uncover Genevieve's plot and reveal her to be a Texan girl who was emotionally scarred by Starla's antics when they were much younger. Genevieve pretends to be an exchange student in order to take revenge; this is a guise which seems to work for her, as after the

Figure 5.1: Starla applies make-up

Figure 5.2: Hilary Faye, centre, has highly styled hair and make-up, and is flanked by matching Christian Jewels, all wearing their pins.

Figure 5.3: Mary, left, has carefully done hair and make-up for the start of school.
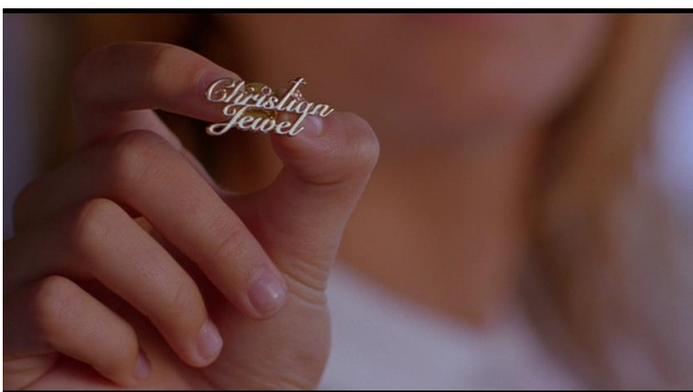
Figure 5.4: The Christian Jewels pin.

revelations and her downfall in Texas, she arrives in France to another host family, where she puts on a Texan accent as fake as her French one.

Both pairs of girls are differentiated along a spectrum of femininity with visual cues. Though none of these girls is visually masculinised, there is variation in terms of visuality and the level of femininity on display. Starla is blonde to Genevieve's brunette, as Hilary Faye is blonde to Mary's brunette. Starla and Hilary Faye are both excessively feminised when introduced – both are donning an excessive masquerade of hair, clothes, and make-up (Figures 5.1 and 5.2).

Mary, at the start of the film, is encouraged by Hilary Faye in her adoption of the masquerade; she arrives for the first day of school with curled hair and make-up done (Figure 5.3), and is rewarded by Hilary Faye with a piece of jewellery (Figure 5.4). The pin Hilary Faye gives her reinforces the emphasis on visuality and appearance for ideal femininity, as it signifies membership in the 'Christian Jewels', the name of the band the girls belong to. In this exclusive group, the girls are metaphorically understood as jewels, purely decorative accessories, and are marked as such by their ownership of and display of just such a decorative accessory. The pin also seems to mark Mary as belonging to Hilary Faye. Mary, however, abandons the masquerade encouraged by Hilary Faye as her pregnancy progresses and she wears loose clothing to hide her belly. This coincides with her search for a more authentic self.

Starla's toning down of her excessively feminine costuming seems to be in an oppositional arrangement with Genevieve's taking on the masquerade. As Starla is punished by the 'French' girl, she loses both her reputation *and* her ability/desire to dress the part to the point that she wears pyjamas to school (Figure 5.5). Her abandonment of the masquerade here marks her low point,

Figure 5.5: Starla arrives at school in pyjamas, looking uncharacteristically unsure of herself.

when she is unable and unwilling to do the work required to appear sufficiently feminine. Starla here shows her inward struggle via her appearance. Genevieve, on the other hand, is introduced in modest 'French' costuming, which includes jumpers and pleated skirts, a beret, and glasses. She begins, however, to wear increasingly revealing clothes which mimic the masquerade donned by Starla at the film's start. It is, of course, later revealed that the 'French' costuming and persona had been a different sort of masquerade.

In addition to the use of the feminine masquerade in both films, visuality is emphasised in the use of mirroring and/or doubling between the pairs of girls. In

both films, the frenemy and the protagonist are at various times visually doubled, whether in terms of costuming or in terms of framing and editing. The visual doubling underscores the relationships between the pairs of girls, as well as their changing relationship to the feminine masquerade.

As the masquerade is called upon to cover over any masculinity or phallic power present in the female subject, it is unsurprising that Hilary Faye's phallic power is displayed early in the film, in a scene in which Mary is seeking her advice regarding her gay boyfriend. Mary's boyfriend's inability to be the straight man Mary wants him to be is countered by images of Hilary Faye, as the film cuts from the troubled couple embracing to a man-shaped gunshot target

Figure 5.6: Mary, unsure, looks to Hilary Faye for guidance

Figure 5.7: Mary looks to Hilary Faye, whose reflection keeps the two paired in the frame.

being systematically shot by Hilary Faye. Hilary Faye stands, legs apart, confidently gripping and shooting the gun, which she fires accurately only at the crotch of the target. The association of Hilary with the phallic symbol of the gun and the meaning of her castrating aim insist both on her phallic power and the danger of such power in the hands of a teenage girl. The shot widens to include Mary, who stands far less confidently, shoulders hunched and gun down (Figure 5.6). To emphasise the power imbalance, Hilary keeps her eyes forward, toward

the target, with her gun firmly aimed, while Mary looks at Hilary, asking her guidance. The two are paired in the frame; both wear jeans and white shirts (Figure 5.6). The scene cuts to shots of Mary alone, except that Hilary's reflection in the glass of the shooting booths actually keeps the two paired in these shots (Figure 5.7). In this scene, Hilary Faye's confidence in wielding phallic power is visually compared with Mary's discomfort with it, signalling their different relationships with the masquerade.

Genevieve takes on Starla's version of the feminine masquerade, not only mimicking her but actually becoming her dark double. One set of shots accentuates this doubling, and the sinister nature of Genevieve's adoption of the masquerade. Early in the film, Starla, as head cheerleader, is seen performing at a school game, positioned in the centre of the frame and at front centre of the cheerleading troupe (Figure 5.8). After Genevieve manages to replace Starla as head cheerleader, a duplicate shot is used to show Genevieve, again at the centre of the frame, and at the front and centre of the troupe (Figure 5.9). The framing of these scenes merely replaces Starla with Genevieve, highlighting the extent to which Genevieve seeks to displace Starla from her own life, but also the exact mimicry of Starla's masquerade in which Genevieve is engaging.

Figure 5.8: Starla as head cheerleader

Figure 5.9: Genevieve as head cheerleader

Another way that framing works in both films is to show the importance of the homosocial world to all four girls, but in particular to Hilary Faye and Starla. Both of these girls are frequently framed so that they appear in the centre of the shot, surrounded by two or more other girls. Hilary Faye is most frequently flanked by the other two Christian Jewels (which includes Mary until she is kicked out), and centred between them (Figure 5.1). Starla is most frequently seen with her friends Tanner (Nicki Aycox) and Ashley (Alexandra Adi) alongside Genevieve (Figure 5.10). Even in a shot in which Starla physically sits to the far left of the frame, the camera is actually positioned so that her face is centred (Figure 5.10). These framing devices serve to situate Starla and Hilary Faye as both central to their homosocial world and as reliant on these other girls for importance within the frame.

Figure 5.10: Starla sits to the far left of the frame, but her face is reflected in the mirror in the centre of the frame. Tanner and Ashley sit to her right.

These framing devices which serve to highlight the importance of homosociality to the characters in question can also stress an over-investment in those homosocial relationships. Hilary Faye and Genevieve both display obsessive homosocial attachments, which take the place of the more acceptable heterosexual interests shown by Mary and Starla, and which threaten the heteronormativity of these narratives. Hilary Faye begins *Saved!* as the leader of her school's most popular girls, while Genevieve takes over this position from Starla. Certainly Starla seems less invested in her relationships with other girls, as she pays little attention to her friends, but she eventually becomes as obsessed with Genevieve as the 'French' girl is with Starla, trying to uncover the plot against her. On the other hand, Genevieve's entire *raison d'être* revolves around her obsession with Starla, and apparently has since the two were young. She sabotages and takes over everything in Starla's life, trying to enact her revenge by *becoming* Starla. In this way, the mirroring motifs throughout the

film alongside the emphasis on homosociality come together in Genevieve's obsession with Starla.

When Mary begins to lose her faith and questions the dogma by which Hilary Faye (and the rest of their community) lives, Hilary Faye resents Mary but simultaneously becomes obsessed with her. She watches Mary's every move, tries to get her in trouble at every opportunity, and spends much of her time trying to figure out how to re-convert Mary and her new friends. Here, too, Hilary Faye's habit of moulding her friends in her own image, so that the girls mirror each other in their masquerade (Figure 5.1), alongside her association with homosocial bonds, underpin her over-investment in her relationship with Mary as it turns from friendship to a frenemy relationship.

The obsession and investment that Hilary Faye and Genevieve display towards their frenemies is reinforced by the love triangle which develops between the frenemies and a boy in each film. Hilary Faye does seem genuinely interested in Patrick, though it still appears that she is interested in him because of what dating him could do for her socially. He is the son of the high school's leader, Pastor Skip (Martin Donovan). However, Hilary Faye's primary motivation for trying to win Patrick is to keep him away from Mary. The time she spends with him is frequently in large groups, and she makes sure that Mary is aware that she is with him; her interest in Patrick is mediated through her relationship with Mary, and it is also only ever seen in the context of her homosocial bonds more generally.

Genevieve is even more transparent in this regard as she actually seems to be disgusted by Starla's football playing boyfriend (and the audience is encouraged to be disgusted by him as well) and only seduces him to take him away from Starla. Genevieve also attempts to seduce Starla's new love interest Ed, perhaps sensing his and Starla's imminent romance, but, like Patrick, Ed is able to see through Genevieve's manipulations, as she is only out to take advantage of his proximity to Starla. Both Patrick and Ed are marked as 'the right boy' by their resistance to the frenemy's advances, and their steady regard for the protagonist's authentic self. Both support the protagonist when she exposes and punishes her frenemy, and are there when the protagonist is finally ready to mature into a stable heterosexual relationship.

Both of these films present the frenemies' over-investment in homosocial bonds as a symptom of their teen girl pathology; socially ruthless, manipulative,

and excessively feminine, these girls will go to any length to secure their social power over others, in particular the protagonists. Both Hilary Faye and Starla really seem to become unhinged as they lose everything they had. Hilary Faye is exposed at the school dance, revealing her true nature and crashing her van into the huge Jesus erected on campus. Starla's manipulative and nasty nature is exposed mid-film when Genevieve manages to broadcast a tape of Starla revealing her true feelings about her peers to the whole high school. Meanwhile Genevieve maintains her cool, calculating demeanour, and the masquerade of femininity which she has come to embody, even as she takes on another masquerade when she moves on to another family to restart the process. This actually makes her even more sinister and sociopathic than if she had merely been punished and learned her lesson, the way that Starla and Hilary Faye have

Figure 5.11: Ashley and Tanner intimately cuddling

Figure 5.12: An intimate moment between Genevieve and Starla

done. Ultimately, however, all three are presented as pathological at some point during the narratives.

Finally, both films use strategies of displacement to elide any homoeroticism or homoromance in the obsessive, triangulated relationships between the frenemies. Starla uses homophobic slurs early in the film to mock a

fellow student with whom she is competing in the news anchor competition. A sexual relationship between Ashley and Tanner (her two best friends) is also heavily hinted at, presumably for comic effect. These two are affectionate throughout the film, and this running joke culminates when Starla wakes up to see the two cuddling on the floor, arms around each other (Figure 5.11). Starla's startled and suspicious look as she sees them adds to the already fairly clear reading of these two girls as lesbian. Both the use of Starla's name-calling and the insinuation of lesbianism in Ashley and Tanner serve to distract from the possibility that Starla, and particularly that Starla and Genevieve, might be engaged in same-sex desire. Despite some intimate moments between the girls which approximate overly dramatic images which in conventional film performance style would lead to a kiss (Figure 5.12), this desire between Starla and Genevieve is never as 'obvious' as the flirting and cuddling between Ashley and Tanner, nor is the relationship between Ashley and Tanner ever named as lesbian. Lesbianism, therefore, is not an admissible option; it is used only as a threat, insult, or comedic effect.

Likewise, Hilary Faye's virulent homophobia in relation to Mary's ex-boyfriend seems to erase the possibility of homoerotic elements in her obsession with Mary, while Mary's reluctant acceptance of his gay identity forecloses the possibility that she might be repressing her own similar desires. Moreover, Mary's mother, sensing something amiss with her daughter, pre-empts the worst case scenario: 'Please tell me you're not a lesbian!' Again, lesbianism, and homosexuality more generally, is not a possibility for the protagonist, and is not admissible for the frenemy character. Only supporting characters can embody this possibility, and serve to displace attention to the obsessive investments present in the frenemy relationships. This is similar to the homophobic elements in the boys' film in the previous chapter, as well as the way that homophobia and homosexual supporting characters have been used in buddy films as outlined in the literature review.

Neither *Saved!* nor *Slap Her… She's French* address the homoerotic elements of the obsession between the frenemies as clearly as the films which follow in this chapter. However, they do quite clearly exist within the discourses which link aggression and insanity with same-sex obsessions. Starla and Hilary Faye both exhibit a descent into (a version of) madness, while Genevieve has been pathological all along, and all three display an ability and desire to harm

others, as well as an obsessive investment in homosocial relations. These relations are triangulated in order to frame the homosocial relations within heteronormativity, but the motives of the frenemies in these heterosexual triangles are actually mediated through their homosocial bonds. The visual differentiation between the frenemies and the protagonists aligns their relationships with heterosexuality, though the doubling and mirroring in both films also sets up the frenemy relationships as akin to narcissistic obsessive desire. Both films also use homophobia and name-calling to distract from and deny the homoeroticism and same-sex desires between the frenemies, erasing lesbianism as a possible scenario.

Becoming One An/Other: *Mean Girls* and *Thirteen*

Even more so than *Saved!* and *Slap Her… She's French*, doubling and becoming are major motifs in both *Mean Girls* and *Thirteen*. In both films, a new girl starts school and is immediately ostracised. Each takes opportunities to climb up the social ladder by identifying the primary and most popular teen girl in the homosocial group and befriending her. In the process, the new girl, who is the protagonist, takes on the traits and appearance of this other girl; in other words, she takes on the masquerade. In both cases, this involves a rapid feminisation and eroticisation of their wardrobe, encouraged by their new friend. Despite the visual and behavioural doubling, visual differentiation persists between the protagonist and the popular girl, who becomes the frenemy character. Though both frenemies engage in the obsession with each other which fuels the films, the frenemy is shown to be relatively more unstable, manipulative, and controlling, and is also unavailable for recuperation to more authentic femininities. Thus, though the two protagonists are implicated in their frenemy's behaviour and even take on her cruel tactics, the frenemy character remains the 'crazy' one at the narrative's conclusion. She ends the film unrepentant, while the protagonist is recuperated to respectable heterosexuality and a femininity which does not destabilise the naturalisation of the gender binary.

Further, these frenemy characters manipulate and harm others, including the protagonist, both in displays of power and, often, simply out of cruelty. Like the films in the previous section, the frenemy character attempts to control her peers and is associated primarily with homosociality. Also like the frenemies in the previous section, those in these two films are over-invested in homosocial

relationships and hierarchies. Again, the frenemy relationship here is triangulated, as each pair goes after the same boy – the protagonist presumably out of genuine interest, and the frenemy out of a desire to take the boy away from the protagonist. These films go further than those above with their use of homophobic accusations and denial, but the accusations are levelled *at each other* here, leading to an unstable representation of heteronormativity. Finally, though the desires of the protagonist are unpredictable throughout the film, she is, in the end, recuperated into heterosexuality and normative femininity, while the frenemy ends the film in some ambiguity.

In *Mean Girls*, Cady (Lindsay Lohan), who has been previously home-schooled, starts high school and enters into an agreement with her new, unpopular friends. That is, she agrees to join the Plastics, the school's elite girl clique, in order to uncover their secrets. As Cady grows closer to the clique's leader, Regina (Rachel McAdams), however, she becomes increasingly obsessed with her. Regina betrays Cady by taking back her ex-boyfriend and Cady's new crush, Aaron (Jonathan Bennett), and Cady swears revenge. With her unpopular friends, Cady undermines Regina's alleged sources of power, taking her friends' loyalty, her boyfriend, and her looks. Eventually Cady's plot is also revealed. *Thirteen* is a drama to *Mean Girls*' comedy, and is shot almost totally with handheld cameras in contrast to *Mean Girls*' sleek Hollywood style, though their stories share many features. Tracey (Evan Rachel Wood) starts seventh grade and finds that the social world in middle school is vastly different to her childhood experiences. She meets Evie (Nikki Reed), the 'hottest girl in school', and pursues a friendship with her. The two are quickly inseparable, with Evie practically and then actually moving in with Tracey and her single mother Melanie (Holly Hunter), who is also a recovering addict. Tracey emulates Evie's sexualised appearance and behaviour, and spirals into Evie's drug, sex, and delinquency-fuelled lifestyle. She begins to lose control, but is pulled back by Evie's betrayals and her mother's support.

Tracey and Cady each go through a make-over period, in which their appearance is altered to become more like the frenemy whom they emulate. Mirrors and doubling are important motifs through *Mean Girls*, signalling the work that goes into a feminine masquerade, and likewise marking the advance of the transformation of the protagonist. Here, the mirror is a visual motif, as scene after scene depicts the Plastics performing various work such as make up,

Figure 5.13: The Plastics (and Cady, centre) in front of various mirrors.

self-criticism, and admiration in front of the mirror (Figure 5.13). As Cady joins
the Plastics, she also begins a transformation as she takes on the feminine
masquerade of the clique; the Plastics actually have strict rules about what can
be worn by the girls and when. Regina sees Cady as a project and aids her
adoption of these rules. In *Thirteen*, Tracey mirrors Evie's costuming and look
increasingly precisely (Figures 5.14 and 5.15). In Tracey's case, she initiates this

Figure 5.14: Tracey and Evie mirroring each other in costume and positioning

Figure 5.15: Evie and Tracey mirrored again in dress and positioning

Figure 5.16: Tracey's less sexualised look at the beginning of the film

herself, trying to capture Evie's attention and admiration. Along the course of their transformations, both Tracey and Cady not only begin looking like their frenemies, but begin to act and speak like them. Tracey becomes increasingly hostile towards anyone who is not Evie, while Cady quickly learns the slang and word choices of the 'girl world' that Regina rules, adopting them to the point that she talks this way even to her 'real' friends. Both Cady and Tracey wear clothing which is much more sexualised and feminine than the clothing they wear in the beginning of their narratives (Figures 5.14-19); Regina and Evie are both 'the hottest girl' in their school, and Cady and Tracey quickly take up the secondary spot as the Mean Girl's shadow/double, even threatening to usurp them as Genevieve did in *Slap Her… She's French*.

Despite the mirroring of the feminine masquerade in these films, there remains visible differentiation between the frenemy and the protagonist. Regina has very blonde hair, which contrasts with Cady's red hair and freckled complexion (Figure 5.18). Evie has dark hair and tan skin, which is contrasted with Tracey's very pale skin and highlighted light brown hair (Figure 5.14). Neither Cady nor Tracey wears obvious make-up at the start of the film, but as they move through their transformations, their make-up gets heavier, until it becomes even more of a mask than either Regina or Evie wears. Further, both protagonists wear relatively gender-neutral clothing when they are introduced, which works as a contrast against the extremity of Evie and Regina's revealing clothing (Figures 5.14-19). Like Starla in *Slap Her… She's French*, as Regina loses her social power, she stops dressing as provocatively, choosing sweats and loose clothing rather than the tight shirts and short skirts which marked the height of her power; like Genevieve, as Cady gains social power, her outfits become more

sexualised and provocative, and these changes seem directly proportional to the her frenemy's loss of power.

Figure 5.17: Cady, far left, in more androgynous costuming at the start of the film

Figure 5.18: Cady, far left, begins to take on the rules of the Plastics. Regina, far right, has blonde hair which contrasts strikingly with Cady's red hair.

Figure 5.19: Cady's transformation into Plastic is complete

Both protagonists become deeply obsessed with their frenemy. This obsession is set up right at the beginning of both films, as both Evie and Regina are introduced in highly dramatic slow motion shots, in which they enter the film from the protagonist's point of view, but at a distance from the protagonist.

The scenes slow down to emphasise the power and prestige of each of the girls; significantly they are also introduced in the company of a homosocial group and alongside admiring boys. As the narratives develop, so do the protagonists' obsessive relationships with their frenemies. Cady's obsession is evident both in her voice-over and her behaviour. She explains that she couldn't stop talking about Regina, admitting 'I was a woman possessed. I spent about eighty percent of my time talking about Regina, and the other twenty percent I was praying for someone to bring her up so I could talk more about her.' Tracey's obsession seems full-blown from the very beginning of her friendship with Evie. In order to strike up this friendship, Tracey will not be deterred and is unrelenting in pursuing a relationship with Evie. She goes along with anything Evie is doing in order to win her approval. Evie, alternatively, manipulates Tracey's mother into empathising for her and taking care of her, distracting her from the dangerous behaviour she is introducing to Tracey.

Despite Tracey and Cady's emulation, Evie and Regina are the unrepentant aggressors in these films. Both girls border on sociopathic behaviour in their desire to control others through manipulation and in their willingness to harm others to get what they want. Their 'corruption' of the protagonists further incriminates them. Neither really sees the error of her ways, and it is not insinuated that either of these girls learns her lessons or alters her aggressive ways. Much like Genevieve, it is more likely that they move on to new victims. Evie deals drugs, and while staying at Tracey's, manages to hide her stash all around Tracey's room. When she feels Tracey slipping away from her, she turns Tracey in, claiming they are Tracey's drugs, and that Tracey is the bad influence and drug dealer. It is unclear whether she has hidden her drugs as investment in Tracey's loyalty, or out of simple necessity, but her willingness to betray her friend in order to punish her for pulling away from their friendship marks a cruelty that Tracey doesn't seem to possess. Regina, too, is ready to blame Cady for the 'Burn Book', which is actually her own creation, and which houses cruel commentary on the entire high school population, including rumours and gossip which lead to arrests and job losses. Evie and Regina's willingness to escalate the levels of betrayal is evidence of their desperate desire for the homosocial relationships they sense they are losing.

Both frenemy characters are primarily associated with homosocial hierarchies, and shots of them are most often framed to include other girls

(Figures 5.18-20). When Tracey first sees Evie she sees the response Evie gets from boys, but it is her ability to engage in the rules of the homosocial world that gets Evie's attention. Regina, too, is the head of the Plastics, and is firmly associated with 'girl world' via framing, plot, and Cady's voice-over (Figure 5.18). Regina makes the rules of 'girl world', and enforces them. She also ridicules those who are unable or unwilling to follow those rules. Within the frenemy relationships, both Evie and Regina are deeply invested in maintaining the interest of and control over the protagonists. They manipulate Tracey and Cady with lies, attention, and flattery, all of which, combined, allude to romantic undercurrents in their relationships.

Figure 5.20: Evie, centre, is introduced in a homosocial group

The homoerotics and homoromance in the frenemy relationships in *Mean Girls* and *Thirteen* are reinforced by the introduction of love triangles. Cady develops a crush on Regina's ex-boyfriend. Despite the Plastics' warning Cady that this boy is 'off-limits', Regina seems to encourage the relationship, only to take him back for herself. This is clearly a move intended to punish Cady for wanting Regina's ex-boyfriend. It is entirely for Cady's 'benefit' in learning the rules of 'girl world', and has nothing to do with Regina's feelings for the boy at all. Cady's reaction, in turn, is fury, but this is all directed at Regina. Whether she really feels the loss of the boy at all is unclear, because the reaction and emotions are all mediated through her relationship with Regina. In fact, she appears to be more upset that Regina is kissing someone else, rather than that the boy is. Since she clearly cannot have Regina, it is at this point that she decides to destroy her.

Tracey first gets a taste of Evie's manipulation in a minor hetero triangle when Evie pointedly sends her on an errand so that she can sneak off to hook up with a boy that Tracey has been seeing. It seems clear that she intended to get

caught, perhaps as proof that Evie does what she wants and Tracey must accept this. More likely, however, it is to show that their relationship, and Evie's power over Tracey, is more important than anything else that Tracey might want.

Figure 5.21: Cady, Aaron, and Regina triangulated in the frame. Regina and Cady look at each other, ignoring Aaron

Figure 5.22: Regina watches for Cady's reaction when Aaron kisses her

Figure 5.23: Tracey watches Evie as she kisses Javi

These triangles, and the mediation of heterosexual relations through the homosocial bonds of the frenemy relationship, are underlined by framing and editing. Many shots occur in which Cady, Aaron, and Regina are triangulated in the frame (Figure 5.21), and shot-reverse-shot editing suggests that Regina

watches for Cady's reaction when Aaron sits down and kisses her (Figure 5.22). Before Tracey hooks up with Javi (Charles Duckworth), who is later seduced by Evie as mentioned above, Tracey and Evie 'practice' kissing. The actions are rendered safe, however, as they are sandwiched between scenes of heterosexuality: Tracey gets off the phone with Javi, she and Evie kiss, and immediately afterward the two meet up with Javi and his friend to 'hook up'. This echoes the events in *Duck Season*, discussed in the previous chapter, in which Moko both shows and tells Flama how Rita has kissed him, trying to come to terms with his desires for Flama and his understanding of the preferable, because normative, nature of his interactions with Rita.

In the scene in which Evie and Tracey meet up with the boys, this experience is also mediated by the homosocial bond between the girls. As Tracey and Evie each start kissing the boys, Tracey watches Evie and mimics her actions (Figure 5.23). Evie watches Tracey, too. Though they are kissing boys, they are gazing at each other. Indeed, the scene is almost entirely made up of the girls looking at each other; there are few looks directly at the boys, and no shots from the boys' perspectives. The two end the night together, after the boys have gone home, against each other in the bed, discussing their evening. Though the kissing scene between Tracey and Evie is bookended by heterosexual motivations, the experience of heterosexuality remains mediated through the girls' relationship with each other.

Like the films discussed above, and the boys' films discussed in the previous chapter, *Mean Girls* and *Thirteen* both use homophobia and name-calling to distance themselves from the presence of lesbianism between the frenemies. During the kissing scene between Tracey and Evie, Evie, asks Tracey if she knows how to kiss. Tracey insists that she does, then asks 'you want me to prove it, lesbo?' Though Evie says no, the two do kiss, and Evie eggs Tracey on by claiming to have 'barely felt that', leading to more 'practice'. By using 'lesbian' as an instance of name-calling rather than identification, the two appear to be trying to safeguard against the full manifestation of their desires, their flirtations, and the possibilities inherent in their actions.

Cady's investigation of the Plastics is motivated by an old rivalry created between one of her unpopular friends, Janice (Lizzy Caplan), and Regina. The two used to be best friends, but when Regina started dating a boy, she claimed that Janice became 'obsessed' with her, and Regina spread rumours that the

other girl was a lesbian and had an obsessive crush on her. This was, apparently, enough to make a social pariah out of Janice, who has harboured her resentment ever since. This accusation structures the film; the pattern of behaviour described by Regina, as recounted here, is also the pattern for Regina and Cady's relationship. Further, when Cady has assimilated most fully into the Plastics, she turns around and accuses Janice of having a crush on her, too. By naming this pattern as lesbian but also defining lesbianism as a threat against 'normal' homosocial and heterosexual relationships, the film is both acknowledging and attempting to deny the homoerotic and homoromantic undercurrents of its narrative.

Throughout these narratives, Tracey and Cady's desires are unpredictable and hard to pin down. They are clearly fascinated by the charisma and manipulations of their frenemies, but also seem genuinely interested in boys, as well. This represents a different kind of threat to heteronormativity, though in these teen narratives, the conclusion of the films, and the recuperation of both Tracey and Cady into heteronormativity and family structures, indicates that they have survived their encounters with the sinister, violent, pathological, possibly lesbian frenemies. They have grown out of the homosocially obsessive 'phase' and into a wiser, more mature, and presumably hetero version of themselves. This is particularly the case in *Mean Girls*, as Cady reunites with Regina's ex-boyfriend at the film's close; even 'lesbian' Janice has found a boyfriend, another victory for heterosexuality. Tracey does not end the film in a relationship, but she does end it in her mother's arms, signalling a return to the family.

Both Evie and Regina are coded as cruel, manipulative, and back-stabbing. They are also presented as charismatic and fascinating, and Tracey and Cady easily fall under their spells, gradually becoming their doubles. The two protagonists are visually differentiated from their frenemies, even as they become more and more like their frenemies through their donning of the masquerade. Ultimately, Evie and Regina gain their power from their homosocial relationships, and in particular their relationships with Tracey and Cady; these friendships are mutually obsessive, but the fear of losing control leads Evie and Regina to betray the protagonists by blaming some of their own crimes on the other girls. The frenemy relationships develop into love triangles, which the frenemy characters manipulate in order to punish or control the protagonists,

rather than out of any interest in the boys in question. Finally, both films attempt to acknowledge and deny the homoerotics of the frenemy relationships, as the protagonists take off the masks and (re)embody 'authentic' heterosexual femininity, yet both fail to completely erase the lesbian spectres.

Needy Monsters: *Me Without You* and *Jennifer's Body*

Of all the films discussed in this chapter *Me Without You* and *Jennifer's Body* offer the clearest articulations of insanity and/or mental instability on the part of the frenemy character. The latter film is also the most physically violent, while the former shows the detrimental effects of the destructive frenemy relationship gone unchecked into adulthood. Indeed, these two films both exhibit the threat of the frenemy relationship in the long-term, and magnify the seductive charm and fascination of the frenemy character. The obsessive homosocial relationships still hold power over the frenemies and the protagonists, but the relationships are more set into patterns – not spiralling out of control as in the first set of films, nor only just beginning, as in the second set of films. This does not mean that the obsessive hold of the relationship is any less, indeed the hold seems stronger in these long-term relationships. Like the other films discussed in this chapter, and like the representations of violent women discussed in the literature review, there are doubling motifs as well as visible and introduced differentiations between the characters, which serve to mark the characters as 'the same' while also 'different' enough to account for their desire for one another within heteronormative boundaries.

Again, like the films and representations discussed in this chapter, romantic triangles crop up; in these films, as the relationships are longer term, more than one triangle is created, and this becomes a pattern of triangulation between the characters. One way in which these two films differ quite significantly from the others in this chapter, however, is that while the frenemy character dons a feminine masquerade, the protagonist is not allowed to – both try, but are never able to succeed in embodying the excessive femininity of their frenemy. There is also a lack of homophobic denial in these films – in fact any name calling serves to explain or acknowledge the relationships here, rather than to deny them. Even so, each character partakes in heterosexual relationships which perhaps serve as 'alibis' protecting the characters from being understood as lesbian.

Jennifer's Body is the only horror film discussed in this chapter (though *Thirteen* could be seen as a horror film for the parents who watch it). Jennifer's (Megan Fox) gruesome murders most explicitly links the frenemy character with physical aggression, rather than the more social aggression evidenced in the other films in this chapter. Jennifer has been made into a succubus by a local band who tried to sacrifice her to the devil in order to make it big. She gains a remarkable blood thirst, and starts eating local boys. There is a direct link here between Jennifer's violent murders and her sexuality, as she seduces each boy first, then kills him. Jennifer's killing of boys is also linked to her ability to uphold her feminine masquerade. Jennifer's best friend Needy (Amanda Seyfried) quickly figures out what is going on and is determined to stop her. Things get out of control, and Jennifer kills Needy's boyfriend Chip (Johnny Simmons). Needy vows revenge, finally killing Jennifer and taking on some of her powers in the process.

Me Without You is a drama which is centred on the claustrophobic relationship of two girls who grow up next to each other. This is the only film which follows the girls past their teen years and into adulthood, although as these girls have not managed to end or adapt their relationship, the two remain in a sort of immature limbo. They are inseparable, going to University together in Brighton, and moving to London together as adults. Significantly, *Brookside*'s Anna Friel plays Marina, the frenemy character.[55] The institutional ties and wider homosocial environment of this film are subdued, partially due to the longer timescale of the narrative, and partially due to the film's British origins. This film is one of the most destructive examples of frenemy relationships. Holly (Michelle Williams) is constantly held back by the highly feminised and sexualised Marina, who tries to keep Holly as close as possible and manipulates her into giving up relationships and opportunities so that they can stay together. It is not until the two are adults, and Holly has had several failed heterosexual relationships, that she finally realises she must end the destructive pattern of their relationship in order to embark on the mature heterosexual relationships she desires.

While the violence that Jennifer unleashes is a more obvious component of the film, Jennifer also partakes in the emotional and psychological violence typical of the kind of popular teen girl seen in characters like Starla and Regina.

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[55] Friel played a lesbian (and a murderer) in *Brookside*.

She uses her sexuality and looks to gain power over others and get what she wants, and this carries over into how she commits her brutal murders. Jennifer's version of monstrosity mocks the character type of the popular teen girl. When Needy, hoping for advice, tells her boyfriend 'Jennifer's evil,' and he nonchalantly replies, 'I know,' Needy has to repeat herself: 'No, I mean, she's actually evil, not high school evil.' Jennifer seems to only feast on teen boys, and as her violence is linked to her sexuality, she appears to be using or consuming boys as though they are disposable; her masquerade (Figures 5.24 and

Figure 5.24: Jennifer admires herself in the mirror just after feeding
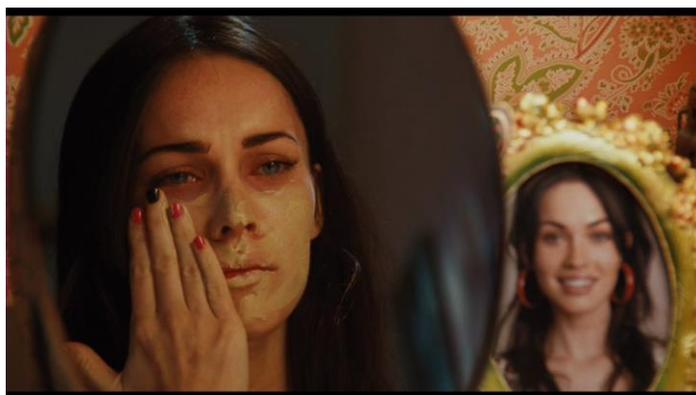
Figure 5.25: Jennifer tries to maintain the fading masquerade between feedings

5.25) begins to depend on her regular killing, as well; she begins to look tired, too-thin, and washed out unless she has made a recent kill. Jennifer is therefore literally using the boys to get what she wants and to maintain her power, rather than for any emotion or attraction she feels.

While Marina is socially and sexually aggressive throughout the film, she is particularly cruel to Holly when it comes to preventing or disrupting her heterosexual relationships. She lies to Holly their whole lives about her brother Nat's (Oliver Milburn) returned feelings for Holly. She is needy and demanding, and it appears that she becomes a burden in Holly's life rather than a friend; she

hounds Holly by calling over and over, convincing her to turn down opportunities, and undermining her other relationships often by sleeping with the men Holly has been involved with.

Though Jennifer consumes boys, she is consumed by her relationship with Needy. She makes an effort to claim all of Needy's attention, all the time, especially if Needy has plans with Chip. Needy returns this obsessive attention, and is frequently depicted watching Jennifer. In the opening scenes, Needy gazes dreamily at Jennifer, who is cheerleading. As Needy's narration informs the viewer that 'sandbox love never dies', a girl sitting behind Needy, witnessing Needy's infatuation with Jennifer, leans down to tell her that she is 'totally lesbigay.' Not only does the film present Needy and Jennifer as obsessed with each other, it acknowledges the homoerotic elements of this obsession – Needy and Jennifer don't deny them either, and in fact it emerges later that the two have had a sexual relationship in the past. Though *Me Without You* is not as open about the homoeroticism between Holly and Marina, the two are in an obsessive and consuming relationship. They are almost never separated from the time they are children, whether visually or narratively, and Marina desperately tries to control Holly via her relationships and the power their lifelong bond has over the other girl. Marina repeatedly tells Holly that everything will be fine so long as they have each other, telling her 'we're still us!'

As children, Holly and Marina are so close that they come up with a new name for themselves: Harina. This name signifies their attempts to meld together their identities, as well as the domination of Marina over Holly. Through their University years, the two mirror each other in style, with Holly the

Figure 5.26: Holly, left, does not take on the masquerade of excessive femininity which Marina, right, wears throughout the narrative.

Figure 5.27: Marina, left, manages to wear her bin bag in a slightly more flattering way than Holly, right

shadow of Marina's more glamorous femininity (Figure 5.26). Alongside this doubling, there are some significant markers of difference, both visually and as stated by the film. Marina is 'the pretty one', raised by her family to believe all she has is her looks, and she spends a portion of the film as a blonde (aside from this time, the physical features of the girls are remarkably similar). Holly is 'the smart one', raised by her family to think that she doesn't have the looks Marina does, but she can get by with her intellect. This means that Holly doesn't have the confidence in romantic and sexual relationships that Marina does, a fact which Marina takes advantage of when trying to keep Holly to herself. Holly does not successfully don the masquerade, as evidenced in several scenes which depict her costume as a less flattering version of what Marina wears (Figure 5.27). Holly is also raised Jewish, a fact certainly established as a differentiating factor within the film.

Jennifer and Needy are also doubled, as they frequently appear side by side in the frame, wearing similar colours in different shades (Figures 5.28 and 5.29).

Figure 5.28: Needy, left, wears a darker shade of the colour that Jennifer wears

Figure 5.29: Again, the girls wear similar colours, but Needy's version is darker

Jennifer is aggressive and mean where Needy is passive and sweet, so that, as a monster, Jennifer is Needy's repressed desires, returned to wreak havoc on their small town. Jennifer is Needy's dark double, her evil shadow. The visual differentiation between the two supports this, as Jennifer has dark hair and striking features, while Needy is blonde and has rather innocent features, 'hidden' in true teen film form, behind glasses and a ponytail (Figure 5.28). Needy's costuming is also more subdued and gender neutral, where Jennifer's is tight and revealing. Needy even says, at one point in the film, that she is not allowed to look cuter than Jennifer, and plans her outfits accordingly.

Jennifer and Needy are also linked almost telepathically. For instance, Needy knows when Jennifer has arrived to pick her up. One scene in particular, however, encapsulates the ways that Jennifer is both strangely linked to Needy and also operates as a disruption of Needy's relationship with Chip visually, aurally, and narratively. This scene cuts between Needy and Chip having sex and Jennifer seducing and killing a boy from their high school, Colin (Kyle Gallner). The scene begins with Needy and Chip in Chip's bedroom, as they start to kiss and undress. It then cuts to a nervous Colin, the victim, trying to find the house Jennifer has directed him to for their 'date.' Just before he finds her, there is a cut back to Chip and Needy, as they open a condom – choosing safety just as Colin wanders into danger. Initially, the music in the two scenes was different, but the music playing in Colin's car and then in Jennifer's house spills over so that it plays in the scenes with Chip and Needy too. The connection between Jennifer and Needy is so strong that Jennifer's words and actions are starting to spill over into Needy's consciousness. Though she doesn't seem to be able to actually see and hear word for word, she certainly gets visible and aural hints: Needy sees blood dripping from the ceiling in Chip's room, and then she sees the

ghostly presence of a previous victim of Jennifer's, and then finally she sees Jennifer's grinning demonic form. This scene develops the girls' strange connection to imply that Needy can somehow sense what Jennifer is doing elsewhere. The intercutting editing means that Jennifer has literally interrupted Chip and Needy's sex, pointing at the same time to the possibility that Needy and Jennifer are more intimately connected – Chip mistakes Needy's fear and panic for pleasure, while Needy barely realises he is there, once she has been distracted by Jennifer. Even so, both scenes come to what appears to be a climax, in which music blares while Jennifer feeds, and Needy gasps to a horrified finish. The alignment of the sexuality and violence in this segment, in addition to the indicated connection between Needy and Jennifer, underlines the way that Needy's feelings for Jennifer and their connection disrupt her heterosexual relationship, preventing her from fully engaging.

There are two main love triangles in both *Jennifer's Body* and *Me Without You*. In the former, Jennifer is set up in permanent competition with Chip for Needy's attention. She interrupts their heterosexual relationship on a number of levels and after trying to break them up, Jennifer eventually seduces and kills Chip, following which Needy kills Jennifer. Though occasionally seen in the framing of shots, the framing of this triangle actually seems to repress the visual of Needy, Chip, and Jennifer together. When Needy confronts Jennifer over killing Chip, the two girls interact in a shot-reverse-shot sequence until Chip, coming briefly back to life, impales Jennifer on a long stake. The framing, however, pushes Chip out of the frame to focus only on the two girls (Figures 5.30-2). Despite Chip's unsuccessful attempt to kill Jennifer in this segment, even the framing indicates how little he actually matters when it comes to the homosocial bond between Needy and Jennifer. The second triangle is less involved, and serves as more of a warning for Needy regarding Jennifer's newly found appetite. Colin, who Jennifer kills when Needy has the vision discussed above, has been lightly flirting with Needy, and it is only after witnessing this flirtation that Jennifer decides to kill him.

In *Me Without You*, the more significant love triangle, like the Needy-Chip-Jennifer triangle, is between Marina, Holly, and Marina's brother Nat. Marina first feels threatened by Holly and Nat's relationship when she witnesses the two having sex, when she and Holly are teenagers. From this point on, she endeavours to cause miscommunication between Holly and Nat so that they
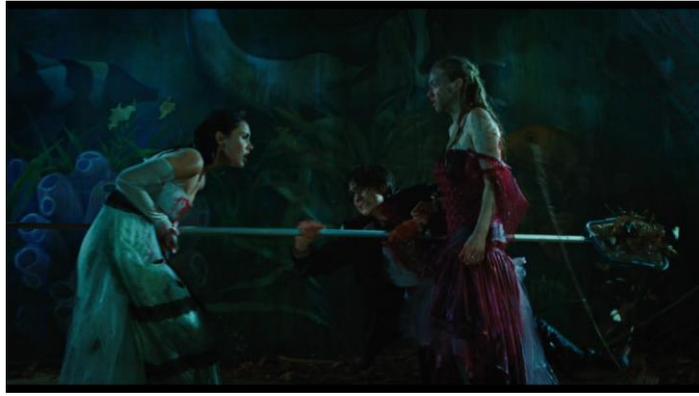
Figure 5.30: Chip impales Jennifer, and is centre frame, though behind Needy

Figure 5.31: The camera position moves to place Jennifer in front of Chip in the centre of the frame

Figure 5.32: After another cut, Chip has completely disappeared from the shot.

won't realise their mutual affection. She lies to both and keeps this going well into their adulthood. The second triangle is, again, not as emotionally charged; Holly is attracted to a professor at University, and she and Marina both begin relationships with him. Marina figures out that they are both sleeping with him (it is unclear as to whether she knew the whole time, though she appears to only be sleeping with him because of Holly's attraction to him) but she doesn't tell Holly, and instead uses the situation to her advantage, allowing Holly to see her

kissing the professor. The timing of this situation foils Holly and Nat's relationship once more, as well. As the two grow into adulthood, Holly seems to give up on choosing her own heterosexual partners, instead dating men that Marina picks out for her, and for whom she holds little affection. Both of these triangles are translated into the framing of shots which place the men in question between the Holly and Marina, while the separation of the two seems to become unbearable for Marina (Figure 5.33).

Figure 5.33: Holly and Marina are divided by their professor in the frame

Both films explicitly acknowledge the homoromance and homoeroticism in their narratives. These more explicit films, however, must more effectively destroy the bond which exists between the protagonist and her frenemy, and also emphasise the heterosexual attachments of the protagonist more heavily than the other films in this chapter. Both Marina and Jennifer are excessively feminine, and the destabilisation of naturalised gender roles inherent in the masquerade carries over into their relationship with Holly and Needy, respectively, as the two frenemy characters are both more aggressive than and more attached to the protagonist. Though Holly and Needy do frequently mirror Marina and Jennifer, they do not succeed in fully taking on the masquerade, remaining instead in a more subdued, more 'authentic' version of femininity. It is this authentic femininity which allows them to survive the relationship and to move on.

The frenemy and the protagonist in both films are involved in obsessive relationships with each other, and are both doubled, emphasising narcissistic obsession, and visually and explicitly differentiated from each other, in part here by the feminine masquerade of the frenemy, which serves to heterosexualise their relationship. Both films link the frenemy character's aggression and 'unnatural' homosocial attachments to lesbianism, or at least to

homoeroticism. This means that, despite the distinct possibility that these two films might be understood to depict lesbianised if not strictly lesbian relationships, the relationships depicted are disturbing versions of lesbianism, characterised as destructive, pathological, and even 'evil'.

Conclusion: Authentic Femininity, Frenemies, and the Price of Lesbian Visibility

This chapter has argued that representations of frenemy relationships are underpinned by the discourses which link aggression, criminality, pathology, and lesbianism. The aggressive frenemy character in particular is understood to be over-invested in homosocial relationships, and this over-investment is portrayed as a pathological attachment to the protagonist. In these films, though the two girls are narcissistically doubled, they are also visually distinguished from one another, which makes their desire for one another heteronormatively legible.

These films use similar tactics of denial found in the films about teen boys in the previous chapter of this thesis. In particular there is a widespread use of homophobic abuse in an attempt to displace the possibilities of homoromance and homoeroticism. Roz Kaveney echoes Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick when she argues that in films which are the product of a heteronormative society,

> social policing in general and the enforcement of heterosexual norms in particular are shown as directly linked to homosociality; the ambiguities of intense same-sex friendships are mediated through an aggressive refusal and rejection of explicit homosexuality. (2006, 57)

Antagonistic teen girls in these films gain power from homosocial relationships, and the displacement of homoeroticism via homophobia is one tool used to maintain that power. Similarly, the relationship between the protagonist and her frenemy is articulated through a triangular relationship between the two girls and a single boy. This boy is usually arbitrary, as the true emotional centre of the triangle's conflicts is about the girls' relationship to each other. The difference between the close friendships between teen girls discussed in this chapter, and those discussed in the last, is that these relationships contain elements of hatred, competition, jealousy, and resentment which co-exist with the close and obsessive friendship. The tools used to deal with homoerotic and homoromantic undercurrents in these antagonistic and obsessive relationships between girls have much in common with the tools used in the films about boys' relationships in the previous chapter.

The power dynamics between the two girls in these films are unbalanced, and this must be corrected if the protagonist is to grow out of the relationship, negotiate her use of the mask of femininity in order to find her more authentic self, and enable normal 'adult' or 'mature' heterosexuality. Authenticity, here, involves a more 'naturalised' femininity, which does not destabilise the gender via its excesses as the masquerade of the frenemy has done. This is a negotiation between the protagonist's 'true' self and the social norms which are required, as outlined by Rosalind Gill above, to capture and maintain the attention of boys without the threat of phallic power which the frenemy and her masquerade presents. Ultimately, the frenemies in these films are unrepentant, do not learn their 'lesson', cannot take off their masks, and are abandoned by the protagonists, who are then able to be recuperated into heterosexuality, normative femininity, and the family.

The previous chapter looked at fairly isolated 'best friend' relationships. This chapter has expanded on the work done on those relationships by addressing other kinds of relationships between teen girls, specifically antagonistic relationships within larger homosocial contexts. The chapter which follows will continue to build upon the ideas introduced in the previous chapter by turning to representations of teen boys within larger homosocial contexts.

Chapter 6 School Friends: Boys, Bodies, and Violence

> 'My girlfriend became my arch-enemy, my arch-enemy became my best friend, and my best friend became my girlfriend. But hey, that's high school!' Will Stronghold (Michael Angarano), *Sky High* (Mitchell 2005)

Where the films discussed in 'Best Friends' depicted best friend relationships which were more socially isolated, and the films in 'Frenemies' provide examples of girls' relationships within larger social groups, this chapter turns to films which depict relationships among teenage boys within larger social groupings. These groups are primarily homosocial; while all include at least one female character, she is eclipsed by the relationships between the boys in these films, serving only as a tool to threaten or strengthen those dyadic homosocial relationships. At the centre of each of the homosocial groups is one close friendship. This friendship is exposed to more serious threats than the female characters, most often in the form of other boys, and it is the queer possibilities created by the dynamic between the two boys in the primary friendship and among all the boys in the group which serves as the focus of this chapter.

The group of films chosen here also vary from those discussed in previous chapters because, with one exception, they are European productions. The teenagers in other chapters have most frequently been North American, but North America has provided few films between 2000 and 2009 about boys' homosocial groups which focus on the relationships between pairs of boys within the group. More frequently, these films attend to the relationship of the group to the larger community, or to the development of heterosexual relationships between boys in the group and girls outside the group. Of 28 films about groups of boys in the corpus, 18[56] are US productions, a proportion which is similar to the breakdown of the corpus as a whole.[57] These 28 films fit into a small number of settings categories: five are sports films and take place on the field and in

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[56] *Friday Night Lights* (Berg and Pate, 2004), *Lords of Dogtown* (Hardwicke, 2005), *Superbad* (Mottola, 2007), *Slackers* (Nicks, 2002), *Gridiron Gang* (Joanou, 2006), *The Covenant* (Harlin, 2006), *Napoleon Dynamite* (Hess, 2004), *Road Trip* (Phillips, 2000), *Dumb and Dumberer: When Harry Met Lloyd* (Miller, 2003), *Brick* (Johnson, 2005), *Drillbit Taylor* (Brill, 2008), *The Rocker* (Cattaneo, 2008), *Eurotrip* (Schaffer, 2004), *Liberty Heights* (Levinson, 1999), *Remember the Titans* (Yakin, 2000), *Twelve and Holding* (Cuesta, 2005), *The Wood* (Famuyiwa, 1999), and *L.I.E.* (Cuesta, 2000).

[57] 64.3% of the films about homosocial boys' groups are US productions, while 60.5% of the corpus as a whole is made up of US productions.

locker rooms, four are about home and families, three depict urban experiences, two are road films, and fourteen focus primarily on a school environment. As compared to the corpus as a whole, this is a high proportion of films set in schools, especially as roughly similar numbers took place in family contexts and outside of schools as did within schools among films in the larger corpus. Of the 28 films, only eight are comedies while the rest can be categorised as dramas. Again, as compared to the corpus as a whole, this means there are far more dramas, about twice the proportion as in the corpus as a whole. Further, there are proportionally far more sports films represented in this group than in the corpus more generally. The five films in this chapter focus on the institutional situations in which liminal teenage boys are moulded into adults, and so fall under the educational institution category with the exception of *Goodbye Charlie Bright*, which is a film which takes place 'outside the home' in an urban setting. The films in this chapter explore boys' relationships with each other within institutional homosocial environments. It is the enclosed and constricted nature of relationships within these institutional environments which provides these films the opportunity to focus on the dyadic homosocial dynamics, and which allow this chapter to pinpoint the queer moments and possibilities within these relationships.

Supporting this exploration of queer possibilities within representations of teen boys' relationships, the analysis in this chapter will refer to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's seminal arguments regarding the 'emerging pattern of male friendship, mentorship, entitlement, rivalry, and hetero- and homosexuality' (1985: 1) in modern social relations. It will also use more contemporary discussions of male homosociality as a framework for discussions of masculinity, violence and bullying, and the spectacle of the male 'teenage' body. In particular, the 'buddy film' literature discussed in Chapter 2 and analyses of violent and spectacular representations of men and men's dyadic homosocial relationships lend shape to the effacement (or lack thereof) of homoerotics within men's friendships.

The five films chosen for this chapter provide varied examples of male teen dyadic homosociality, and like the films about boys discussed in the 'Best Friends' chapter, all display at least some knowingness regarding the homoerotic undercurrents of those homosocial couples. After a brief contextualising discussion which builds on the work discussed regarding male homosociality in

the literature review, this chapter will be structured by two comparative sections discussing two films each, first *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (Newell, 2005) and *The Covenant* (Harlin, 2006), and second *Evil* (Håfström, 2003) and *Goodbye Charlie Bright* (Love, 2001), and a third section dedicated to a single film, *The History Boys* (Hynter, 2006).

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire is the film in the *Harry Potter* series which most aligns itself to the characters' liminal teenage-ness, including such teen film genre staples as a dance event. This alignment with the teen film genre allows for crushes and insecurities and a focus on the social context among the teenage characters. In *Goblet of Fire*, Harry and Ron's relationship is tested by the arrival of another teen boy at Hogwarts; unlike the other *Harry Potter* films, the boys' burgeoning feelings for others casts a new light on their own relationship. Lighting and costuming decisions, along with plot details, contribute to the possibility for queer desire in this period of their relationship. *The Covenant*, about a group of boys who paternally inherit supernatural powers, likewise presents a central dyadic homosocial friendship which is threatened by the introduction of a stranger. This film displays the male 'teenage' body in ways which serve to both sexualise these boys and to invoke an image of powerful masculinity in ways not totally dissimilar to the built bodies of 1980s and 1990s action films discussed by Yvonne Tasker (1993) and Chris Holmlund (1993a).

The boys in *Evil* must deal with the legacy of fascist violence in their boarding school. The central homosocial couple here is heterosexualised so that the main protagonist is a heroic, ideally Aryan, and muscular teen boy, while his best friend is feminised and intellectualised. The best friend is also, as in *The Goblet of Fire*, and *The Covenant*, understood to be the hero's weak spot, and this vulnerability is manipulated by the antagonists who seek to challenge the hero. *Goodbye Charlie Bright*, the one film taking place outside of the school environment, is contained within the world of the council estate, and likewise features boys trapped in a milieu of masculine violence. The primary group of boys is coming of age in a world of criminalised male power; it is as isolated and self-contained as the schools in the other films of this chapter. Like *The Covenant* and *The Goblet of Fire*, the central friendship is heterosexualised to some degree. The two primary characters are set up in a class-inflected hierarchy of masculinity, in which tropes of gender are invoked to describe the

power imbalance of their relationship. The choice the boys in this film must make is between the criminal world of men within the council estate and the more successful, though still probably criminal, world of men who have 'escaped' – a rare feat, as the film reiterates throughout.

Finally, this chapter will look at how dyadic homosociality among teenage boys in these four films are reflected and refracted in the rather differently focused *The History Boys*. Though this narrative, too, contains a best friend relationship, it is not the centre of the film. As an ensemble film, the centre is in fact difficult to point to, and it is this scattered focus, along with a lack of specifically heteronormative trajectory which makes *The History Boys* an interesting contrasting point to the other films in this chapter. Analysis of this film will therefore take a slightly different form, allowing for the ensemble form which is more thoroughly about the homosocial group rather than an individual couple within a homosocial world, yet still attends to the homoerotics of these homosocial relationships. In this way, while the model of masculinity embodied by the individual teen heroes of the other films is indicated as the 'preferred' version, in *The History Boys* no such singular ideal actually exists. Therefore, though each character does stand as a type, the group is able to present a more conflicted version of masculinity and sexuality than the other films in this chapter, while still providing queer possibilities and realities amongst the characters. Though less structured by the admission and then denial of the homoerotics of teen male friendships as seen in the other films in this chapter, *The History Boys* still shares the same concerns of a heterosexual future and the repression of homosexual desires.

The conclusion of this chapter will work through the points of intersection between these films, as well as what the differences can mean for representations of teenage male homosociality and homosocial desire. This last section will also draw preliminary comparisons between the findings of the 'Best Friends' and the 'Frenemies' chapters, in order to indicate some of the main themes that these chapters, which have focused on ostensibly heterocentric and heteronormative films, might have in common, and the ways they have differed. This will help set the thesis up for the final textual analysis chapter, which will look at how the patterns identified in these first three textual analysis chapters translate across representations of overtly gay and lesbian teen friendships.

Teen Male Homosociality: Contexts

The phrase 'male homosociality' is used to describe practices of male bonding which are often defined in part by their homophobia, so that homosociality and desire appear to oppose or deny each other's co-presence. It is for this reason that Eve Sedgwick argues that 'to draw the "homosocial" back into the orbit of "desire," of the potentially erotic, then is to hypothesize the potential unbrokenness of a continuum between homosocial and homosexual' (1985: 1). The term homosocial desire, here, refers to the potentially but not necessarily erotic bond between men in homosocial relationships. By hypothesising a continuum, Sedgwick argues that there is an always present possibility of slippage between platonic and erotic homosocial desires. Sedgwick further points out that in the English literature she analyses, this continuum is invisible, erased, or 'radically disrupted' (1985: 2). What I want to argue about the films in this chapter is that this continuum is actually made visible *before* being displaced or erased. This fits with the larger project of this thesis, which is to bring the 'unbrokenness' of teen homosocial continuums to light, and to point to slippages between homosociality and desire in presumably heteronormative and heteronormalising film narratives. This chapter will use three components of Sedgwick's analytical framework: first, the homosocial function of heterosexual desire; second, homophobia as a tool which controls male homosociality; and third, the relationship between these homosocial dynamics to patriarchal control over women and women's bodies and to gendered understandings of homosexual desire. These frameworks will help illuminate the ways that representations of male teenage dyadic homosociality interact with what Sedgwick has outlined as the 'emerging pattern of male friendship, mentorship, entitlement, rivalry, and hetero- and homosexuality' (1985: 1) in modern social discourses.

Furthermore, a model of homosocial bonding which involves hierarchies of masculinity, and which Sedgwick identifies as 'cuckolding' can be found in alternative form in the narratives discussed here. What Sedgwick describes are relationships which are '*necessarily* hierarchical in structure, with an "active" participant who is clearly in the ascendancy over the "passive" one' (50); specifically, 'the difference of power' most often 'occurs in the form of a difference of knowledge' (50). These homosocial relationships are enacted through a woman, whose position is both key to the success of the homosocial bonding and beside the point. In the films included in this chapter, the 'passive'

boy is indicated through visual signals as well as plot lines, personality differences, framing, and costuming so that this passivity is communicated through helplessness, lack of knowledge and/or power, and relative femininisation. The coincidence here of the activity/passivity power split described by Sedgwick and the historically gendered power of film representation and the gaze comes through quite clearly in the films discussed below; the relationships between the protagonist/antagonist and protagonist/best friend fit along the corresponding binaries of active/passive, dominant/submissive, masculine/feminine. In several of the films, there are actually multiple levels of this 'cuckoldry', so that the antagonist and protagonist engage in a vying back and forth for power, while the protagonist and his closest ally are in a more permanent hierarchical arrangement of activity and passivity. I would argue that this hierarchy of relative masculinity seeks to recuperate the protagonist's masculinity at the expense of the others in his group.

Though the films are not focused on athletics, there is an emphasis on physical activity in each film. Of the five films, four of them feature scenes in which one or more of the primary characters goes swimming. In both *Evil* and *The Covenant*, the main characters swim competitively, providing the opportunity for some of the more gratuitous shots of teenage boys' bodies, and a basis for comparisons of their muscularity. However, these are the only two films discussed in this chapter in which the characters engage in competitive sport. Harry Potter swims in a competition in *Goblet of Fire*, but the aim is to save the life of another, rather than to compete in swimming as a sport; while Harry Potter also famously plays the wizarding sport 'quidditch', this is not included in *The Goblet of Fire*. Swimming's individual (and non-contact) nature, as well as its nearly-naked uniform, means that the success the boys achieve in the water simultaneously marks their physical abilities, their physical power, and their physical appearance in particular ways. It also presents ample, and sanctioned, opportunity for the boys' bodies to be displayed at length.

Single-sex boarding schools and British public schools have frequently been associated with homosexual activity as a matter of course (though this depends on whose memories are recounted), which makes sense given that a cloistered group of teenagers passing through puberty and working through the liminal space of teenage-ness had little access to any other teens, male or female.

Evidence of these activities, regardless of the ensuing identities, has been well established, particularly by Alisdare Hickson in *The Poisoned Bowl* (1995). Half historical (based on letters, books, memoirs and other histories) and half testimonial (based on interviews and qualitative research), Hickson's book establishes both the existence of homoeroticism and homosexual activities in these single-sex environments as well as the anxious denial or repression of non-heteronormative practices. Though the films in this chapter, with the exception of *Evil*, do not depict strictly single-sex environments, they do either closely resemble the single-sex school, present single-sex living accommodation, or focus on the homosocial group to the exclusion of almost any others.

The isolated homosocial environment socially secludes the characters and excuses the exclusion of family and wider communities. This isolation also aligns these narratives with homoeroticism and homosexuality. Justin Wyatt has argued that 'gay people's alienation from heterosexual society and, often, from family leads us to replace biological/blood family with families we choose or create' (2001: 54), and that 'the role of friendship in this process is, of course, central' (54). Boarding school films mimic this loss of family, so that the boys are isolated with only each other for company. Although *Goodbye Charlie Bright* takes place within a larger community, there remains a sense of isolation on the estate and the boys search for alternative figures in the social world to replace distracted or missing parents. In these films, friendships are the primary relationships for the boys, with family members either unavailable or out of the picture entirely.

Out of the isolation of the school and/or council estate environment of these films, then, comes a social order which is, for the most part, envisioned and enacted by the boys and their peers. As these films are concerned with images and ideas of masculinity, the social orders in these films invest in values such as competition, violence, bullying/enforcement of social order, performance, and ability – the masculine teen heroes are tested against each other to prove their virility and their worthiness for their encroaching adulthood. Each of the heroes must compete in a battle or competition of some sort, whether violent or not – and in some cases, this is linked to (but *not* reliant on, as in the high school football or sports film) athletic performance – in order to prove themselves. While Timothy Shary argues regarding the high school sports film that 'the symbolism of athletic victory signif[ies] the ultimate masculine

achievement' (Shary 2002: 77), this is only one element of the construction of masculinity in the films in this chapter. Rather, in all but one film, the ultimate performance ends in a dangerous confrontation, in which the hero risks death.[58] Only *The History Boys* removes the violence from the final and climactic fight, as it is engaged with intellectual and academic ability, rather than physicality and violence. The overwhelming links between masculinity and violence echo the arguments laid out in the 'Frenemies' chapter, in which it was argued that violence and aggression enacted by women is linked to non-normative femininity, because these traits are so instinctively socially connected with masculinity.

Boy Wizards: Magical and Homosocial Power in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* and *The Covenant*

A Harry Potter film may seem like an odd choice for this chapter, as the series primarily depicts heterosocial child/teen groupings at the co-educational Hogwarts School. *Goblet of Fire*, however, works quite differently from other films in the franchise, in that it seems to represent the most liminal and specifically teenaged period of the characters' teen years. The film is almost entirely set within the confines of Hogwarts,[59] unlike the others in the franchise, and focuses on the social workings of the school, even providing comparisons between this social world and those present in other wizarding schools. Further, this is the film in which the possibility of heterosexual romance for all three primary characters is introduced for the first time. The analysis in this section insists that this film also raises the spectre of homosocial desire between Harry and Ron in order to lay this potentiality to rest by the film's conclusion. This queer spectre is raised by visually differentiating the two boys through costuming, editing, and framing, by the insistence on a hierarchy of masculinity, as well as by creating an emotionally charged rift between the two which must be healed via laying bare feelings usually kept hidden.

Unlike *Goblet of Fire*, *The Covenant* features an almost exclusively homosocial group of boys. If Hermione in *Goblet of Fire* is a primary if side-lined character, *The Covenant* gives even less importance and screen time to female

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[58] All the films in this chapter save *Evil* end in the death or presumed death of another male character, who dies to emphasise the hero's survival.

[59] Aside from its opening scenes at the Quidditch World Cup

characters; the three it does contain are the main character's mother and his new girlfriend, and his best friend's girlfriend. Otherwise, this film is strictly about a central group of four boys and their wrestling for dominance with other male characters. The Sons of Ipswich (Figure 6.1), as the main group is called,
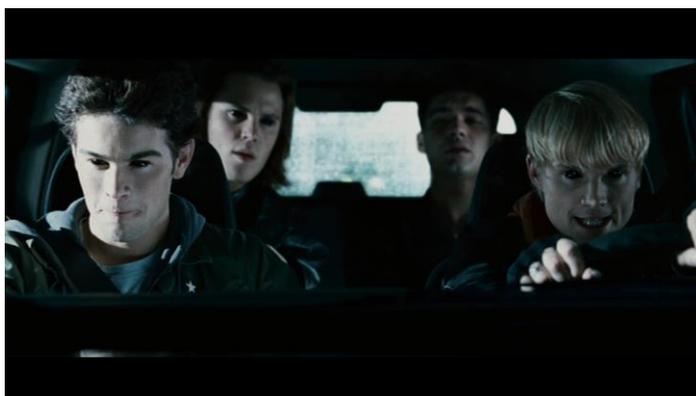
Figure 6.1 - The Sons of Ipswich: Tyler (Chace Crawford), far left; Pogue (Taylor Kitsch), centre left; Caleb (Steven Strait), centre right; and Reid (Toby Hemingway), far right.

are the inheritors of magical powers which have passed down the patriarchal line for generations. Already separated as an elite group of friends attending an exclusive New England boarding school, their inherited 'difference' promises even more power than they already had as upper class white straight males. The antagonist Chase (Sebastian Stan), introduced as a potential friend in the first scene, has, unbeknownst to them, also inherited powers from an unknown father – he is one of them yet isn't, and his intensity and difference is played out via increasingly homoerotic threats as he purposefully grows close to the boys in order to steal their power. In the moments following the revelation of his true intentions, Chase takes on the appearance of the primary character, and confronts him with his own likeness. As the identity of the threat is revealed, Chase kisses the hero before leaving. Danger, insanity, and narcissism here are bound to homoeroticism and homosexuality in the figure of Chase. His disregard for acceptable behaviours links the physical threat he presents with the threat of sexual desire entering the homosocial space.

Visual differentiation works in both films to set up the hierarchy of masculinity, as well as to heterosexualise the relationship between the protagonist and his best friend. The three primary characters of the *Harry Potter* franchise have quite distinctive visual features throughout the series (Figure 6.2). Harry Potter (Daniel Radcliffe) has dark hair and round Lennon-esque

Figure 6.2 - Visual differentiation between Hermione (Emma Watson), left, Ron (Rupert Grint), centre, and Harry (Daniel Radcliffe), right, primarily through hair and grooming, given the similarity of their school uniforms in this image.

spectacles, along with a famous lightning-shaped scar on his forehead. Ron Weasley (Rupert Grint) is tall with ginger hair, and Hermione Granger (Emma Watson) is not only the primary female character, but also has characteristic long, curly, light brown hair which sets her apart from other girls at Hogwarts. Beyond these individual character markers, however, there are differentiations between Ron and Harry in *Goblet of Fire* which are not present in the rest of the franchise, and which contribute to the articulation of homosocial desire in the narrative.

Though the costuming throughout the film features longer, shaggier hair on many male characters than in previous franchise instalments (these styles are changed again in the following films), Ron's hair is certainly the longest, and its wispy, feathered waves which fall over his eyes and well past his neck lend an immediate femininity to his appearance. This is intensified by comparison to Harry's unkempt though still shaggy hair, which, though also long, manages to maintain a more boyish disregard for appearance than Ron's, which tends to appear well groomed (see Figure 6.3). In several scenes, elaborated below, Ron
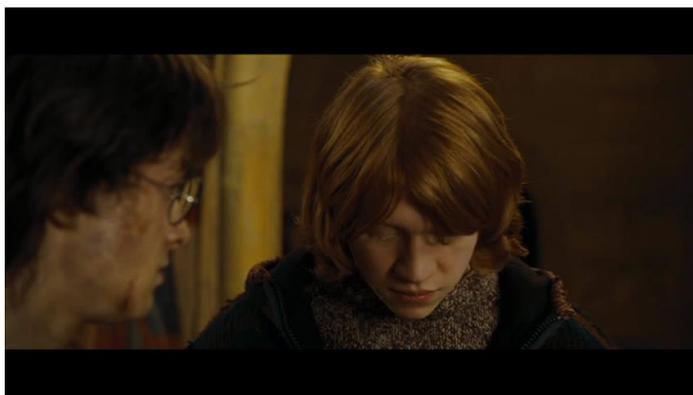
Figure 6.3 - Harry, left, is smeared with dirt and has disshevelled hair, particularly in comparison with Ron, right, whose hair shines in the light.

watches Harry through his fringe, and softer lighting causes his hair to shine where Harry's stays out of his eyes and soaks up light, helping it to avoid the feminising luminosity of Ron's. These differences seem to make meaning primarily through their comparison, particularly in close up shot reverse-shot sequences, which frame the boys' faces and hair (again, Figure 6.3).

Part of *Goblet of Fire*'s generic alignment with teen films is the presence of a school dance. For this dance, Ron and Harry have extremely divergent costuming. One of the ongoing character traits of Ron and his family is their thrifty lower middle class-ness, which often results in Ron wearing hand-me-down clothes and receiving odd gifts from his parents. To his ultimate embarrassment, Ron is sent a dress gown for the ball which is very old fashioned. It is embellished with frills and lace, unlike the more clean-lined dress gowns of the other boys (Figure 6.4). This costuming serves to accentuate both Ron's lack of class power and his relative femininity – though the gown is technically an old fashioned men's design, its decoration is fussy and detailed and is more in line with feminine clothing styles.

Figure 6.4 - Ron's dress gown, centre left, displays the frills and lace of an earlier tradition of masculinity, which now appears to be both shabby and more feminine than Harry's dress, centre right, which has more in common with contemporary masculine fashions.

In fact, Ron's association with his family also emphasises the differences between the two boys. Ron's large, close family is a constant throughout the series, and in the year depicted in *Goblet of Fire*, three of Ron's siblings also attend Hogwarts. Harry, on the other hand, is an orphan, and is most famous for his parents' death and his survival of the attack which killed them. Harry's remaining family are emotionally and physically abusive, and he therefore often takes refuge with the kind Weasleys in their family home. Visually, members of

Ron's family are distinctive due to their universal red hair, a unique feature among characters in the Harry Potter films.

Finally, Harry is frequently shown dirty, sweaty, and dishevelled, which strongly contrasts with Ron's illuminated, groomed softness (Figure 6.3). As Harry is the 'hero' here, particularly in this story, he is most frequently fighting dragons, saving lives, and arguing for his own integrity. This translates into costuming and make-up which suggests or gives evidence of his trials and activities, in fact his activeness. Ron, on the other hand, is primarily on the side-lines of this narrative, providing an emotional obstacle and, as comes to light as the narrative unfolds, helping Harry from behind the scenes. Ron is brought in as a prop in one of Harry's tasks for the Triwizard Tournament, and even for this, he is unconscious and bound underwater, waiting for Harry to save him. It should be reiterated that Ron's 'femininity' is established both visually and narratively, but is actually a marker of relative masculinities, comparisons of which are played out across gender and class lines in this film. In other words, in order to indicate Ron's relatively less powerful masculinity and Harry's more powerful masculinity, Ron is shown to be comparatively both feminine and lower middle class.

Harry is not the only powerful male against whom Ron is contrasted. Victor Krum, a competitor in the Triwizard Tournament from a generically Eastern European wizarding school, is a famous quidditch player, already playing professionally, as well as a tall, powerfully built older student. The competition for both Harry's and Hermione's attentions that Krum represents is too much for Ron; he quickly shifts from quidditch-related admiration to resentment and strong dislike. Krum is introduced in the first few minutes of the film at the Quidditch World Cup, in his role as professional athlete, his face on the large stadium screen accompanied by thunderous applause. In sharp contrast to both Harry and Ron, his hair is drastically shorn, and his stern features have none of the childishness or boyishness that Ron and Harry still have. When he enters as a potential competitor for his wizarding school, he enters the dining hall shot from a low angle, emphasizing his power and importance, and symbolising the admiration and fame he has already gained from the students at Hogwarts.

Reverse shots show the students of Hogwarts, particularly Ron, watching admiringly, as Krum is a hero both in sport and now possibly in wizarding challenges. Hermione also watches Krum in this scene, and he returns her gaze,

implying the attraction which he will act on throughout the film, to Ron's dismay. As the primary female character, Hermione has been associated with tomboyish looks and behaviour up to this point in the series. In fact, Hermione only 'comes out' as a girl for the first time in *Goblet of Fire,* when she attends the ball with Krum – for this she wears her hair up, puts on some make-up, and finds a dress, and the film takes advantage of this dramatic make-over, using editing and framing to emphasise her entrance (Figure 6.5). The make-over of a

Figure 6.5 - Hermione enters the ball having undergone the dramatic feminine make-over, a common trope in teen films.

tomboyish and/or nerdy teen girl is a common trope particularly in teen films. Though her relationship with Ron and Harry is not at this point a triangulated one, in which both boys are romantically involved with her to reinforce their own homosocial bonds,[60] she does act in *Goblet of Fire* as an intermediary during their emotional rift and as a commentator on their reunion.

Initially caused by Ron's sense of betrayal when Harry's name emerges from the magic hat which chooses the competitors in the Triwizard Tournament, the fight between Ron and Harry grows because of a series of miscommunications and the boys' mutual refusal to discuss their issues with each other. Their inability to communicate with each other is presented as stubborn masculine refusal of emotions, but this assertion is troubled by the melodramatic and emotional reunion. This scene perfectly captures both the visual differentiation of Ron and Harry, particularly along gender lines, as well as the differentiation in the power dynamics of their interactions. Ron's lustrous hair is particularly well groomed in this scene, while Harry has just finished

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[60] This triangulation does occur between Ron, Hermione, and Harry, but not until the first installment of the final (two part) film, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 1* (David Yates 2010).

fighting a dragon and is dirty and dishevelled. Harry is at the centre of a cheering crowd, held aloft by Ron's brothers (Figure 6.6), while Ron stands

Figure 6.6 - Harry, centre, is held up by Ron's older brothers in the centre of a crowd of cheering students. He is seen from the position of the crowd.

awkwardly at the doorway, on the margins, shot from the perspective of the crowd's centre, interrupting the celebratory mood. The scene up to Ron's arrival is shot from the perspective of the crowd which surrounds Harry, with occasional shots from Harry's perspective as well. When Ron arrives, the scene is shot from over Ron's shoulders as he looks on, taking in the whole scene of Harry's celebration. The camera then returns to the position of the crowd, clearly placing Ron outside of the group, and medium shot reverse-shots of Ron and Harry track Ron's hesitant entry into the room (Figure 6.7). During their
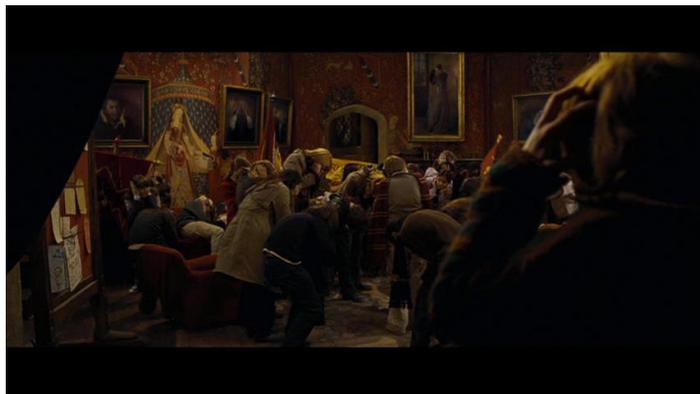
Figure 6.7 - Ron, foreground right, enters the room as an outsider, looking in on the crowd around Harry.

interaction, Ron's eyes are constantly averted from Harry's, only occasionally looking up to gauge Harry's reactions (Figure 6.8).

As Ron explains to Harry in this scene, their rift has all been a misunderstanding – while Harry thought that Ron had abandoned him out of resentment and jealousy, Ron had actually been secretly helping him during the tournament because, even though Ron was upset with Harry, he still cared about

Figure 6.8 - Ron, right, looks up at Harry, left, from under his hair, taking one of several glances at Harry as he avoids a direct gaze.

him. The confusion and embarrassment between the two boys, as well as the insistence that the rift is based on miscommunication rather than any dislike for each other, reinforces the intense emotional bond between the boys. The manner in which the two boys interact likewise reinforces the power dynamic between them, as Ron's appearance and shy gestures present him as submissive to Harry's forgiveness and his heroic masculinity. The scene is sealed by Hermione's exasperated expression as she witnesses the entire exchange, and writes off the intensity of the emotions under the surface of the scene with a flippant, dismissive, and slightly condescending, 'Boys!' This one statement, and the nodding agreement of another neighbouring female schoolmate relegates the exchange to what is considered 'normal' or 'normative' expressions of masculinity, namely the inability to communicate feelings; the statement also attempts to recover the heteronormativity of the narrative by restricting the homosocial bond between Ron and Harry to heteronormative homosociality.

This attempt becomes overstated, however, given that the scene is immediately followed by one that introduces the character Cho, and her apparently returned interest in Harry. This interest is fleetingly represented in several shots depicting Cho gazing at Harry, and Harry's awkward responses to her gaze – there is little actual interaction. In the scene which follows Harry and Ron's reunion, the two boys are in the dining hall when Harry notices Cho looking at him. There is little to the scene beyond a simple shot reverse-shot structure which shows Cho looking at Harry, his response (he spits out his drink in an attempt to smile), and then a close up of her still smiling at him. The traditional structure of the exchanged gazes here unquestionably establishes a heterosexual romantic possibility between the two, and simultaneously contains

and denies the homosocial desire between Ron and Harry which was depicted just before.

Visual differentiation in *The Covenant* is very similar to the Harry/Ron dynamic. The primary character, Caleb (Steven Strait), and his best friend, Pogue (Taylor Kitsch), both have female love interests, but Pogue is feminised in relation to Caleb, and the two are frequently seen together. Both are also highly sexualised and objectified in ways that Ron and Harry definitely are not, with their chests on display through much of the film. In contrast with Caleb, then, are his friend and constant companion Pogue, and his friend turned enemy Chase. Both Pogue and Chase also display built bodies, but their hetero-masculinity in relation to Caleb's is far less stable. Pogue has long hair which often wisps around his face (Figure 6.9), and he is always shown in far more revealing costuming, so that his body is even more on display than those of the other boys. Despite the power connoted by his muscles, Pogue does not involve himself in the fights and violence between Caleb and Chase. He seems generally uninterested in his girlfriend, Kate, except when he feels threatened or she has been threatened.

Figure 6.9 - Pogue's appearance, including his long hair, and his relationship with Caleb both place him in a subordinate and relatively feminine position.

Chase's interest in Caleb and his friends is from the beginning flirtatious, but it is at first unclear what his motives might be; after it becomes clear that he is the antagonist, his flirtations are increasingly overt and sinister. His appearance does little to feminise him, as Pogue's does, but his actions increasingly link his threat to that of sexual desire within the homosocial group.

Within the context of Sedgwick's ideas regarding the hierarchy of power and knowledge in homosocial groups and relationships, Caleb is certainly the most powerful of his friends, and acts as the leader. As such, the other boys wait for him before doing anything. It is Caleb who 'gets' the 'new girl', and who will

'ascend' and gain his full powers first. He frequently walks ahead of the others, and always involves himself during any altercation. The school's provost calls Caleb alone to the office to question the activities of the group. Caleb has the most magical power of his friends, but also displays the most control over their use and the 'seductive' draw of using them which has destroyed his own father and driven Chase over the edge.

These issues are crystallised in a pair of consecutive scenes from around the middle of the film. Caleb and Pogue enter the pool area, wearing swimming trunks that leave little to the imagination – this emphasises the display of these highly sculpted, built and waxed bodies, especially when compared to the girls' swimsuits in the background, which are fairly modest (Figure 6.10). Pogue avoids

Figure 6.10 - Caleb and Pogue enter the pool area.

Figure 6.11 - The camera in The Covenant lingers on the bodies of, from left to right, Reid, Tyler, Pogue, and Caleb as they size up the swimming competition.

the gaze of the viewer, looking off-screen as if looking at something, then turning forward. He walks behind Caleb, emphasising Caleb's dominance in the relationship. Caleb scans the room and then looks forward. He acknowledges the presence of the other two sons of Ipswich, and as he reaches them, Pogue and the two others all turn to look at him, watching, while he stretches his muscles

and looks off-screen as though disinterested, their gaze then follows his (Figure 6.11). When Reid (Toby Hemingway) finally tries to speak to the reticent Caleb, Pogue teases the friend by touching him and reminding him of the results of a recent bar fight – the friend was thrown into a pile of bottles by Caleb's superior strength and powers. Again, this highlights Caleb's masculinity by calling attention to his physical strength as well as his social power – his motives are unquestionable, and he holds his friends in his thrall.

The film immediately cuts to further scenes of nude and nearly nude teenage boys, located in the boys' locker room, a frequent locus for erotic looking and suppressed desires in teen films. The camera follows Reid as he walks through the showers and into the locker area, flirting with Tyler (Chace Crawford), who tells him to 'towel-up' in an attempt to censor his homoerotic antics. As he passes Chase Collins, the camera switches to follow Chase, who is confronted for looking at a classmate. The other boy's reaction to Chase's gaze invokes Sedgwick's homosexual panic and homophobic blackmail in his attempts to police Chase's gaze. Chase appears to enjoy the physicality of the confrontation with the other boy, sneering slightly as the boy pins him against the locker. He waits until Caleb has appeared around the corner before he retaliates by easily twisting the boy around and punching him – this appears to be mainly for Caleb's benefit. Chase's response to the boy's homophobic attack is to tease him, by acknowledging that he *was* looking at his penis, and reminding him that 'size isn't everything'.

Figure 6.12 - Pogue watches on as Caleb and Chase leave together.

Caleb's approval of Chase's actions comes after this last comment; his use of the phrase 'my man' while grasping Chase's hand to gesture to his admiration is slightly ambiguous, as he could be reaffirming Chase's masculinity after Chase has shown himself to be impervious to homophobic policing, or he could be

responding to the homoerotics of Chase's acknowledgement that his gaze was in fact directed at the other boy's penis. Chase and Caleb then make plans to play some foosball in celebration of their bond. Chase invites Pogue, who has stood watching this whole time – Pogue declines, and gazes after the two boys as they leave (Figure 6.12). The film cuts to some establishing shots of the school, and then to Pogue forbidding his girlfriend Kate from seeing Chase or hanging out with him. There is little explanation for his desire to prohibit Kate from spending time with Chase except for the previous scene, which didn't include Kate. It seems that Pogue's feelings of jealousy about Chase's relationship with Caleb are displaced onto a relationship in which he is the dominant partner. He is passive and feminised in relation to Caleb, and seeks to reaffirm his masculinity in his relationship with Kate. Her confused response verifies that this has little to do with her – when he states, sarcastically, that he is sure that Chase is 'interested in just being friends', he is talking about Chase's interest in Caleb, not Kate.

Both Ron and Pogue are put in the feminised position of a victim chosen to manipulate the hero's feelings. In *Goblet of Fire*, during another trial of the Triwizard Tournament, the competitors, Harry, Victor Krum, Cedric Diggory, and Fleur Delacour, must rescue something precious to them. As Hermione has begun seeing Krum, she is chosen as his precious thing, while, as Cho has begun seeing Cedric, she is his. Fleur's younger sister is also chosen. The choice of two romantic partners sheds an interesting light on the choice of Ron as Harry's precious person. First, it implies that, unlike the older Krum and Cedric, neither Ron nor Harry has matured beyond homosocial attachments in order to form normative heterosexual relationships. However, this point is understated so that, second, this aligns Harry and Ron's relationship with the romantic partnerships of Hermione and Krum and Cho and Cedric. The image of Ron bound underwater along with Cho, Hermione, and Fleur's little sister also aligns his physicality with the femininity of the other three – his long hair also undulates in the water, and his gender is visually indistinguishable from the other three. This means that Harry's heroic saving of Ron and Fleur's younger sister places Ron in the position of a more or less helpless victim, the passive feminine to Harry's active masculine.

By the time of the next film *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (David Yates 2007), the series' narrative has moved on from Ron and Harry's

intense and emotional friendship, downplaying their relationship in order to focus on Harry's relationship with his godfather Sirius and his enemy Voldemort as well as his renewed relationship with Cho, alongside Ron's increasingly romantic relationship with Hermione. In this later film, Hermione is placed firmly between them. However, in *Goblet of Fire*, the effectively pre-heterosexual relationship between Harry and Ron takes precedence, providing the emotional core of the film and the conflicts to be resolved.

In *The Covenant*, as Chase's intentions emerge, Pogue takes a similar position to Ron's. Chase targets an attack at Pogue in order to get to Caleb. Just as Ron is used as bait for one of Harry's tests in the *Goblet of Fire*, Pogue is chosen as Caleb's closest emotional bond when Chase wants to ensure that Caleb responds to Chase's threats. Chase's homoerotic threat toward Caleb and his friends is manifested quite clearly when Chase finally tells Caleb what he's after. He wants Caleb's power, and in explaining this to Caleb he flirts, leering at him and finally kissing him on the mouth before leaving him to mull over his demands (Figure 6.13). This scene is repeated in the final confrontation, when
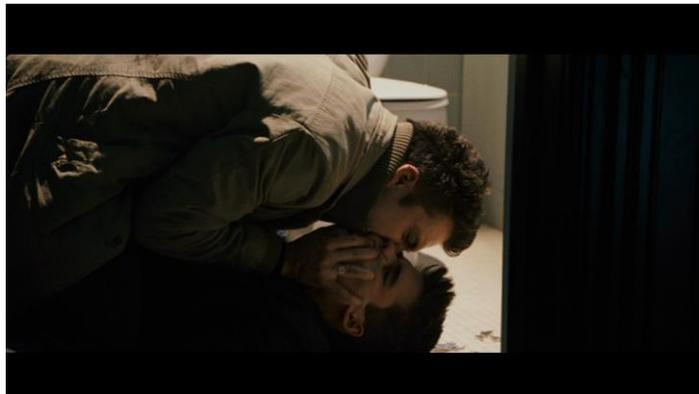
Figure 6.13 - Chase kisses Caleb after revealing his true motivations.

Caleb declines to give Chase his power, refusing to submit to Chase's desires. As the antagonist, Chase's blatant use of homoerotic gestures signals that ultimately, homosexuality is *not* an acceptable outlet for the homosocial desire between the sons of Ipswich – he is out of control, unable to fight his desires to use the 'seductive' powers to which only he and the other sons of Ipswich are privy, therefore threatening to bring sexual desire into the homosocial space. Caleb is repeatedly portrayed as the most powerful of the boys, and likewise the most in control of his power – his refusals of Chase's demands and his ultimate superiority over him (via the patriarchal sanctioning of his father) reaffirm the film's denial of the abundant homosocial desires it has let slip.

In both *The Goblet of Fire* and *The Covenant*, a hierarchy of masculinity is set up between the hero and his best friend, so that in relation to the hero, the best friend is feminised both visually and narratively, particularly in terms of his needing to be saved by the hero in both cases. This heterosexualised bond, then, opens the possibility of queer desires between the teen boys; both films work to deny these possibilities via heterosexual denial and displacement.

Violence, Criminality, and Golden Boys: *Goodbye Charlie Bright* and *Evil*

Unlike the other films in this chapter which are set in schools, *Goodbye Charlie Bright* is a British film set on a London estate. The film's homosocial group, however, is isolated on the estate just as effectively as the boys in schools, and the concerns are quite similar in terms of masculinity, teenage-ness, and the negotiation of the liminal homosocial/heterosexual borders. The issues at stake are different in that the film is quite clearly interested in the class and specific location of its characters, as opposed to the generally middle and upper-middle class associations with educational institutions in the other films here, and the scattered origins of the students at these schools. However, class mobility – its possibilities and impossibilities – remain primary concerns across these narratives of masculine formation. Like *Goblet of Fire* and *The Covenant*, there is a primary friendship within the homosocial group which the film focuses on. The relationship is structured so that the main character, the titular Charlie Bright (Paul Nicholls), holds more social power, as well as more power within the relationship, than his best friend Justin (Roland Manookian). Also like the two films discussed above, this is established in the narrative visually and through the plot and script. The homoerotics of this relationship are both recognised and homophobically mocked in the film; homophobic policing arises twice in the film, in an apparent attempt to contain Charlie and Justin's relationship within the homosocial. The film's emotional and narrative climax occurs after a party when the two friends engage in a physical altercation on their way home, and the conclusion ambiguously separates the friends, proscribing any future they might have together.

Though set in 1950s Sweden, *Evil* (Mikael Håfström 2003), like *Goblet of Fire* and *The Covenant*, is set in a boarding school, and like these two and *Goodbye Charlie Bright*, poses a male homosocial couple within a larger

homosocial milieu. Also like these films, the two boys who form the primary relationship are visually and narratively differentiated in order to situate them along the opposing axes of binaries such as gender, class, and race. This differentiation distracts from but also serves the homoeroticism and homosocial desire between the two boys. Further, the hints of homoeroticism and homosocial desire within the wider homosocial context of this film indicates that, though these desires still cannot be spoken, they are common. Despite the inclusion of a heterosexual romance for the primary character, the homosocial desire between Erik (Andreas Wilson) and Pierre (Henrik Lundström) has considerably more impact on both plot and visuals. Editing in the film lends to the sense that the heterosexual romance is included to cover the homosocial desire between the boys. The film's ending, a device very similar to that used in *Goodbye Charlie Bright*, furthers the possibilities of a queer relationship between Erik and Pierre.

As in *Goblet of Fire* and *The Covenant*, visual differentiation is emphasised between the hero and his best friend in *Evil* and *Charlie Bright*. *Evil*'s hero Erik is throughout the film portrayed as troubled, tough, and rebellious. His physicality is also highlighted visually initially in scenes which depict him fighting with other boys, and later through both scenes of physical violence and through shots of Erik in the pool, shirt off, a well-toned torso on display. Once he is embroiled in the school's homosocial regime of violence and control, images of Erik's physicality, set against the images of the other boys in the school, show his to be the 'hardest' and strongest.

Further, Erik wins fight after fight, whether it is through sheer stamina as he stands up to the violent regime of the school without engaging in that violence himself, or through finally succumbing to his violent tendencies to bring about the destruction of the students' fascist regime. He also wins the swimming competition, despite being warned that, according to the regime, another boy was meant to win. A hierarchy of masculinity and power is set up via Erik's physicality and his ability to use violence and withstand violence against him. As Erik is 'fated' to bring down the oligarchical control of the school by cruel older students, he must be both strong and fair minded; he is an almost Christ-like figure in the sacrifices he makes to save Pierre from harm and by extension the rest of the student body. Erik has noticeably Aryan features (Figure 6.14), a fact which sets him up to be a potential member of the powerful oligarchy and which

also positions him as the opposite of Pierre's darker appearance. Erik's 'ideal'
Aryan features are even pointed out by a history teacher with Nazi sympathies,
who uses the opportunity to compare him with Pierre's 'undesirable' physique
during a lesson in eugenics.

Where Erik is masculinised through his associations with violence and a
strong physique, Pierre is feminised by his differentiation from Erik and 'ideal
masculinity' via associations with music and books (Figure 6.15), his soft
physique, and, finally, insinuations of his Jewishness and/or ethnic otherness
which in the rather Aryan world of the school marks a major contrast. As Pierre
and Erik share a room and quickly become good friends, Pierre is also feminine
specifically in comparison to Erik's almost excessive masculinity. In the early

Figure 6.14 - Erik (Andreas Wilson) has Aryan features which contrast with Pierre's dark hair and eyes.
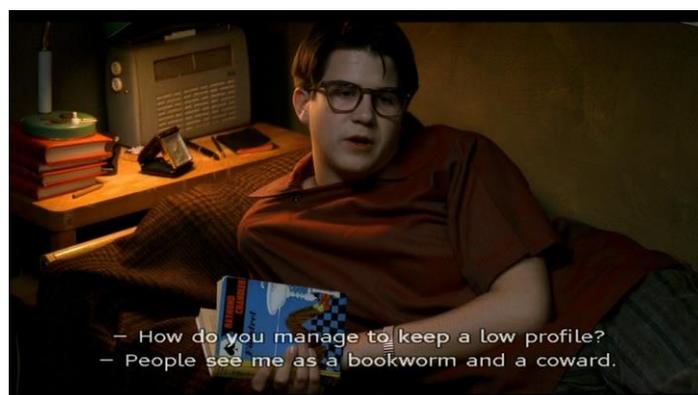
Figure 6.15 - Pierre (Henrik Lundström) has dark hair and eyes and is associated with books and music.

scenes of the two boys bonding, they share their mutual love for James Dean,
particularly in *Rebel Without a Cause* (Ray, 1955), a film which many have
pointed out contains queer connotations in the context of a male friendship (see
for example Dyer 1981). Pierre specifically cites the film's ending, during which
the 'gay' character, Plato, dies, stating that he cries 'every time' he sees this

scene; for many critics, this scene in *Rebel Without a Cause* represents the impossibility of gay love onscreen, as Plato dies rather than live out any gay adulthood. Early in the film Erik is dressed like James Dean (see the leather jacket in Figure 6.14). Their admiration of Dean, then, has queer undercurrents as well as being in some way related to Erik's association with an exalted figure.

In *Goodbye Charlie Bright*, Charlie is 'intended' for better things, while Justin is destined to be contained within the estate. Their differences are perhaps what attract them to each other in the first place – Charlie is tall and blond, markers which present him as a 'golden boy' (not to mention his surname, 'Bright'), and Justin is short and dark haired, with a criminal career ahead of him – but also what guarantee their separation. It is the smaller, darker, more unpredictable Justin who is feminised as the 'wife', the Aryan Charlie presenting a desirable and powerful transcendent masculinity. Both wear preppy clothes like polo tees and khaki shorts (Figure 6.16), along with

Figure 6.16 - Justin (Roland Manookian), left, and Charlie (Paul Nicholls), right

sportswear, both of which are aligned with working class British masculinity's fetishisation of high or middle end fashion labels, but which seem to sit oddly on Charlie. Charlie's class mobility transforms this costuming, highlighting not only his working class masculinity, but also his ability to move between class positions.

The dynamic of Charlie and Justin's relationship is recognised by the estate community, all of whom refer to Justin as Charlie's 'wife' or 'ball and chain'. This is telling for several reasons; as a direct alignment of their relationship with a romantic heterosexual partnership, and as an instance of homophobic policing. This is not the only moment in the film in which Justin is aligned along the relatively less powerful axes of socially structured binaries. He is, in fact, shorter than Charlie, dark-haired to Charlie's blond, parentless compared to the

brief presence of Charlie's separated parents, and, ultimately, stuck on the estate while Charlie has opportunities laid out before him.

The visual differences between Charlie and Justin are striking, and are quite loaded, in ways similar to Ron and Harry in *Goblet of Fire* and Caleb and Pogue in *The Covenant*. These differences are expressed along several social binaries. In terms of gender, the dynamics of looking and the way these looks are framed and edited work specifically to feminise Justin in relation to Charlie. According to Richard Dyer (1982), images of men most often show men looking at the camera, straight ahead, or off screen in an upward direction, as though thinking of other things, distracted or consumed by these thoughts, while women either look coyly at the camera, avoid the camera's gaze, looking down or away, or, if in the same frame as a man, they watch the man. Justin frequently watches Charlie; Charlie, on the other hand, often looks up or away. Charlie is the decision maker and active member of the relationship, while Justin watches him admiringly, ready to listen to or accompany him (Figures 6.17-19). Justin is often, visually and narratively, in a position which relies on Charlie.

Midway through the film, the two boys prepare for the party which will serve as the catalyst for the climax and ending of the film. The party is at Charlie's cousin's house; this cousin, Hector, is the primary model for Charlie's potential for escape from the estate. He has managed, through a career in property and real estate, to not only leave the council estate but to attain a huge house, rich friends, and a hedonistic lifestyle which appeals to Charlie and Justin. Justin also resents Hector's lifestyle, however, perhaps most specifically because of the possibility of this future threatening to separate him from his friend.

As the boys get ready for the party, they snort coke and look at themselves and each other in the mirror (Figure 6.19). Primarily, Charlie looks at himself or off in the distance, while Justin watches Charlie. In the end, Charlie wears a white button up over black jeans, and Justin wears a light pink button up over black jeans – a slightly smaller and more feminine version of Charlie. As they arrive at Hector's house, Hector welcomes Charlie and notices that he's still got 'the old ball and chain', Justin. Aside from the obvious heterosexualisation of their relationship which is continually referred to throughout the film, this indicates that Justin is what is chaining or holding Charlie from leaving the estate and joining Hector in the middle classes.

Figure 6.17 - Justin, left, is turned to watch Charlie, right, whose self-contained position contrasts with Justin's dependent one.

Figure 6.18 - Charlie, right, looks out of frame while Justin, centre, looks at Charlie.

Figure 6.19 - Charlie, left, watches himself in the mirror while Justin, right, watches Charlie.

At the party, Justin expresses disgust with Hector's extravagant and pretentious lifestyle, marking his preference for their life on the estate – Charlie's defensiveness of his cousin Hector and of Hector's choices marks his wish to escape the estate. Interestingly, the split here is along class lines and class ambitions as well as gender. Gender is perhaps subsumed within class-related indicators, and though the class issues of the film cannot be disentangled from the gender and sexualities of the characters, the dyadic homosocial

relationships can mean different things when viewed through the lens of homosocial desire rather than the lens of strict class analysis. Though Justin is consistently referred to as Charlie's 'wife' and 'ball and chain', he actually represents quite a different kind of masculinity – he is not strictly feminised in the film except in direct relation to Charlie; their power differential is expressed through the gender binary, where Charlie is the more powerful of the two, so that Justin is feminised. Justin's masculinity outside of his relationship with Charlie, however, is impulsive, violent, and disrespectful, which feeds back into his ultimate powerlessness in terms of escaping the stagnant estate.

The relationship between Erik and Pierre is similarly heterosexualised and reliant on hierarchical masculinity both between the two and in the homosocial environment more broadly. The context within which Erik and Pierre meet and bond is the boarding school. The oligarchy which controls the behaviour of the boys in the school is run by older students and ignored by staff. The Council, as this oligarchy styles itself, controls the homosocial world of the school through fear and violence, all of which is often tinged with homoeroticism. The two main leaders of this group of boys dress smartly (Figure 6.20) but in a meticulous way,

Figure 6.20 - The two leaders of the Council, left and centre, confronting Erik, right foreground.

which lends associations with both upper class lifestyles or aspirations and homosexuality. The two are almost always together, and frequently glance at each other as though communicating with just a glance when either is challenged as a leader, particularly by Erik.

This coupling mirrors that of Erik and Pierre, and though these two couples exist within a wider homosocial milieu, they form the centre of it and of the narrative. The two boys who lead the Council target Erik and Pierre, punishing Erik's insolent refusal to follow their orders by making Pierre their mark. Much like Ron is chosen as Harry's vulnerability, and Pogue is chosen as Caleb's, Pierre

is used by the Council to try to manipulate Erik. Also like those other films, there is a female love interest who, according to standard heteronormative narrative structures, might better serve as leverage against the male hero. Rather than a wife/girlfriend, then, these male best friend relationships are deemed more effective in exerting control over the primary character. It is in this light, as well as the coupling of Erik and Pierre with the two older boys, that homosocial desire as a basic presence in the homosocial milieu is established.

Despite the seeming comfort with homosocial desire that *Evil* evinces, however, there are several moments in which editing helps to repress the homoerotics between Erik and Pierre. Each instance of close friendship or physical contact, or even mention of homosexuality, is followed by a scene between Erik and Marja (Linda Zilliacus), his female love interest. Erik's relationship with Marja is never elevated over his friendship with Pierre, and in the end Erik contacts Pierre, not Marja. However, the decision to follow any scenes which insinuate a growing attraction and attachment between the two boys with brief scenes between Erik and Marja shows an implied denial of the homoerotics of their friendship.

The first occurrence immediately follows the boys' discussion of *Rebel Without a Cause*. This marks Marja's first screen time: though she and Erik do not interact, she stands out as the only young attractive female in the cast. Her blonde hair and isolation in the scene as she serves Erik's food further highlights her presence. The escalation of Erik and Pierre's connection calls for an escalation of this potential relationship with Marja; this next occurs during a brief montage showing Erik settling in to the school's routine. During a study session in their room, Erik begins tickling Pierre, eventually pushing him down on the bed (Figure 6.21). A close up of Pierre's happy face (Figure 6.22) cuts immediately to Marja (Figure 6.23), once again serving food to Erik in the dining hall – but this time, Erik looks up and the two make eye contact. Though this interaction with Marja is extremely truncated, its isolation as a solitary moment of potential heterosexual attraction within the homosocial world of the school (Marja is not seen speaking or looking at any other boys, nor has Erik spoken to any other women aside from his mother) serves to nearly cover over the intimate moment between Erik and Pierre which immediately precedes it.

This pattern continues, as, after a weekend punishment from the Council, Erik dines alone, and talks to Marja, who serves him. In the next scene, Pierre

Figure 6.21 - Erik, left, pushes Pierre, right, onto the bed during a study session.
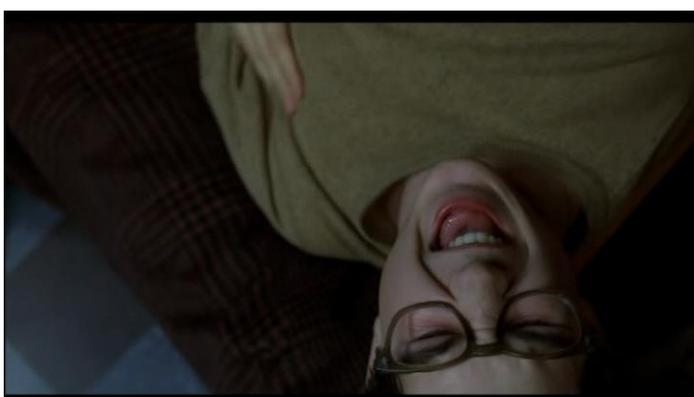
Figure 6.22 - Pierre's face as Erik pushes him onto the bed, immediately before a cut to Marja.

Figure 6.23 - Marja, standing, makes eye contact with Erik, seated, for the first time.

lounges by the pool as Erik swims, and they discuss Marja. Pierre is not implied to be in competition with Marja, and he in fact encourages Erik's interest in her. Instead the relationships develop parallel to each other. As the main conflict in the film is between good (Erik) and evil (the Council, fascism, violence), it makes sense within the world of the film that Erik is adored by both intellectuals (Pierre) and women (Marja).

However, after the poolside scene, the first hints of homophobia arise. One of the Council leaders must approve Erik's reading choices, and he questions one book, by Oscar Wilde. The Council leader points out that Wilde was a 'poof', to which Erik replies, 'Wilde. He's dead'. The Council leader asks if the book has been approved by the school, and Erik asks if he needs approval because Wilde is a 'poof' or because he's dead. At stake here is the insinuation via over-emphasis that the Council leader might be gay, as well as Erik's interest in more gay cultural icons (this one is certainly more overt than the James Dean references). The Council leader's objection to Wilde as a gay author, as compared to Erik's studied ignorance of Wilde's sexuality, implying that Wilde's gayness is as important as his being dead, both just facts, implies that Erik is tolerant at least of homosexuality, while the Council leader is homophobic perhaps to the point of protesting 'too much'.

Further, while Erik's scorn implies that he finds the Council leader's insinuated gayness distasteful, the Council leader's is the kind of severe and cruel homosexuality associated with Nazi leaders and narcissism, and is contrasted with Erik's more playful, pure relationship with Pierre. Following this complex play, which marks the only mention of homosexuality in the film, Erik meets Marja in his and Pierre's smoking spot, and they kiss for the first time. Again, this covers over the closeness between Pierre and Erik, shown during the pool scene, and provides a heterosexual alibi which prevents the previous scene about Oscar Wilde from 'contaminating' Erik with a personal interest in Wilde's writing. It also manages to replace Pierre with Marja in a location which has been associated with the two boys being alone together.

In *Goodbye Charlie Bright*, the use of insinuations of homosexuality also works to deny the eroticism of the homosocial desire between Charlie and Justin. Charlie is shown to be a natural leader; like Caleb in *The Covenant*, his group of friends looks to him for decisions-making. He usually speaks for the other boys, making arrangements and negotiating with adults on the estate. However, Charlie finds it difficult to discuss his relationship with Justin, and struggles in situations which involve physical contact between the two. When questioned about his relationship with Justin, Charlie is unable to talk, or refuses. When others are offended by Justin's antics or mouthiness, they often complain to Charlie or ask him why he is still hanging around the other boy. Charlie responds in each situation with a speechless shrug, seemingly unable to

come up with an articulable reason; the bond between himself and Justin can be shown and sneeringly referred to but never actually named. Charlie's silence, and the recurring gesture of throwing his hands in the air in a dramatic shrug, presents an ambiguity which allows for the possibility that he cannot tell anyone the extent of their attachment to one another – whether this is because people wouldn't understand or because they wouldn't approve is irrelevant, as in any case, he is unable to voice it.

Figure 6.24 - Justin hugs Charlie after the fight before being rejected.

Figure 6.25 - Tony offers Justin support, but his offer has undercurrents of homoeroticism, which leads to homophobic rejection.

When Justin's behaviour has aggravated or distanced Charlie, he tries to bridge this distance by hugging Charlie. Justin's demand for physical contact and intimacy is refused once, only to be accepted again as a final reaffirmation of their bond just before Charlie leaves. The lingering shots of the hugs and the close framing indicate that the physical intimacy here is different from any other in the film (Figure 6.24). The hug that is rejected follows two situations, one at the party discussed above, and one immediately following the party. The first occurs between Justin and another adult 'role-model', the junkyard owner and shady dealer Tony (Jamie Foreman). Tony has shown an interest in the two

boys, buying their stolen goods and offering help and advice; he seems to be a parallel figure to Hector – whereas Hector represents an escape from the estate, Tony represents the entrepreneurial opportunities present within the estate.

At the party, while Hector isolates Charlie in his bedroom in order to offer him a future, Tony isolates Justin in the pool to do the same. The scene between Tony and Justin is more sexually loaded, as the two face each other in close proximity and tight framing, so that their naked torsos are just visible (Figure 6.25). Though Tony is drunkenly offering Justin his support in a similar way to Hector's offers to Charlie, his desperation and sadness bely a homoerotic undercurrent to his attentions. Acknowledging and simultaneously denying this, Tony tells a nervous looking Justin that he's not 'gonna pounce' on the boy. 'I ain't queer,' he continues, 'I just want... you know I like you'. Several levels of denial and admission are present in this exchange, and Justin continues to look around before quickly leaving the pool and searching for Charlie. Despite Justin's rejection of Tony's coded advances, the exchange, and particularly the naming of it as homoerotic, serves to colour the following scenes with the possibilities of homosocial desire.

Justin is caught fondling a woman passed out at the party – perhaps trying to reinstate a heterosexual focus for himself – and is kicked out. Hector insists that Charlie stay, rather than follow Justin out, but Charlie shrugs once again and leaves with Justin. The boys walk home together but in silence and several meters apart. The tension growing here leads to a fight in which their passion and desire is subsumed by violence. The images and scenes of the fight, however, do little to deny the homoeroticism (Figure 6.26). The boys wrestle

Figure 6.26 - Justin and Charlie wrestle after the party.

rather than throwing punches until both are spent. At this point, the camera focuses on each of them as they sit back, panting (Figures 6.27 and 6.28). The

sexual undercurrent comes through fairly plainly here, and it is perhaps this surfaced desire which threatens Charlie and leads to his rejection of Justin's embrace upon the boys' return to the estate.

The final expression of homosocial desire between Charlie and Justin comes through the exchange of a gun Charlie stole early in the film. He hides this gun from Justin throughout, which leads to his voiced over comment that he has never hidden anything from Justin before this. This comment lends the gun a great deal of symbolic weight, so that when Charlie finally shows Justin the gun, he is sharing a phallic fetish long kept secret. Justin, typically, cannot be trusted

Figure 6.27 - Justin pants after the fight's climax.

Figure 6.28 - Charlie gasps for breath after the fight's climax.

with the gun – he immediately takes it and runs off with it, threatening children, aggressively asserting his newfound power via the phallus revealed by Charlie. If showing Justin the gun is a sort of peace offering from Charlie, it is also a catalyst for the dramatic conclusion of the film, in which the gun is used in a sequence of interchanges between Charlie's homosocial group and the rest of the community on the estate.

Charlie brings out the gun with vague intentions to threaten or kill a man who has slept with one of the boys' pregnant girlfriend; the man catches Charlie

and he leaves with the task undone. Justin, however, as the excitable, unpredictable, and uncontrolled boy in comparison to Charlie's more steady masculinity, grabs the gun. Running after the man, he shoots him during a confrontation and he and Charlie run to the top of a high rise. He aggressively wields the unfamiliar phallic firearm, and though he doesn't shoot to kill, he is able to take action where Charlie's hesitation has prevented him. On the roof, the boys reconcile after their earlier fight in an intimate scene which shows the boys clinging to each other, eyes shut, the camera reverently still on the scene, only cutting to show the emotions on each boys face (Figure 6.29 and 6.30). The

Figure 6.29 - The camera closes on Justin, right, in his final embrace with Charlie.
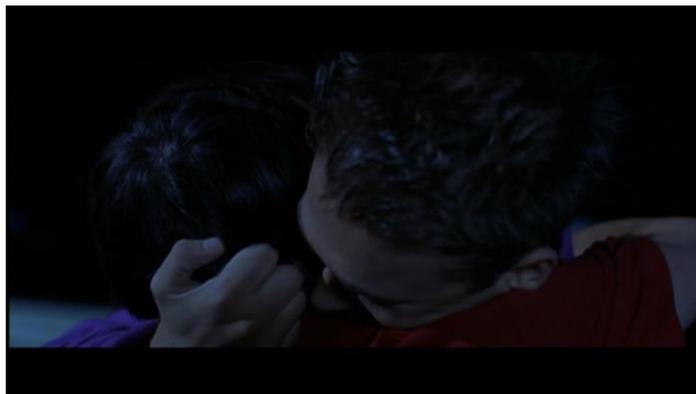
Figure 6.30 - Charlie, right, grips Justin close intimately before leaving the estate.

intimacy of the embrace, however, forecloses their future together. The boys can love each other, but as Jack Babuscio (1975) points out in his discussion of 1970s buddy films, there is no place to go from this embrace – heteronormative understandings of masculinity do not allow the homoerotics expressed in this scene to be further explored, and the relationship must be interrupted before the homoerotics turn into homosexual behaviours or identities. Thus, the boys descend from the roof, with Justin, grinning to the crowd, turning himself in for

the shooting, while Charlie runs – from the shooting, from the estate, from his impossible relationship with Justin.

Like *Goodbye Charlie Bright*, *Evil*'s narrative articulates the dramas of the homosocial environment through violence. There are two particular bodily violations which mark *Evil*'s climax; the first involves an exchange of faeces, the second, a series of scenes of escalating violence against Erik, then Pierre, and then Erik again. This violence leads to the consummation of his relationship with Marja, and the apparent end of his relationship with Pierre. The exchange of faeces, as initiated by the Council leaders who throw a bucket of it into Pierre and Erik's room, is initially a threat, intended as an attack on the senses worse than a beating. It is not only humiliating and taboo, but also intimately related to the anal exchanges insinuated but denied by the homoerotic bond between Erik and Pierre, and, possibly, the Council leaders. It is when Erik decides to return the favour, throwing it back onto the main leader of the Council, that it truly becomes an exchange – Erik both recognises and refuses the anal threat, and throws it, literally, back in the Council's face. Erik's capacity for violence and his ability to better the Council at their own power games is what sets him apart from the other boys at the school.

As in *Goblet of Fire* and *The Covenant*, it is not the female hetero-love interest in *Evil* who is targeted in order to get to a seemingly invulnerable male hero. Rather, once the Council realise that threatening Erik's body and mind directly only meets determined resistance, they set about attacking that which is closest to him: Pierre. Throughout the film Pierre has been conveyed as a weak-bodied, non-athletic intellectual. These traits make him both invisible and irrelevant until he strikes up a relationship with Erik, and once the Council targets Pierre, these traits make him vulnerable to their attacks. The Council's first physical attack on Pierre is done specifically for Erik's benefit; he finds Pierre cornered in the dormitory rooms of the Council, his fleshy body completely exposed and vulnerable, the leaders of the Council preparing to put out a cigar on his naked chest. The image of Pierre's body contrasts quite sharply against those of Erik's body seen throughout the film during his swimming practice and competition. While Erik's body is athletic and toned, Pierre's is flabby and soft (Figure 6.31). Pierre's soft body and fear of pain mark him as vulnerable and penetrable. Erik's willingness to sacrifice his own hard body for Pierre's, and his total lack of reaction when the leader of the Council

Figure 6.31 - Pierre, left, is exposed and vulnerable to the machinations of the Council leader, centre.

burns him, mark him as both a martyr for those who cannot fight back, and as a masculine, hard figure in contrast with Pierre's feminine, soft one.

Erik's eventual loss of Pierre affects him much more noticeably than his loss of Marja. His loss of Pierre occurs immediately after he spends the night with Marja – he comes home to their shared room to find a note announcing Pierre's departure from the school. At this, Erik falls to the bed and curls up, letting the letter fall; the camera contemplates him in this position for several seconds before cutting, emphasising the depth of his despair at losing his friend (see Figure 6.32). Though the Council uses Erik's relationship with Marja to try to get him expelled, they do not threaten or interact with her at all, compared to the physical threats and attacks Pierre experiences. This is perhaps because

Figure 6.32 - Erik in despair at the loss of Pierre.

Erik's relationship with Marja is nameable and somewhat acceptable – though their relationship is inappropriate due to her employment at the school and possibly their age difference, this is not as taboo a relationship as Erik's with Pierre, nor is it as able to provoke Erik's protection or sacrifice. While Erik and Marja are separated because their relationship is nameable, Marja is not

physically threatened. It seems as though the homosocial desire between Erik and Pierre is not only unspeakable, but is also possibly extant among the boys in the homosocial world of the school, particularly the leaders of the Council, and therefore cannot be used to officially condemn Erik or Pierre.

Finally, the film closes after Erik's graduation from the school. He goes to find Pierre, and the two reaffirm their friendship while also establishing that the two are going separate ways as the film ends. Like the freeze frame of Charlie running away from the estate in *Goodbye Charlie Bright*, *Evil* ends on a freeze frame of Erik riding his bicycle away from this last meeting with Pierre. Though the last meeting does not indicate that the two boys will not see each other again, it has concreted their separation for the time being, as in *Goodbye Charlie Bright*, and it has likewise established the homosocial relationship between Erik and Pierre to be the primary one which must be concluded before adulthood can begin. The two films freeze their heroes mid-flight because it is this movement forward which initiates the next stage of their lives, and which does not concern the narrative. These films are telling the story of a coming of age, a shedding of homosocial desirous attachments, and a moving away from violent and traumatic teen life. Therefore the movement forward is frozen as a way of representing the hope and potential in each boy's future, while also remaining ambivalent about whether they pursue relationships with the boys they leave behind.

Polymorphous Perversity in the World of Teen Boys: *The History Boys*

The History Boys provides a contrast to the films discussed above, and signals toward the next chapter, which deals with gay and lesbian characters and narratives. Similar to the others in this chapter because of its homosocial environment, *The History Boys* is different in almost every other way. The film shows the variety of desires which emerge within a homosocial environment, and while it does not focus on a homosocial dyad at its centre, it provides an ensemble which presents shifting dyadic attractions and triangles. However, what it does not do is devote time to the intensity of any of these relationships, and therefore makes a case for the specificity of the dyadic focus of this thesis. In fact, it presents teen friendships as a series of shifting attractions and desires, which aligns this film with Kaveney's definition of teen film as containing a

'free-floating atmosphere of sexual chemistry' (2006, 8), despite the considerable distance between the film and the teen film genre. It also devotes a good deal of time to the relationships between the boys and their adult male teachers. Male teen sexuality is presented as existing along a spectrum; within the central three teen boys, it presents a young openly gay character, a heterosexual character, and a character willing to be wooed by either men or women. The rest of the homosocial group is presumably heterosexual, while two of the three adult men with whom the boys interact are gay. Though based on a play by a gay playwright, Alan Bennett, the representation of homosexual identity and desire is by no means a stable or positive one. The film is set in the early 1980s, at the beginning of long years of homophobic cultural and political onslaughts, and this is reflected in the despair of the adults as well as the rather depressing epilogue of the boys' lives as the film concludes, particularly that of the one gay teen character. The film, therefore, seems to serve as a kind of warning against unrequited teen homosexual desire, as it cannot lead to a happy and fulfilled life.

Homosexual desire in *The History Boys* must remain repressed and unspoken, and is at all times implied to be inappropriate. While the film attempts to criticise this attitude, it unfortunately ultimately reinforces it. Indeed, it takes on the appearance of homosocial desire in ways similar to the other films in this chapter. Like many stories about boys' schools, the 'corruption' of sexuality within the bonded group comes from above, and like *The Covenant*, from outside the group. Here it is introduced by a teacher rather than by students physically engaging with their own potentially homosexual desires. In fact, as the adult teachers are the only example of adult gay characters within the film, they represent an adulthood filled with shame and inappropriate desire for young boys which borders on criminality. The ending of the film echoes this, as Posner (Samuel Barnett), the gay teen character, states that he grows up to be a teacher, unhappy and in love with his students just like his own teachers were.

Throughout the film, Posner nurses a long-standing crush on another student, Dakin (Dominic Cooper), which is unspoken but acknowledged by both characters. Posner expresses this through lingering glances and by enduring the teasing of his peers on the subject without objection. The moment closest to an expression of homosexual desire among the group of boys comes when Posner

and Dakin hug, allegedly fulfilling Posner's long-burning desire for Dakin, but also containing it within a non-threatening physical gesture. Likewise, the only moment in the film in which overt homosexual desire is outwardly expressed is when Dakin recognises his desire to please his tutor Irwin (Stephen Campbell Moore) and offers to fulfil what he (correctly) perceives as Irwin's sexual fantasies. Both Irwin and Hector, another tutor, lust after the teen boys they teach. This is presented in the film as ethically questionable but not starkly wrong, and as a perfectly human emotional response to the allure and the possibilities of youth. It is, in fact, a pattern which is stated to continue on in Posner's adult life.

If there were a character at the centre of the film, it could arguably be Dakin. Dakin is certainly the character whose looks and physicality are the most discussed, as the object of both Posner and Irwin's desire, although very little is done to draw special attention to his appearance. In a scene which ought to bring attention to Dakin's looks and his attractiveness, Posner sings a ballad as Scripps (Jamie Parker) accompanies on the piano. The scene begins with a shot of Dakin watching as an unseen Posner sings a ballad on the soundtrack. The camera cuts between Dakin and Posner, establishing the direction of the song, then moves from Dakin across the classroom to show their classmates' reactions, and Posner's unwavering gaze toward the camera is clearly aimed directly at Dakin, whose position the camera shares (Figure 6.33). If this weren't enough to

Figure 6.33 - Posner (centre, background) sings directly to Dakin (far left) but Dakin is not isolated for objectification by the camera.

indicate Dakin as the object of this gaze, their classmates turn to look at Dakin, to gauge his reaction to this pointed moment. However, the shot is from behind Dakin, showing only the back of his head, so that Dakin remains one of the many students in the classroom, not visually isolated or objectified by the camera. As such, he is still just one amongst a classroom of students, so that it is his

membership among the class and his youth which is objectified rather than his physical features or charisma as such.

Aside from Dakin, the students' other preoccupation is academic success. Unlike the other films in this chapter, the violence wrought by and toward the boys is primarily intellectual and emotional. Intellectual battles are constantly fought by the students: against each other, against the headmaster, against the new teacher, against Oxford's admissions. The headmaster, who stands in for bureaucratic and state authority, is the bully here, as the capitalist-driven school agenda he promotes is opposed with the 'tradition' of British intellectual masculinity which Hector represents. The film's nostalgia for this particular brand of masculine intellectualism refers to a cracked facade, however, as the push for the boys to get accepted to Oxford is engineered by people who never went to Oxford, or who lied about their attendance there. The two men who uphold the masculine intellectual tradition as a continuing trajectory (Hector represents the 'old school' tradition, and Irwin injects a 'new' and 'fresh' approach to the same tradition) are both shown to be unstable adults, both in love with the boys they teach, and in love with the possibilities of youth which the boys represent. The film's emphasis on the language, rhetoric, and specifically the subjunctive tense helps to spell out the allure that the possibilities of youth hold for both teachers, and for the adult Posner.

The masculine intellectualism is presented in many ways as 'queer' (abnormal, multiple, shifting, unstructured, non-linear) despite the shame with which any sexual desires are expressed. The homosexual desires within the group, and between the teachers and the group, are acceptable as long as they are not named; Posner, for instance, is never selected by Hector for the infamous ride home (which inevitably ends with Hector molesting the chosen boy), because it is understood that Posner himself is gay and might welcome those advances. The shame with which any homosexual desire is treated, alongside the disdain with which women are treated, means that the masculine intellectualism is implied to be ideally asexual, resistant to heterosexuality, yet to also involve repressed homosexuality. This aligns it with longstanding traditions of sexual desire being subsumed by work, art, and intellectual pursuits – but the desire which is subsumed here is unmistakeably homosexual, particularly among the homosocial group. Dakin's desire to please Irwin translates into his willingness, if not his desire, to engage in homosexual acts

with him, and to flirt with him, frequently leaning in close, always looking for attention (Figure 6.34). However, Posner's stated gay identity works almost as a guarantee that the sexualities of all the other characters are unstated (and therefore heterosexual), so that their homosocial desires do not threaten to turn into homosexual expression. The discovery of Irwin's desire for Dakin and his collusion with Posner after Posner comes out to him as gay align his repressed and shameful sexuality with Posner's, as though he represents what Posner will

Figure 6.34 - Dakin, right, leans in close to Irwin, left.

become. In the epilogue, Posner is said to be the only boy who really heard everything Hector taught: he himself becomes a teacher, and carries on not only the masculine intellectual tradition, but also admits he falls in love with his students, and that not touching them (as Hector did and Irwin attempted) is a 'constant struggle'.

Though the homoerotic and homosexual desires underlying teen boys' homosocial worlds is acknowledged here, they continue to be repressed, and are presented as leading to a life of shame, lacking the fulfilment of adult heterosexuality. Hector acts on his desires, fondling his students year after year, and is punished with an untimely death – no different really from the death which has historically greeted gay characters. The question arising from this film, and carrying over to the next chapter is: what happens when the covert or unspoken homosocial desires discussed in this and the previous two chapters are actually spoken? How does this change the dynamic of friendships? How do the strategies for presenting and denying same-sex love and desire in homosocial friendships which have been discussed so far in this thesis change when the characters involved actually admit and possibly act on those desires?

Conclusion

The films in this chapter do not admit the queer possibilities available within their narratives, unlike the films about boys' friendships discussed in the 'Best Friends' chapter. With the exception of *The History Boys*, there is no acknowledgment of the 'love' or desire extant between teen boy characters; instead it remains unspoken. Though the narratives depend on this love and/or desire, it is not named as it is in the films in the 'Best Friends' chapter. Even *The History Boys*, despite its acknowledgement of homoerotic desire within the homosocial, still finds that desire slightly threatening, and cordons it off as predatory and inappropriate.

In fact, though homosocial love and homosexual desire remain unspoken, each film, with the exception of *Goblet of Fire*,[61] uses homophobia as a mechanism of denial of that love and desire. These films, then, along with *Duck Season*, *Superbad*, and *Y tu Mamá También*, align themselves within the discursive patterns outlined by buddy film scholars as discussed in Chapter 2.[62] In the films in this chapter, however, this homophobia is also expressed through the inclusion of an antagonistic character whose possible homosexuality often *is* spoken, even if suggested and denied. Again, however, *Goblet of Fire* is the exception: it contains neither an overt suggestion of homosexuality nor an overt homophobic denial.

The threat posed by these possibly homosexual characters varies in each film, however in all cases in this chapter, the danger comes from outwith the primary teen boy couple.[63] This is similar in some ways to the way that violence and aggression are bound with lesbianism in the 'Frenemies' chapter, but the threat posed in that case is *within* the homosocial friendship as opposed to outside the primary pair as found here. Perhaps this is due to the ways that the spectrum of homosocial desire is expressed across genders: for teen girls, the

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[61] This exception is likely due to *Goblet of Fire*'s position as one of the *Harry Potter* franchise, which are aimed at families and children; this more subtly, then, excludes the possibility, even the denial, of queerness from 'the family'.

[62] Such as Babuscio (1975), Biskind (1974), Fuchs (1993), Wood (2003 [1986]), Tasker (1993), Holmlund (1993),

[63] In *Goblet of Fire*, though it is not ever stated, Voldemort presents a queer sort of villain, spending years chasing a little boy (see Edelman 2004, 21). In *Evil*, the two leaders of the Council are clearly dandified and coupled, which is further emphasised by the confrontation about Oscar Wilde. Tony, in *Charlie Bright*, shows an intimate interest in Justin, though he denies it, and represents the estate-bound future with a sinister edge. In *The Covenant* Chase is presented as a queer figure as discussed above, and in *The History Boys* both teachers are gay and though this is not necessarily antagonistic it is predatory and inappropriate.

possibility of lesbianism is always already present, within the relationship itself. For boys, however, homosocial relationships must publicly (as in, within the context of a larger homosocial group) and definitionally exclude the possibility of homosexuality.

Though it shares many of the same concerns as the other films in this chapter, *The History Boys* in particular also points to the issues taken up in the following chapter: what happens when homosocial desire translates to overt homosexual desire? What can narratives which allow gay and lesbian behaviour and identities add to the understandings of teenage friendships which have been analysed in this thesis so far?

Chapter 7 More than Friends: Gay and Lesbian Teen Desire

While previous chapters have focused on the queer possibilities underlying ostensibly heteronormative friendships among teen characters, this chapter will turn to the representation of friendships between gay and lesbian teen characters. These relationships are not necessarily overtly romantic or sexual, which is why and how they gain comparative potential in relation to those analysed in preceding chapters. The aim of this chapter is to look at how patterns identified in the previous chapters map across films about gay and lesbian characters, in particular examining the ways that mechanisms of desire, love, and boundary policing operate in films which may not rely upon these mechanisms to deny homoerotics and homoromance between characters. Each of the films discussed here will be compared directly to the groupings of films which have come before. As these films depict a relatively underrepresented group, gay and lesbian teens, they are accompanied by a representational burden in keeping with the 'images of' discourse discussed in the literature review chapter. *How* they depict gay and lesbian teens, and how those representations align with film teens more broadly, is just as important as the fact of their depiction.

There are seventeen films with gay and lesbian main characters[64] in the database compiled for this thesis.[65] Of those films, four are from France, four are from the US, and there is one each from Argentina, Canada, Italy, Germany, Taiwan, Greece, Spain, Sweden, and the UK. This is a marked deviation from the patterns across the database as a whole, in which 219 of the 267 films are from either the UK or the US. This group of films, then, represents a much more international selection than seen in the database as a whole, which is reflected in the films chosen for discussion in this chapter. Eight of the seventeen are

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[64] The focus here is on gay and lesbian characters primarily because of a distinct lack of transgendered or bisexual main characters. Also, though there are a larger number of gay and lesbian supporting characters throughout the database, these characters are not the narrative focus and therefore provide less material for analysis.

[65] *From the Edge of the City* (Giannaris, 1998), *Show Me Love* (Moodysson, 1998), *Porquoi por moi?* (Giusti, 1999), *But I'm a Cheerleader* (Babbit, 1999), *Freeway 2: Confessions of Trickbaby* (Bright, 1999), *Presque Rien* (Lifshitz, 2000), *Krampack* (Gay, 2000), *L.I.E.* (Cuesta, 2001), *Gasoline* (Strambini, 2001), *Suddenly* (Lerman, 2002), *Blue Gate Crossing* (Chih-Yen, 2002), *Ma Vraie Vie a Rouen* (Ducastel & Martineau, 2002), *My Summer of Love* (Pawlikowski, 2004), *Mysterious Skin* (Arraki, 2004), *Summer Storm* (Kreuzpaintner, 2004),*C.R.A.Z.Y.* (Vallee, 2005), and *Water Lilies* (Sciamma, 2007).

about girls, and nine are about boys, which is roughly similar to the gender breakdown of the database as a whole. Generically, IMDb counts seven of the films as comedies, while it counts all but three as dramas.[66] This also reflects the general patterns presented in the database as a whole. Other IMDb genres represented are crime (two films), thriller (one film), romance (seven films), and mystery (one film). That there are the same number of comedies and romances does present a deviation from the patterns seen in the database, where 76 films are romances and 121 films are comedies according to IMDb. While there are films which present straightforward homosexual romances, the five films discussed in this chapter were chosen because they focus on friendships, so that they are able to create certain resonances with the films discussed in previous chapters, which also focus on teen friendships.

Concepts like liminality and the process of becoming (adult, heterosexual, etc), which have been useful in previous chapters for analysing the malleability and flux in teen relationships and identities, are problematic for some scholars writing about gay and lesbian teens and teen films. The issues raised by these scholars question the usefulness of concepts like liminality as they destabilise the hard-won identities established by the few gay, lesbian, and queer teens present in film. This seems at odds with the very flexibility inherent in queer as an identity (anti)category, but again the debates around 'images of' and representation have emphasised the importance of the mere existence of these characters, and the precariousness of these few representations certainly justifies some defensive scholarship.

Though elsewhere she has argued for the liminality of teens, and the non-fixity of identity,[67] Susan Driver, in her study of what she calls 'queer youth films' (she seems to be using queer here as a synonym for gay and lesbian), argues that to focus on the liminality of teen characters would erase or undermine the ability of these characters to claim queer identity, and to resist heterosexual recuperation in normalising narratives (2007a, 242). In this

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[66] Many films in the database have multiple genres assigned by IMDb, hence the overlap.

[67] In *Queer Girls and Popular Culture*, Driver says: 'While *queer* is used to specify particular girls and their desires, it is more readily deployed to encompass an interchange between cultural signs and socially embodied subjects, mobilizing the term *queer* as a verb rather than securing it as a noun […] But rather than fixate on queer girls as discrete sexual minority youth, I hope to disrupt the structure of binary discourses inscribing girls as either heterosexual or lesbian' (2007b, 2). Interestingly, this definition is in relation to work with queer teens and their relationship with popular culture, while the definition used in the discussion above is used to discuss popular texts themselves.

chapter, I want to argue against the fixture or security of queer identity implied by arguments like Driver's. In fact, it seems problematic to presume queerness as an *identity* for any of these characters or films; queerness as a *descriptor* of the liminal state of teens more generally, on the other hand, is less restrictive. I intend to carefully discuss the ways that gay and lesbian teen characters are in fact liminal in many ways so that the strength and validity of any possible queer identification is not undermined. Further, unlike queer possibilities in otherwise heteronormative narratives, which, as has been demonstrated in the previous three chapters of this thesis, are so often kept at bay through the heterosexual recuperation of the liminal characters as the narratives progress, gay and lesbian representations of teens are less likely to use such recuperative mechanisms, allowing for gay and lesbian identities to emerge from narrative conclusions.

This chapter, therefore, will build on the arguments presented here so far to investigate how the patterns identified in heteronormative narratives translate across narratives which depict lesbian and gay teenagers. Each film here will serve as a case study for patterns found in the films in the preceding chapters. How does the expression of liminality change in films about non-normative teens? How do gendered patterns operate when homoeroticism is not repressed or denied? To answer these questions, the chapter will look at five recent films. These films differ greatly in terms of style, origin, genre, and tone, but also have much in common beyond the depiction of gay and lesbian teen behaviour and identity such as (relatively) low budgets, minimal or restricted distribution, and strict advisory certifications.

Two of the films focus on teen girls: *Blue Gate Crossing* (Chih-yen 2002) is a film set in a high school in Taipei, and witnesses the development of a friendship between a girl and the boy her best friend likes – she is in love with her best friend, and as a result of a misunderstanding, he is interested in her. Though this is a coming out story of sorts, it focuses on gender roles and expectations in Taiwan as well as friendship and boundaries rather than sexual relationships as such. In this way it aligns with the 'Best Friends' chapter, and will provide some comparison with the patterns identified there. *My Summer of Love* (Pawlikowski 2004), on the other hand, is a story about two girls in Yorkshire who meet and have an affair one summer. At no point does the film choose to label either girl as lesbian or otherwise; it rather coolly observes their relationship and its demise, with a focus on their class differences. The antagonism and betrayal

underlining the friendship between the girls closely resembles the relationship patterns which emerge from the 'Frenemies' chapter, here enacting the desire I have argued underpins frenemy relationships.

The third film focuses primarily on a group of boys in nearly exclusively homosocial environs, in common with the male homosocial groups discussed in the previous chapter. *Summer Storm* (Kreuzpaintner 2004) explores the homophobia of a Bavarian rowing team confronted with a self-identified queer team, following one Bavarian boy specifically as he realises and comes to terms with his own gay desires. The film mobilises hierarchies of masculinity which echo the patterns identified in the 'School Friends' chapter, in order to create a system of masculine gay identity.

The final two films work a bit differently in relationship to the rest of the thesis. *L.I.E.* (Cuesta 2001) follows a young boy neglected by his father in the suburbs as he dabbles in delinquency and is taken in and fostered by an unlikely ally as he too comes to terms with his sexuality and desires. This film acts as a companion to *The History Boys*, in a way, as a film which associates adult homosexuality with criminality, paedophilia, and unfulfilled desires, while paying attention to teen boys' desires for one another. *Another Gay Movie* (Stephens 2006) operates as a spoof of both gay teen coming out narratives and of heteronormative sex comedies; in this way it acts as a meta-text allowing for commentary on the teen film genre, as well as patterns of representations which exceed that genre.

Best Friends: *Blue Gate Crossing*

As a film which focuses on the discovery and development of lesbian desires, and the realisation that these feelings cannot be suppressed, *Blue Gate Crossing* is a coming out story interested in linking identity and desire. Though the conclusion of the film does provide a protagonist, Kerou (Lunmei Kwai), who has admitted and somewhat accepted her same-sex desires, the film itself is driven by her desire to dissolve those feelings, and the development of a heterosocial relationship between Kerou and Shihao (Bo-lin Chen) which treads the line between friendship and something more. The liminality of their relationship is due to Kerou's confusion and resistance to her feelings toward her best friend Yuezhen (Shu-hui Liang), while the impetus of the relationship in the first place is Yuezhen's excruciating and obsessive crush on Shihao. This heterosocial

triangle, then, and particularly the growing friendship between Shihao and Kerou, is the focus of the film and is what allows for the gradual admission of Kerou's desires for Yuezhen. These desires, and Kerou's countering desires for heteronormativity, structure a film which is otherwise made up of repetitions of movement, words, and images which are eventually peeled away to reveal Kerou's raw fears and feelings. The best friend relationship, the emphasis on love rather than sexuality, and the presence of a love triangle (though necessarily less straightforward than those previously discussed) all work to align this film with the patterns identified in the 'Best Friends' chapter, particularly those found in films about young teen girls.

The relationship between Kerou and Shihao develops along parallel lines; each has a very different understanding of the reasons behind their relationship as well as the direction it is headed. For Kerou, their interactions are based on her need to gain his attention for Yuezhen, and anything that progresses from this is friendship at best, competition for Yuezhen's attentions at worst. Yuezhen's crippling inability to expose her feelings, however, prevent her from coming forward to claim her crush on Shihao, which means that Shihao does not believe Kerou's friend even exists. He thinks that Kerou is coyly flirting with him, and for him, the relationship is romantic from the beginning. The progression of a teen relationship along so many varying lines, which allows the boundaries between these understandings to blend and merge and re-separate, means that the flexibility and liminality of the teen characters and of their burgeoning relationships is able to shine through in its muddled and confusing way.

As a reflection of the competitive and potentially romantic possibilities in their interactions, Kerou and Shihao's relationship is marked by mirroring and doubling in both movement and editing. The first time the two speak, Yuezhen has sent Kerou in to talk to Shihao, to ask if he has a girlfriend. Shihao is swimming, getting extra practice in the school pool at night. Kerou calls out to him, and attracts the attention of the school's guard, which means the two have to hide. They continue their conversation from behind a few rolls of lane dividers. The first shot which depicts this shows them from the side – Kerou is in the foreground, Shihao just behind her (Figure 7.1). This perspective makes them look like they are crouched quite close together, but the scene then cuts to a shot from the front as the two stand up after the guard leaves, so that the two lane dividers are in front of Kerou and Shihao, and it becomes clear that

Figure 7.1 - Shihao, left, and Kerou, right, hiding behind rolls of lane dividers, look like they are sitting close to each other

Figure 7.2 - The next shot shows that they are actually a meter apart

they are actually a meter or two apart (Figure 7.2). The doubling here, as they each sit behind a lane divider roll in the same position, as well as the trick of perspective, presents their relationship as one which shifts depending on the point-of-view of the character and the audience. This shot, which takes place near the beginning of the film, is repeated toward the end of the film. At that point, Shihao and Kerou have shared some courtship, but Kerou has both asked Shihao to kiss her and made it clear she isn't interested. His confusion over her intentions colour both scenes, as he questions and teases her through both. She is also confused, but this is because she is resisting her feelings towards Yuezhen and trying to understand them – in the first scene, she is pursuing Shihao for Yuezhen because she'd do anything for her, and in the second scene she is trying to work out how to finally tell Shihao how she feels about Yuezhen. In both cases, the distance between the two and the shift of perspective through editing show Kerou's inability to communicate about her feelings, to herself, to Yuezhen, and to Shihao, as well as the different meanings of her relationship with Shihao depending on the perspective of the character (and, literally, the camera).

Kerou is repeatedly paired with Shihao as his double; otherwise she is mimicked by him or mimics him herself. Bookending the film are beautiful scenes of Kerou and Shihao riding their bicycles through Taipei; these have no dialogue but much is exchanged in their physical interactions as their bicycles move within the frame of each shot. The first precedes the pool scene discussed above, as Kerou rides up to Shihao and just passes him by a few inches as they wait at the light. He sees this and moves forward to pass her. She passes him again, and he follows suit. This game of mimicry borders on competitive for her, and is flirtatious for him. The second of these scenes is the last shot of the film; the two, rather than competing or flirting, ride happily alongside each other (Figure 7.3). Having become close friends in the course of the film as Kerou comes to terms with her feelings for Yuezhen and with the pain of losing her friendship because of those feelings, Kerou and Shihao are no longer bound by mimicry and competition. Their doubling here, then, is harmonious.

Figure 7.3 - Kerou and Shihao ride happily together at the end of the film

On the other hand, Kerou and Yuezhen are visually differentiated, primarily through Kerou's short hair and baggy school uniform. Yuezhen's hair is longer, and her school uniform more fitted. Outside of school, Kerou also wears more androgynous clothing, which contrasts with Yuezhen's choices. Further, Yuezhen is shown to be quiet and reserved, as compared with Kerou's more confrontational attitude; this is particularly evident when Yuezhen asks Kerou to investigate and talk to Shihao for her, and when Kerou tries to confront her silent friend about the misunderstanding resulting from Shihao's pursuit of Kerou. This differentiation serves to make Kerou's gender presentation rather ambiguous, aligning her with the more androgynous, tomboyish young girls seen in the 'Best Friends' chapter.

In addition to the initial misunderstanding in which Shihao assumes that Yuezhen doesn't exist and is just a cover for Kerou's feelings, there are several other instances of confused identity in the film, or times when one person's identity is used to cover the other. After the first meeting in the pool, Yuezhen has Kerou wear a photocopied image of Shihao's face as a mask, and the two girls dance (Figure 7.4). The intimacy of the dance fulfils the desires of both girls, as Kerou is able to dance with Yuezhen, and Yuezhen can dance with Shihao/Kerou. This scene also works as another instance of the doubling of Shihao and Kerou. Later, Yuezhen gives Kerou a note pass on to Shihao, but signs it with Kerou's name; Shihao is by this point infatuated with Kerou, and takes this as proof that Yuezhen does not exist except as a cover for Kerou's own feelings. He resumes pursuing her until she agrees to go out with him; she agrees to see him because of her anger at Yuezhen for the deception, and she also sees it as a way to repress her desire for the other girl.

Figure 7.4 - Yuezhen, left, and Kerou, in a mask of Shihao's face, dance

Repetition is a motif of *Blue Gate Crossing*; throughout the film, repetitions of images, movements, and sounds emphasise several themes. First, Kerou's refusal to express her feelings and her confusion about her desires; second, the doubling of Kerou and Shihao; and third, the pursuit of questions of identity during the teen years. Several lines of dialogue are repeated throughout the film. Following her around, Shihao asks Kerou 'what do you want?' repeatedly. She does not answer, and the repetition blurs, rather than clarifies, what Kerou might want, and when she might be able to answer the question. When trying to convince Kerou to consider dating him, Shihao repeats the traits that make him a desirable partner: 'I'm a Scorpio, blood type O, guitar club, swimming team'. He easily states the factors that make up his identity, but it is not so easy for

Kerou. Indeed the thing he has left unspoken is 'heterosexual' which she isn't sure she can claim.

Both Kerou and Yuezhen use repetitive writing to express their desires, or denial of them. Kerou writes 'I'm a girl and I like boys' over and over in various places – scenes of her inscribing this on a column in the school gym are repeated throughout the narrative, and after she tries to kiss Yuezhen and is rejected, she writes it in the sand on the beach where she has tried to join some boys for the evening. Her need to deny her desire for Yuezhen is reiterated, echoing the denial and repression of same-sex desire in representations of teens. Yuezhen writes Shihao's name over and over again obsessively. Both girls seem to believe that repetition through writing will bring these desires, or their denial, closer to fruition. Shihao, however, never falls for Yuezhen, and Kerou realises that she cannot change her feelings toward Yuezhen.

Like the repeated writing, the repetition of movement marks the film throughout. In particular, Shihao follows Kerou around and mimics her pacing movements; several repeated shots of the same or similar movements make it seem as though each action happens many times. After Kerou finally follows Shihao's advice and tries to kiss Yuezhen, Yuezhen gets up and walks away, joining other girls at basketball. Trying to get her attention, and afraid of losing her friendship, Kerou follows. The scene consists of a series of shots of Yuezhen moving through the frame playing ball with the others while Kerou, behind her in the shot, follows, trying to gain her attention (Figures 7.5-7). The many shots create a sort of cascade of Yuezhen's rejection of Kerou, increasing the impact of her refusal, as well as emphasising Kerou's desperation to follow her and regain her attention, to no avail.

Figure 7.5 - Kerou finally tries to kiss Yuezhen

Figure 7.6 - Yuezhen runs from Kerou's kiss

Figure 7.7 - Kerou follows Yuezhen, who ignores Kerou as she plays ball

Repetition is used here as a kind of reiteration of the questions which haunt Kerou. Particularly in a film about establishing and expressing identity and desire, reiteration can highlight the difficulty of claiming an identity which might be unacceptable or less acceptable. The repeated and long unanswered question of 'what do you want' is allowed to reverberate through the film before Kerou is able to begin expressing her desires. In her liminal state of becoming, of working through her desires and fears, Kerou is able to move between several different relationships with Shihao, from competitive to dating to friendship. Likewise, the relationship itself has such blurred boundaries because of the liminality of the characters that its status and definition shift, depending on the position from which it is viewed. The cycles of repetition, mimicry, and doubling which make up this film establish a lyrical in-betweenness which helps to illustrate the indeterminacy which is so frequently a part of the representation of teenagers.

The patterns discussed in the previous chapters of this thesis, are here spread across the love triangle, rather than weighted in the primary same-sex friendship. The relationship between Kerou and Shihao, which is characterised

by mimicry and doubling, embodies these most directly, however the differentiation between Kerou and Yuezhen also echoes the differentiation between teen girls seen in the 'Best Friends' films. Part of the queerness at the centre of this film is expressed through the love triangle: rather than two girls carrying an unrequited obsession with one boy or man, each member of the triangle has unrequited desires for another member. The hint of lesbian desire, Kerou's for Yuezhen, effectively destroys the possibility of friendship between the girls. In fact, the friendship between the two girls deteriorates as the narrative develops, and it is in dealing with this loss that Kerou is able to form a bond with Shihao. So after the admission of her romantic love for her best friend, which places the relationship just beyond the bounds of the best friendships of previous chapters, Kerou must find a way to cope with the fallout of her desires. The heterosocial relationship she develops with Shihao in many ways also elaborates the patterns discussed as occurring in dyadic homosocial friendships.

Just as in films about girls' dyadic homosocial relationships in which two girls are shown to mirror each other visually and otherwise, and are often linked by editing and framing, Kerou and Shihao are linked in heterosocial mirroring. The two literally enact repetitions of each other's behaviour, and Kerou at one point actually wears an image of Shihao's face. Their relationship is triangulated by Yuezhen, however ultimately she is relegated to the margins of the narrative. If Kerou and Shihao's friendship is then aligned with representational patterns developed around dyadic homosocial friendships, it oversteps these patterns by admitting Shihao's developing crush on Kerou. The film blurs the boundaries of each of its friendships, allowing for all the various possibilities for desire between Kerou, Yuezhen, and Shihao. In this way the relationships represented here enact the liminality of teen friendships, which have been repressed and denied by the films discussed in the 'Best Friends' chapter, by breaking down the borders between friendship and romance for each pair of characters.

Frenemies: *My Summer of Love*

My Summer of Love is not 'about' the sexual preferences of its characters, which are never really distinguished, and therefore the film avoids engaging in the representational burden which potentially haunts images of gay and lesbian

teens. Instead, it is the story of a friendship which muddles the boundaries of friendship, love, and desire. This does not mean that the film does not engage with the patterns which have emerged from the analysis of same-sex friendships in this thesis. In fact, the film has much in common with the films about girls' friendships discussed in the 'Frenemies' chapter. The girls are relatively isolated in their relationship but there is also a sinister undercurrent, as in the frenemy films. Rather than holding their homosocial desire at bay and under the surface, however, Tamsin (Emily Blunt) and Mona (Natalie Press) actually consummate their obsessive relationship. Several of the motifs of films about friendships between girls discussed throughout this thesis are present here, such as the use of mirrors, doubling (the two girls increasingly dress alike until they are literally wearing the exact same outfit at the giddy height of their relationship), and narcissistic obsession, as well as the common insistence on visual and other differentiations. The pathology of Tamsin's character, as well, emerge in her lies and betrayals of Mona's trust. The girls' relationship is triangulated by their relationship to Mona's brother Phil (Paddy Considine) and also by their relationship with Tamsin's sister Sadie (Kathryn Sumner). In fact, their relationship is in many ways structured by Sadie's absence. Ultimately, the representation of the friendship of these girls crosses the boundaries between friendship and love which have been discussed in previous chapters, so that the two girls are able to explore the obsessive desires latent in the frenemies films.

Figure 7.8 – Tamsin as seen from Mona's perspective on the ground.

Friendship and desire between Mona and Tamsin are both developed through the use of space and the creation of tension through framing and editing devices. From the very beginning, the hierarchical gulf of power and class between them is made clear, and is played out in various ways as the narrative progresses. When the girls meet, Mona is lying on the ground on the side of the

road, resting from pushing her motor-less motorbike back home. Tamsin approaches on horseback, and is first seen upside down in the frame, from Mona's perspective on the ground (Figure 7.8). This relationship, established right at the beginning, is played out in all their encounters: Mona is working class, Tamsin upper middle class; Mona rides a ten pound motorbike with no engine, which implies poverty, innovation, making do, and the desire for mobility, while Tamsin rides a horse, which implies wealth, leisure, and mobility. Mona, on her back on the ground, has little social power, while Tamsin rides high above Mona and others, having both social power and the desire to wield it. It is little surprise that most of the relationship takes place on Tamsin's terms, in her large family house.

Figure 7.9 – Tamsin, left, and Mona, right, sit apart on the couch, emphasising the distance between them.

The differentiation between the girls, however, soon slides into a doubling, mirrored effect, as their attraction becomes clear. The first night they spend together is spent outdoors, and though they are close together there is a sense, through the wide shots of them lying in the grass, of openness around them which prevents much intimacy from developing. The second night, however, is shown in closer shots, in which the girls sit at either end of the frame, looking at each other (Figure 7.9), emphasising the space and tension between them; immediately after, they begin dancing to Edith Piaf, romantically twirling in shots which still emphasise the space between them as they spin at arm's length. That night, they share Tamsin's bed. They keep to their own sides, but the duvet is stretched taut between them embodying their growing tension and attraction. At this point the tension is unspoken, merely underlying the development of their relationship, a visual representation of their desires held at bay.

These desires are also visually represented through Tamsin's gradual mirroring of Mona's personal style. Mona has worn shortened jeans and pink vests from the beginning of the film, with the added potential layer of a zip-up jumper. Though both girls have alternated wearing large hoop earrings, on the third day of their friendship, they both don them. Likewise, however, on this day Tamsin also wears shortened jeans, a vest (in a more domineering red, rather than pink), and a jumper (Figure 7.10). The adoption of Mona's style is quick and thorough – when the girls go out together, they are almost mirror image of each other, which sets them up as doubles and their attraction becomes narcissistic, and they are in fact frequently now shot close together in the frame. This doubling does serve a purpose within the narrative, to help Tamsin fit into the estate where her father's mistress lives; otherwise she might look as out of place as her father's expensive car does in the mistress's driveway. This could have been done in many ways, however, without Tamsin mimicking Mona's style exactly, down to colour schemes and accessories.

Figure 7.10 – Mona and Tamsin in coordinating colours, as Tamsin takes on Mona's look

In another moment of mirroring, Tamsin catches Mona dancing in front of the mirror in her pants. She gives Mona clothes to try on, standing behind her as Mona watches herself in the mirror, modelling the feminine and expensive looking items. This scene leads to the first of Tamsin's many lies, as most of the clothes she gives Mona are actually her sister's and she tells Mona her sister has died of anorexia. The give and take of this mirroring, Tamsin taking Mona's style and giving her clothes of her own and of her sister's, represents an exchange of narcissistic desire, pivoting on Tamsin's ability to both acquire new clothes and to give away those which are in excess of her needs. Her social power and status allow her to manipulate the situation, clothing both herself and Mona as she sees fit. Tamsin is able to use Sadie's clothes to create a sister over whom she has

power, perhaps; Mona is more easily manipulated and awed by Tamsin than Sadie was. Sadie's wardrobe also provides the means by which the two girls exchange narcissistic and obsessive gazes in the mirror and across the room.

Figure 7.11 - Mona and Tamsin entering the water as doubles

Figure 7.12 - Mona and Tamsin meet as equals in the environment

Elements play a symbolic role; water is used twice as the beginning and end of their relationship, and fire is used in the middle, as they forge their bond. The first time the girls cross the boundary between friendship and desire, they do so in the river pool which is Mona's favourite place. In this fluid space, they are able to express themselves to each other, entering as doubles (Figure 7.11), and meeting as equals in the natural environment (Figure 7.12). The fire scene occurs after the girls have ingested mushrooms. They are shot in silhouette against a fire, as they declare their love for each other and promise that if either tries to leave the other, they will kill each other. This pact, forged against fire, is perhaps the height of their obsession, as the next morning Tamsin appears bored of their relationship and ready to move on, perhaps with Mona's brother Phil. The second water scene recreates the first, with the scorned and betrayed Mona being found by Tamsin near the river pool. The two enter the water once more and kiss, just like the first time, only this time Mona moves to

fulfil their pact, choking and attempting to drown Tamsin. Her total seriousness in this act, though she doesn't complete it, and Tamsin's outraged shock, both serve to finally differentiate the girls who had been doubles of each other, and to clarify their positions in terms of their relationship.

Despite the inequalities of their relationship in terms of emotional and social power, the expression of these key points in their relationship via natural settings and elemental associations serve to equalise the girls, placing them in a less polarised relation to each other. Tamsin's motivations appear to be boredom and curiosity, rather than the genuine interest and desire that Mona has felt. This gives Tamsin power over Mona, via manipulation of Mona's feelings, yet Mona makes sure that Tamsin does not maintain the power in the relationship, and in fact reclaims this for herself as she tries to fulfil their pact in the water. This reclamation of power ends the film, as Mona walks away from Tamsin and her small town, on foot but self-sufficient. The title of the film as well as the frozen action of Mona walking away serve to place the relationship between the girls as an episode, perhaps a transitional episode, in Mona's life. It does not promise any particular kind of future, but unlike the frenemy films it does not foreclose any possibilities, either.

Mona's brother Phil and Tamsin's sister Sadie each interrupt and pepper the relationship between the girls in particular ways which are telling in terms of the two girls' relationships to heterosexuality. Phil interrupts the girls' first sex scene, as he arrives at Tamsin's house looking for Mona. Tamsin's level of distraction at this interruption, as well as her many gazes in Phil's direction, hint at her attraction to him and her attempt to seduce him. Tamsin's interactions with Phil serve to foreground her manipulative nature, and emphasise her power over Mona and her eventual bored disinterest when the fascination of her new friend wears off. Sadie, on the other hand, is a vehicle for Tamsin's manipulations of Mona. She dresses Mona in Sadie's clothes, and tells her stories about Sadie's death and the mourning of Tamsin's family. It is Sadie's appearance at the end of the film which drives home for Mona the extent of Tamsin's lies and betrayals. Sadie not only is alive, but demands Mona return her shirt, which Tamsin had given her. As Phil is a catalyst for exposing Tamsin's equally passing interest in both hetero and homosexuality, Sadie operates as the site through which Mona's devotion and commitment to her relationship with Tamsin are expressed. Sadie's wardrobe allows Mona to double Tamsin, and the

exposure of Tamsin's lie about Sadie's death is the means by which Mona is most hurt by Tamsin.

Tamsin in many ways echoes the cold-hearted, manipulating and reprehensible lesbian figure found in the frenemy films discussed earlier in this thesis. She is sexually aggressive and does not seem to care about the effect her actions have on those around her, and in face is disruptive of both hetero- and homonormative categories. Like the frenemy relationships, too, Mona and Tamsin's relationship cannot continue as a possible future within the narrative. Mona, however, is able to resist the patterns which plague the protagonists of the frenemy films, as she moves on without necessarily recommitting herself to a heteronormative lifestyle, and instead heads off to an unknown future on her own. Again the motifs of doubling, mirrors, and narcissistic obsession are linked to lesbian desire, but that desire is here acknowledged and acted upon by the film's teen protagonists. This film, then, though it has much in common with other films about teen girls which suppress possible lesbian desire in girls' friendships, is able to present an explicitly sexual and romantic relationship without any attempts in the narrative's conclusion to recuperate Mona to heteronormativity. This marks the biggest change from the patterns which have been traced in representations of teen girls' friendships across this thesis. Unfortunately it also preserves the association of lesbianism with pathology, aggression, and deceit.

School Friends: *Summer Storm*

Even more than *Blue Gate Crossing*, *Summer Storm* is rather typical of the 'coming out' film genre. Harry Benshoff and Sean Griffin call this genre of films 'young love', or gay and lesbian romances, stating that 'these films generally provide "positive" and realist images of gay men and lesbians coming out or falling in love' (2006, 270).[68] The teen coming out film is most often structured so that the teen realises he/she is gay, faces obstacles socially and emotionally, and decides to come out and stop 'living a lie' in order to have a happy and satisfied future. The inclusion of actual or implied sexual activity is a key aspect of this genre, almost as much as the chosen identity itself. This is perhaps

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[68] Benshoff and Griffin mention teen coming out films such as *The Incredibly True Adventures of Two Girls in Love* (Maggenti ,1995), *Beautiful Thing* (MacDonald, 1996), *Edge of Seventeen* (Moreton, 1998), *Get Real* (Shore, 1998), and *But I'm a Cheerleader* (Babbit, 2000),

because teens are often straight until proven gay, as seen throughout this thesis. However, *Summer Storm* presents this narrative structure framed through an exploration of the boundaries of friendships, particularly between Tobi (Robert Stadlober) and Achim (Kostja Ullmann). In this way the film acts a bridge between the coming out film genre and the films about teen friendships discussed in this thesis. The film also has much in common with those discussed in the 'School Friends' chapter, particularly in its mobilisation of hierarchies of relational masculinity.

From the beginning, there is a physical element to the friendship of Tobi and Achim, and a focus on their bodies and physicality through editing, framing, looking within the film, as well as spoken commentary and admiration. The opening scenes depict the two boys running through the woods on an exercise track, and the athletic theme runs right through the film. The premise is a rowing competition taking place at an isolated lake; Tobi and Achim's team is one of the groups competing. All of the boys in the film play pranks, wrestle and tease one another, but all of this is set against the opening scenes of the film, in which it is made clear that for Tobi, the physical goofing off between himself and Achim means something more. In one of the first scenes of the film, the two chase each other with washing sponges, they wrestle, and then Tobi pins Achim to the floor. He pauses over Achim, breathing heavily (Figure 7.13). Achim notices that Tobi has an erection. Immediately following this moment, the boys lie on the floor of the shower room and simultaneously masturbate, in a scene which echoes *Y tu Mamá También*. In the middle of this, Tobi looks over at Achim. Echoing *Y tu Mamá También* further, Achim begins describing the female body he is picturing. Tobi laughs, and protests that he is trying to concentrate. His longing gazes at his friend, and his disregard for Achim's attempts at

Figure 7.13 – Tobi pins Achim to the ground during play, Achim notices Tobi's erection

heterosexualising their homoerotic masturbation, offer early hints of Tobi's desire for Achim.

Further, though the heterosexual team from Bavaria is set at odds with the 'Queerstrokes' from Berlin, the level of homosocial physical teasing and play is no different in either group aside from the overt homosexual reference points of the Queerstrokes. All this highlights the blurred boundaries between heteronormal homosociality and homosexual desire, and situates Tobi's feelings as perfectly natural, restricted only by social intolerances. The outdoor setting, too, helps promote this symbolic move. Tobi is an athlete, at home in nature and his body, and his coming out experiences are situated within a socially isolated natural environment, therefore his feelings and desires are aligned with the natural.

The physical aspects of Tobi and Achim's friendship, which for Tobi are sexual and romantic, and for Achim are within heteronormative homosociality, are shown clearly through glances and touches as well as play and teasing. Immediately following the masturbation scene, Tobi misunderstands a kiss blown across a room by Achim. The kiss is aimed at Achim's girlfriend Sandra (Miriam Morgenstern), but intercepted by Tobi, who hides in shame as he realises his mistake. It is this moment that Tobi realises the extent of his own desires, and is simultaneously confronted with the fact that Achim is unaware of his feelings and perhaps does not return them. The details of their physical interactions are not far off from the kinds of representations of boys' friendships which have been discussed earlier in this thesis. In the previous cases, the homoerotics of these kinds of exchanges have been covered over and suppressed, whereas this film takes the homoerotics of teen boys' relationships for granted and shows the kinds of possibilities which exist there, even if they are not always admitted or understood by all involved. As much as it blurs the boundaries separating friendship and desire, the film also shows the heartache when these feelings are admitted and acted upon, particularly given the social stigmas which surround those friendship/love boundaries which have been illustrated in previous chapters.

Romantic relationships and friendships are further blurred through the parallel exchanges of looks between friends and lovers or potential lovers throughout the film. Looks exchanged between Tobi and Achim are presented similarly to those exchanged between Tobi and Leo (Marlon Kittel), the

Queerstroke team member who pursues Tobi and encourages him to admit his burgeoning gay identity. Achim and Tobi each stare at each other as they dance with or kiss Sandra and Anke (Figures 7.14-15); Leo stares at Tobi while Oli (Ludwig Blochberger) caresses him and dries him off. In the first scene, Tobi is not interested in Anke, who pursues him, and instead watches Achim and Sandra. Tobi mistakes Achim's (perhaps overzealous) interest in Tobi and Anke's 'romance' for the reciprocation of Tobi's longing gaze. This exchange is mirrored by the looks between Tobi and Leo on the pier in the second scene – Oli, another Queerstroke who solicitously helps Leo take off his clothes, puts on his sun cream, and dries him off after his swim, is essentially ignored by Leo, who only has eyes for Tobi. Here, the looks exchanged between Tobi and Leo

Figure 7.14 - Achim smiles at Tobi as he dances with his girlfriend

Figure 7.15 - Tobi watches Achim longingly as he dances with Anke

despite the more immediate attentions of others are actually intercepted and understood by Oli, whose jealousy over the situation emerges as the narrative progresses. The similarities of the two scenes illustrate the ease with which Tobi has mistaken the nature of his relationship with Achim, as heteronormative homosociality and homosexual desire are shown to have identical markers.

The film is, in fact, largely interested in highlighting those identical markers, particularly while downplaying certain stereotypes of gay men. With the introduction of the Queerstrokes team, Tobi is presented with athletic, confident, and masculine teens who freely admit their homosexual desires. It is the introduction of these role models at the time that Tobi realises his desire for Achim which both troubles and encourages his own recognition and claiming of gay identity. His ability to do so comfortably, however, comes with the reassurance from Leo, Oli, and Malte (Hanno Koffler) that they do not approve of the adoption of feminine behaviours by gay men; they both are and desire masculine men. As mentioned above, there is a focus on the similarities of behaviour between Queerstrokes and the presumably heterosexual boys on the Bavarian team, and Malte even goes so far as to pretend to be straight to seduce another of the Bavarians; without changing his behaviour aside from denying that he is gay, he is easily able to pass as a straight boy. The Queerstrokes' presentations of masculinity, alongside their homophobic denouncement of femme-ininity in gay boys, make the transition from heteronormative homosociality to homosexuality an easier one for Tobi, playing on his internalised homophobia and his heteronormative understandings of masculinity. Some of the internalised homophobia of the Queerstrokes is aimed at the two members of their team who do present more feminine versions of masculinity, and who are constantly derided and teased. There is a clear hierarchy which emerges, in which straight-acting gay boys are 'better' than the two femme boys on the Queerstrokes team. This echoes much of the discussion regarding the hierarchy of masculinity developed in the films in the 'School Friends' chapter.

A parallel storyline between Malte and Georg (Tristano Casanova), a particularly homophobic member of the Bavarian team, is used to denounce both predatory homosexuality and virulent homophobia, so that the 'worst' impulses of both groups are expressed and denied by the group at large via the two extremes embodied by Malte and Georg. It also serves as an extreme example of what happened when Tobi made his feelings known to Achim, as well as dramatising the homophobia of heterosexual masculinity with which Tobi is internally battling along with his apprehensions about social rejection. This plot also brings the film to a climax, as Malte's deception of Georg and subsequent attempt at seduction have brought the tensions between the groups to the fore, forcing them to air their fears and anxieties. Oli takes this opportunity to out

Tobi to the group, which results in further divides and physical violence in the form of a brawl.

After the confrontation and physical altercation, the film dramatises Tobi's isolation from his peers, gay and straight, because of his desires and because of his denial of them. As the teams return to the camp in the pouring rain (the titular summer storm which coincides with the film's climax), a tree falls between Tobi and the rest of the Bavarian group. This effectively and dramatically isolates Tobi, creating a physical signifier for what he has been feeling all along. Tobi's heavy breathing overpowers the soundtrack, detaching him from the sounds of the rest of the group as the coach's voice is barely heard in the background, ordering the teams to abandon the camp and head for the nearby hostel. This isolation of Tobi's breath on the soundtrack works to emphasise his feelings of estrangement from the group, and brings an end to the climax of the dramatic action. Though this isolation is resolved after Tobi accepts and vocalises his new identity, it is particularly poignant here as a representation of the dangers faced by gay and lesbian teens upon coming out to their friends and families. The threat of violence and the fear of losing his community have so far prevented Tobi from admitting his feelings.

The resolution of the film, however, comes only after Tobi has come out to the group, and the Queerstrokes have won the competition, proving their athletic ability and associated masculinity. The twinned preoccupations with promoting heteronormative masculinity even within the group of gay teens as well as insisting that Tobi inform the group about his newfound identity, in order that he stop 'living a lie', are thus resolved and allow both teams to work through their fears about each other. Georg is forced to replace the injured Leo in the Queerstrokes team, so that teamwork and sport can help them overcome their differences; likewise Tobi and Achim must work together as friends and teammates and therefore move beyond the various dramas of Tobi's desires. The resolution of all dramatic plotlines through acceptance and coming out of the closet is a frequent component of the 'coming out' genre, and seems to offer advice to teens: coming out is always better than hiding your desires, no matter what you might face.

The film works within the context of typical representations of teen relationships, particularly in the production of the web of desire which is laced through the group: Oli wants Leo, Leo wants Tobi, Tobi wants Achim, Achim

wants Sandra, Sandra wants Achim, Anke wants Tobi, Malte wants to prove something with Georg, Tobi might want Leo. The various triangulations and unrequited crushes amongst the ensemble link the film's depiction of teen desires with films about teens more broadly, and particularly those discussed throughout this thesis. The only stability is in the reciprocity of Achim and Sandra's relationship, which is threatened and then re-strengthened via Tobi's interference, and in the relationship of the femme-inine gay boys Nils and Niels, who are minor characters. Though the fluidity and flux of these multiple desires are able to comment on the false heteronormativity of mainstream representations of teenagers and teen relationships due to the many same-sex crushes depicted, the film fails to question the femme-phobia of its presentation of gay male relationships in its efforts to make gay identity a safe place for questioning teens.

Certainly the film tries to intervene in the strict policing of boundaries between friendship and romance, however it does so by validating heteronormative masculinity in a similar vein to the films in the 'School Friends' chapter. By privileging normative masculinity even amongst the gay teens, the film is unable to disrupt the mechanisms of homophobia mobilised by representations of teen boys' friendships. Though the film highlights the spectrum of homosocial desire, and the slippage along it embodied by liminal teens, by denying any reciprocation of crushes between friends and between clearly marked gay teens and straight teens, the boundaries between friendship and romance, gay and straight, are in fact rigidly upheld. The only character allowed to move along the spectrum is Tobi, whose narrative arc requires him to recognise his inappropriate desire for Achim and to seek solace in a more appropriate relationship with another gay teen.

Uncertain Gay Futures: *L.I.E.*

Like *The History Boys*, *L.I.E.* depicts gay teens in otherwise heteronormative environments struggling to accept themselves and to find a place in their social worlds. Again, like *The History Boys*, gay adulthood is linked to paedophilia, criminality, disappointment, and sudden tragic or violent death. Here, Howie (Paul Dano) is a teen by who comes to accept his gay desires via his friendship with Gary (Billy Kay). Like in *Summer Storm* and *Blue Gate Crossing*, the difficulty of crossing the boundaries between friendship and desire, despite the

often indefinite quality of those boundaries, is illustrated through this friendship. Howie's desire for Gary is expressed via editing and framing, as well as dialogue and plot, though he is never able to tell Gary or act on his desires. Gary's flirtation with Howie, meanwhile, is also shown through editing and framing, and though it may be obvious in the narrative, it is not to Howie. Like Kerou's love for Yuezhen, it is Howie's desire for Gary which pushes him to discover and express his desires and identity, even though nothing ever passes between the two. After Gary leaves and Howie discovers some of Gary's secrets with the help of Big John (Brian Cox), it becomes clear that Howie had a naïve understanding of Gary and his motives. The boundaries of their relationship, which Howie was afraid to cross, were probably much more flexible than he assumed. Through both homophobic remarks and tempered acceptabce, he also finds that his infatuation was obvious to the other members of his and Gary's homosocial group. In illustrating this infatuation, the film pays close attention to the boys' bodies, and the ways that Gary and Howie look at each other's bodies.

The relationship between Gary and Howie is presented as a friendship, although both Big John and the boys' friends already assume they've been lovers. It is clear from the beginning, from the first robbery they commit together if not before, that Gary is the object of Howie's desire. Point of view shots isolate and focus on Gary's face and flirty smile, and refer back to Howie's awkward stance as he stares (Figures 7.16-18). The viewer is anchored with Howie as he looks, then rewarded with the object of his gaze, before cutting back to Howie, as he watches Gary. The apparent mid-shot point of view shots from Gary's perspective are not necessarily anchored to his gaze because initially, when we see this shot, Gary doesn't realise that Howie is there watching him. Instead, the viewer is given the sense of watching Howie watch Gary, rather than any sense of Gary's persepective. Howie is able to look but is
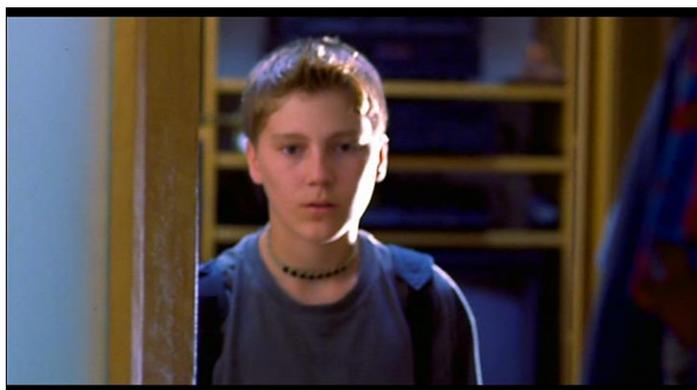
Figure 7.16 – Howie watches Gary

Figure 7.17 – Gary catches Howie

Figure 7.18 – Reverse shot shows Howie again

afraid to act, despite Gary saying things like, 'I'd fuck anything', which keeps the possibility of reciprocated feelings open and encourages Howie's crush without actually giving anything away.

Several scenes are shot as fantasies from Howie's point of view. The first is bookended by time spent with Gary, and follows the boys breaking into Big John's house. A shot of Howie in his bed immediately precedes the fantasy scene. In it, flashes of Gary sitting shirtless in grass from various angles follow the progress of a snake curling around his body while the soundtrack is filled with the compliments that Gary has given Howie. The snake reaches Gary's chest, and its tongue flickers across the image of Gary's nipple (Figure 7.19). The sensuousness of the close-up shots of the snake against Gary's skin is combined with Gary's direct visual address to the camera. Frequent shots back to a close-up of Howie's face together with the soundtrack present this sequence as a fantasy. The camera next wanders down to Gary's jeans, and then back up to his disgusted face, as Howie imagines Gary's reaction ('what are you looking at?') should he reveal his desires. Despite shots of Big John reacting to

the robbery, the scene ends on Howie waking up, confirming that this has been his fantasy.

Figure 7.19 - Shots of Gary's naked torso during Howie's fantasy

The second fantasy sequence is cut in a similar way to the sequence discussed above, but it is unclear as to whether the scene is imagined or not. In terms of plot development, it is most likely actually happening. In this sequence, Howie and Gary's actions mirror each other. Big John has confronted each boy about the robbery, and they go to each other's houses, separately, each boy looking for the other. The sequence cuts between the boys as they mirror each other's movements. Gary enters Howie's bedroom; Howie enters Gary's. Gary falls back on Howie's bed; Howie sits down on Gary's. Gary goes into the bathroom and looks at himself in a split mirror, while Howie enters Gary's bathroom and finds a similarly split mirror. The camera moves closer, and the scene cuts between Gary caressing himself, his image doubled in the mirror, and Howie's face, also doubled in the mirror, appearing via editing to be watching Gary (Figure 7.20-21). The scene, though it technically shows parallel events, is clearly also meant to imply that this could be Howie's fantasy. Howie is shown looking, Gary is shown 'looking back' at the camera, as if he is looking back at Howie – like the direct address during Howie's fantasy about Gary and the snake.

Despite his clear feelings for Gary, Howie continues to promote his heterosexuality; when he and Gary exchange secrets, his is that he has 'never really been with a girl' as though this is the ultimate goal, but has not yet been achieved. There are several instances in which his friends and others attempt to bring out some kind of admission regarding his sexual desires and identity. After Gary runs away, their friend Brian (Tony Donnelly), who has previously been protective of Howie at school, tells him maybe now he can try stuff with girls, saying 'when you do stuff with guys that's gay stuff, when you do stuff with

Figure 7.20 – Howie looks into the mirror as though watching
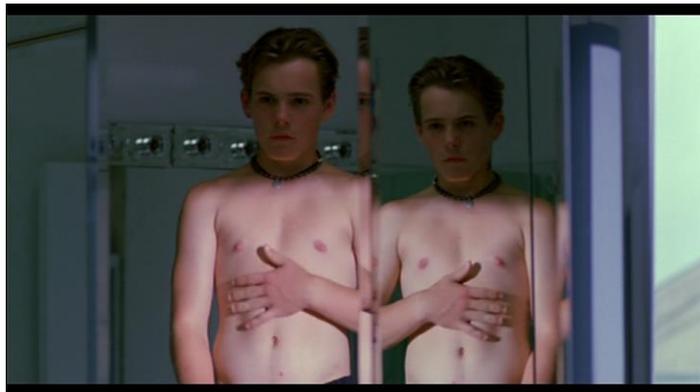
Figure 7.21 – Gary looks into the mirror as if returning the gaze of the camera/Howie

girls, that's straight stuff'. Howie's defensive reply, 'what the fuck are you trying to say?' is met by an incredulous retort from their other friend Kevin (James Costa), asking 'what, you think we didn't know you were a salami wiper?' As Howie walks away after he and Kevin fight over this last comment, Brian calls out to him, inviting him back, saying at least Howie isn't having sex with his own sister, which Kevin has admitted to. Later, Howie's school guidance counsellor tells him she knows he's different, 'not a nerd or a jock or anything,' and he challenges her as though if she can say, 'you're gay' then he might either be able to deny it or admit it. It is not until he meets Big John and learns of Gary's history as a hustler that Howie seems to realise that desiring other boys might be acceptable.

There are implications that Brian has a history with Gary, or might like to. Again, the boundaries of the friendships in Howie's homosocial group are much more fluid than he has assumed. The implications are expressed through statements strewn through the narrative, particularly Brian's frequent defence of Howie and his no-nonsense assumption that with Gary and his influence gone, Howie can date girls. This last sequence implies that Howie had little choice

against Gary's charisma, which Brian understands as if this had possibly happened to him. Brian knows about Howie's feelings, and knows that Gary is gay or at least has gay sex. The further implication is that Brian might have also had sex with Gary. His seemingly non-judgemental attitude, that 'doing stuff with guys, that's gay stuff, doing stuff with girls, that's straight stuff,' and his unwavering friendship to both Gary and Howie add to this, as does the otherwise gratuitous scene in the police station in which Brian has a visible erection. This unexplained attention paid to Brian's body is unaccompanied by any other reference to this level of physicality throughout the film. The sequence is an anomaly, which is why, with no visible stimulus except the homosocial company and the implication of possibly having spent time behind bars with other boys and men, it insinuates some kind of deviance or non-heteronormative pleasure. Though he has a stated preference for heterosexuality, Brian is a liminal and inexplicable figure in the narrative which undermines the fixity and heteronormativity of the homosocial relationships which Howie had assumed at the start of the narrative.

While *L.I.E.* may not be explicit about sexual activity beyond Brian's anomalous erection and one implied instance of oral sex, it does pay particular attention to the bodies of Gary and Howie, specifically focusing on their bare chests and skin. The shots here are often quite close, as in Howie's fantasy involving Gary and the snake, and call attention to the youth and near childishness of the boys' bodies. This is an interesting choice in a film whose characters take refuge with a paedophile (Big John); Gary, as a hustler, has a past with Big John, and steals his guns to fund his escape to California. Gary uses his body for his own advantage, and there is a parallel of phallic exchange between his turning tricks and his stealing and selling the guns. After Gary leaves, Howie spends time with Big John because Gary blames Howie for the theft. Big John, despite his initial sexual intentions, ends up providing Howie with the father figure he has been missing. This somewhat lessens the potentially distasteful combination of paedophilia and the aesthetic of the sexualised bodies of young boys, as do the point of view shots, discussed above, which claim those bodies primarily for the desires of other young boys. The threat of paedophilia is finally resolved when Big John's jealous young live-in lover kills him. This neatly circumvents the realisation of a sexual relationship between Howie and Big John. Like the use of paedophilia in *The History Boys*,

Big John has acted as a guiding figure for Howie. Also like *The History Boys*, the only other gay-identified characters in the film are adult men with paedophilic desires, thus linking gay adulthood with criminality, shame, and the disappointment evidently experienced by these characters. Both Big John and *The History Boys*' Hector also die violent and/or tragic deaths at the conclusion of the films, linking gay adulthood with untimely destruction and inappropriate desires.

L.I.E. clearly foregrounds Howie's desires throughout the film, particularly through the use of editing and fantasy sequences. The point-of-view shots of Howie gazing at Gary throughout bring to mind other representations of longing between boys in the films discussed in this thesis, such as the final shot of *Superbad*, in which Seth gazes after the diminishing figure of Evan, or *The Covenant*, in which Pogue gazes after Caleb. Likewise, Howie's assumption that his desires are forbidden and impossible to realise is an indication of the homophobia and heteronormativity associated with teen boy's dyadic homosocial friendships, as also demonstrated by the films discussed throughout this thesis. The assumed heteronormativity of young delinquents in suburbia, too, references the history of teen film representations, and its disruption via the introduction of desire within the homosocial group is both a comment on teen film representational history as well as an attempt to break stereotypes extant in the representational history of gay boys.

The presumed limits of teen friendships are called into question here, as they were in both *Blue Gate Crossing* and *My Summer of Love*, and blurriness of the line between friendship and romance is used to help develop Howie's discovery of his own desires for his friend Gary. This section does not make up the majority of the film, but does take patterns of mirroring and the gaze as seen in the 'School Boys' chapter to set up Howie's crush. Homophobia is used within the homosocial group to try to police Howie's recognisable desires, but here the homophobia is tempered by acceptance from (one member of) Howie and Gary's peer group. As compared to the more rigidly policed relationships discussed in previous chapters, these films all strive to demonstrate the liminality of teen desires. Their characters move beyond heteronormative representability, and act on the denied and displaced desires within dyadic homosocial teen friendships which I have argued exist in all the films discussed in this thesis.

Another Gay Movie

Perhaps the raunchiest film discussed in this thesis, *Another Gay Movie* is a satire of mainstream 1990s teen films like *American Pie* as well as the coming out film genre, the representational history of gay and lesbian teens, and gay and lesbian culture more generally. It thus works as a kind of meta-text, both enacting and commenting on the patterns discussed in this thesis. The teen film structure enables the film to present and satirise the desires underlying teen friendship exhibited by the other films in this thesis. The film also invokes heteronormative narrative structures, and queers them by inserting gay and lesbian characters into roles which deconstruct not only heterosexuality but gender normativity associated with those narrative structures. *Another Gay Movie* takes the patterns analysed in this thesis as a given and plays with them to create comedic vignettes and a broader satiric narrative.

Though the film is largely crass and gratuitous, the friendship between Griff (Mitch Morris) and Jarod (Jonathon Chase), and Griff's desire for Jarod which is presented through editing and sequences of looks, are actually rather sweet. The ease with which the boys move from best friends to boyfriends is a comment on the way that boundaries between friendship and romance are represented in heteronormative narratives. Beside the homoerotics of best friendship, this segment of the film also references the opposition between nerds and jocks in teen films, and in particular the trope of the nerdy girl who must undergo a make-over to win the affections of a popular boy. In each case, however, these tropes are queered as the opposition between nerds and jocks is homoeroticised (where in teen films these two often compete over the same girls), and the nerdy girl is played by a nerdy boy who feminises his own inferiority to the popular boy.

Beside the heteronormative masculine hierarchy invoked by the nerd/jock dynamic, the film further addresses the issue of heteronormative gender hierarchies as it exists among gay men, and as demonstrated uncritically in *Summer Storm*. Here this hierarchy, and particularly the sexual positions which are considered appropriately 'masculine,' are discredited; the boys start the summer promising to have penetrative anal sex, specifically as the penetrator (the 'masculine' position), and end the summer having 'become men' by realising that 'real men take it up the ass'.

The boys make a pact to lose their penetrative virginity by the end of the summer – the same kind of pact made in *American Pie* and using the same kind of hierarchy depicted in *Summer Storm*, in which straight (acting) masculinity and 'masculine' sexual positions are favoured. Though this prevalent hierarchy is ultimately satirised and commented on by *Another Gay Movie*, it initially precludes the possibility of a romance between Griff and Jarod, as all the boys claim to be 'tops' and their pact is to 'penetrate a member of the same sex', specifically denying the desire to receive penetration, despite their actual, sometimes hidden, preferences. As Jarod and Griff both claim to be 'tops', looking for 'bottoms', and are both included within the homosocial friend group, they are seemingly off-limits for each other. Griff and Jarod are both, therefore, 'masculine' and are operating within a heteronormative understanding of gay relationships. They are therefore in a similar position to the boys in the 'Best Friends' and 'School Friends' chapters, whose heteronormative masculinity requires them to deny and repress any homoerotic feelings they might have for their best friends.

This understanding of gay relationships also echoes the heterosexualisation present in the 'School Boys' chapter in which a hierarchy of masculinity helps to make sense of the coupling of best friend relationships. All four boys seem to assume that, to lose their virginity, they must look outside the friend group. However, it is quickly obvious that Griff has feelings for Jarod, particularly via longing gazes in Jarod's direction. As it progresses, the film chronicles the development of this crush. It is emphasised through shots which often pair the two boys together or near each other (Figure 7.22), often showing them touch each other. Griff also begins to have fantasies about Jarod, one of which mimics

Figure 7.22 - Jarod, left, and Griff, right, paired in the frame

Carrie (de Palma 1976), with Griff as Carrie, and Jarod's boyfriend Beau as the cruel bucket dumper. The bucket here of course dumps semen instead of pig's blood. The comparison with *Carrie* further exhibits Griff's fears about admitting his feelings for Jarod; he fears that the boundaries between friendship and desire remain in place, and his transgressive desire might result in a painful rejection similar to the intolerance shown to Carrie.

The scene also, of course, aligns Griff with representations of teen girls, complicating the film's ultimate criticism of gendered sexual preferences. This not only feminises Griff's desires, but also aligns him with several narrative patterns in teen film more generally, using the association to create comedy. In particular, the *Carrie* reference and Griff's subsequent makeover scene, in which he dons inflatable butt inserts, wears form-fitting clothes, and takes off his glasses, invokes the trope of the nerdy girl whose makeover results in an excessive masquerade of femininity. Like those girls, Griff is shamed and punished for this excess, and is encouraged to perform a more 'authentic' masculinity.

As Griff's crush on Jarod escalates, the film increases the number of scenes which depict the two boys together in the frame, as well as the number of scenes in which the boys play together with a great deal of physicality. This works in two ways: first, to pair them together, emphasising their coupling, as seen frequently in the films discussed in this thesis; and second to highlight their physical and visual differences, another mechanism used frequently in the films in this thesis. After Griff hacks into their high school's gym CCTV camera (in a voyeuristic scene which mimics and homoeroticises *American Pie*), the two boys, along with their friend Nico (Jonah Blechman), watch excitedly on a computer. The body language in these shots emphasise the connection between the boys. The first few shots show only Griff and Jarod (Figure 7.23), and though later shots show all three boys are in the frame (Figure 7.24), Griff and Jarod sit close together, with Griff's hand resting on Jarod's chest, and Jarod's hand on Griff's knee, while Nico keeps his hands to himself. This escalation of the simple pairing of best friends within the frame as seen in the films discussed in previous chapters plays on the practices underpinning heteronormative films and queers them by inserting touching and physical closeness which is beyond the bounds of heteronormative friendships. The two boys are also physically differentiated quite distinctly: Jarod is tall with brown hair, and dresses in sports apparel

Figure 7.23 - Griff and Jarod paired watching the CCTV footage

Figure 7.24 - Griff and Jarod touching while watching CCTV footage

and preppy clothing, while Griff is short and blond, wears glasses, and frequently wears 'nerdy' clothing styles like sweater-vests and button-up shirts. This differentiation provides the distance necessary for desire, according to psychoanalysis but also to teen film tropes. More importantly, perhaps, the excessive nature of the differentiation works as a comment on the trope of difference as used within teen films and films about gay and lesbian teens.

Throughout the film, Griff maintains a dramatised fear of revealing his feelings. Combined with Jarod's much commented on 'straight-acting' demeanour, this aptly captures and comments on the structure of friendship/desire within heteronormativity which has been discussed throughout this thesis. When Griff finally gets the courage to tell Jarod how he feels, he does so by interrupting Jarod in the process of having sex with another boy. This echoes the way that characters like Melina and Jennifer interrupt the heterosexual relationships of their best friends in the 'Frenemies' chapter, though of course the relationship here is homosexual. Jarod, however, reacts by immediately reciprocating Griff's feelings: the boundary between best friends and boyfriend is crossed immediately, as if they were the same relationship.

In addition to the commentary on structures of friendships in mainstream teen films, *Another Gay Movie* also makes frequent reference to gay and lesbian culture and representation, as well as calling out the heteronormative representative strategies which are so common in gay and lesbian films. The video store the boys hang out in is covered in posters of gay and lesbian movies, like *Edge of Seventeen* (Todd Stephens 1997), a film by the same writer as *Another Gay Movie*. His own film is not free from satire, as Nico states, looking at the poster: 'coming out stories are so passé-bourgeois'. Nico's mother, in costume and accent, is direct reference to Michael's mother Debbie in the US version of the television show *Queer as Folk*, and the actress also played the mother in *Edge of Seventeen*. The literacy in gay and lesbian culture shown by the film makes the commentary on heteronormative hierarchies within gay and lesbian representation the more piercing, even when lightened by comedy.

As a comment on normative definitions of male sexuality, straight or gay, the main character Andy (Michael Carbonaro) keeps quiet about his desire to be the receptive partner until the end of the film, when he and the others all realise that these normative definitions are not as important or relevant as they assumed before gaining actual sexual experience. Though early in the film, Andy's father tells him that 'being the receptive partner in a homosexual relationship is nothing to be ashamed of', it is not so easy for Andy and his friends to accept this and move beyond normative ideas about masculinity and sexuality until after they have gone through the 'rites of passage' the film presents them with. In the end, their friend Muffler (Ashlie Atkinson) tells the boys that they need to learn that having sex doesn't make them men, and they conclude two things: Andy says, 'the moral of this story is… real men take it up the ass', and Jarod adds that 'the best butt love is when you're really in love'. This double moral reinforces the commentary on normative ideas of masculine sexuality and restates the ease with which best friends have become lovers and the line between best friend and boyfriend erased.

As a film which plays with representations of gay men and with representations of teenagers both straight and gay, *Another Gay Movie* provides an example of a film which is aware of the way that desire plays out along the homosocial continuum. It fosters the existence of that desire between friends, allowing it to exist as an unspoken undercurrent in ways which echo the friendships in *Duck Season* and *Superbad*. The difference here is that Griff and

Jarod are allowed to realise their desire for one another, and end the film *as a couple*, without the requisite destruction of their friendship, or the separation necessary for normative hetero adulthood. Likewise, the film uses this friendship to criticise heteronormative understandings of gay male sexuality, simultaneously calling into question the kind of masculine hierarchy found in films like *Evil* and *The Covenant*.

Conclusion

In each of these films a teen is in love with their same-sex best friend, and, unlike the films in previous chapters, these teens are less afraid to admit it. In fact, they all do eventually confess their feelings. The conventions of these films are nearly the same as the more mainstream heteronormative films discussed in previous chapters, except that the desire between friends is admitted overtly here while the films discussed in previous chapters employ mechanisms to deny and repress that desire. Even so, as self-aware depictions of an underrepresented group, the films in this chapter do not always provide the most responsible representations of gay or lesbian identity. Though *Summer Storm* is clearly attempting to counter those stereotypes which lead to homophobic reactions, it has risked its own forms of homophobia via femme-bashing. It nevertheless seems unfair and perhaps naïve to expect these films to provide 'positive images', as this often leads to unrealistic portrayals and restricts creative freedoms, as discussed in the literature review.

Gender continues to play a pivotal role in how friendships are depicted between same-sex teenagers, although as seen in *Blue Gate Crossing*, some of these patterns can translate across to heterosocial friendships as well, particularly when the gender of one of the characters, in this case Kerou, is more ambiguous. The structures and mechanisms of representing dyadic friendships in *My Summer of Love*, *Blue Gate Crossing*, and *Summer Storm*, however, each illustrate an extension and complication of the friendship patterns seen in the 'Frenemies', 'Best Friends', and 'School Friends' chapters, respectively.

According to Benshoff and Griffin, the coming out genre film actually emphasises the separation of gay and straight as much as it calls that separation into question. They argue that 'these films often represent "straight" characters that turn out to be "actually gay," thus undermining presumptive

heterosexuality but nonetheless reinforcing a straight-gay binary' (Benshoff &
Griffin 2006, 270). This tendency holds true for *Blue Gate Crossing* to some
extent, and certainly for *Summer Storm* and *Another Gay Movie*. In *Blue Gate
Crossing* and *Summer Storm,* the lead character's crush on their straight best
friend, which is the impetus for their coming out narrative, is unreciprocated
and the distinction between these straight best friend characters and the
'actually gay' character is rigidly maintained. After being rejected by straight
Achim, Tobi is only able to experience gay sex with Leo, another already gay
teen. In *Another Gay Movie*, the boys do not attempt relationships or sex with
straight boys at all, and in fact the ensemble consists almost entirely of gay
teens (an exclusion which echoes the absence of gay teens in heteronormative
films).

On the other hand, both *My Summer of Love* and *L.I.E.* are more fluid with
their teen identities. Neither girl in *My Summer of Love* confirms either a
straight or a lesbian identity. In *L.I.E.*, though Howie does effectively come out,
Gary's character is hazily defined and their group of friends likewise have
unclear experiences and preferences. Therefore, though Howie distinguishes
himself as gay, the binary between straight and gay established by *Blue Gate
Crossing*, *Summer Storm*, and *Another Gay Movie* does not exist among the
characters surrounding Howie.

Ultimately, the films in this chapter show that the structures and
mechanisms of films about teen friendships as discussed in this thesis translate
across from heteronormative 'straight' films to gay and lesbian films. The
fluidity with which these gay and lesbian teen characters move from friendship
to desire, and the difficulties which they face before admitting that their
'friend' is the object of their desire, illustrate the blurred boundaries between
friendship and romantic/sexual relationships as well as the social resistance to
that blurriness. Finally, they demonstrate that the spectrum of friendship and
romantic/sexual love exists for gay and lesbian teens just as it does for 'straight'
ones, and that the structures of representations of friendship among teens, and
desire within those friendships, translate from heteronormative narratives, as
identified in previous chapters, across to gay and lesbian ones.

Chapter 8 Conclusion: Queering Teen Friendships

This thesis has investigated representations of dyadic friendships between teenagers in film in order to understand how the boundaries between homosociality and homosexuality are maintained, and where slippages and disruptions of those boundaries take place in order to locate queer possibilities within these representations. The findings of this research indicate that while there are indeed queer possibilities in dyadic homosocial friendships, there are also mechanisms in place to deny or repress those possibilities. The mechanisms indicated are gender specific, and can also be found even in narratives with gay and lesbian teen characters.

Though many scholars[69] have argued that lesbian and gay representation in teen films is on the rise, the peak years for production of films with gay and lesbian main characters, 2000 and 2004 according to the data compiled for this research, each saw only four films per year, minimal by any standards. This means that very few recent representations of gay and lesbian teens as main characters in film are readily available. On the other hand, every film in the database contains hetero characters, even the gay and lesbian centred films. What this thesis seeks to do is to expand the scope of gay and lesbian representation, and complicate the heteronormativity of the teen in film by taking queer possibilities into account; if the seventeen presumably heteronormative films discussed in Chapters 4-6 of this thesis are any indication, there are at least as many, if not more, films with queer possibilities within their narratives as there are with gay and lesbian protagonists.

Using queer reading strategies which insist, in the vein of Alexander Doty, that queer narrative elements absolutely exist and are not just 'readings' which emerge from my own biases, this thesis sought to trace queerness through homoerotics and desire within dyadic homosocial relationships. It has therefore looked at the varying ways that this queerness might take shape, as well as how it has been denied particularly in heteronormative narratives. Films which did not focus primarily on dyadic homosocial relationships between teenagers were culled from the usable list in the database. Those that remained, then, were divided by relationship type: close dyadic heteronormative friendships with little antagonism; 'frenemies' or heteronormative dyadic friendships with antagonism;

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[69] Shary 2000 & 2005, Shary & Seibel 2007

male dyadic friendships in wider homosocial groupings; and dyadic friendships in which one or more of the friends was openly gay or lesbian. In this way, the trends of dyadic homosociality could be isolated and analysed on a smaller scale. Each of these types became a chapter here. These chapters present films which often have little in common other than the relationship type and the age of their primary characters. Using queer reading strategies to pick apart the heteronormative dyadic homosocial relationships in each type of film, however, the thesis seeks to point to the varying ways that queer possibilities exist within each of these films. The conclusions drawn from the work in these chapters will be developed below.

The conversations which this thesis hopes to contribute to are: teen film studies, queer reading practices, gender analysis, and representational gay and lesbian film studies. The combination of focused queer readings and interventions in representations of teenagers has been infrequent, and it is at these intersections that this thesis situates itself. Rather than the teen-focused analysis found here, queer readings of adult-focused films are far more common, and in fact are an established subset of queer film studies practices. Likewise, the exploration of homoeroticism in film and literature is most often aimed at adult-focused narratives and very infrequently addresses teenagers. On the other hand, the study of teen film is a growing field within both generic and historical film studies; even so, representations of gay and lesbian teens in film have rarely been rigorously addressed from a textual basis. It is at the nexus, then, of all these scholarly conversations that this thesis has strived to emerge.

This thesis contributes as one of the few studies of teen representation which focuses on homosocial, homoerotic, and queer desires, and likewise as one of the only studies to value queer possibilities within heteronormative relationships as potentially empowering and as disruptive of heteronormative narratives.

Scholars[70] have generally maintained that, though homoeroticism and queer desires burn below (adult) heteronormative representations of homosocial relationships, such eroticism and desire are simultaneously denied. How and when they are denied has varied, according to the literature, between male and female homosociality, and in different filmmaking eras, along with more subtle generic differences. What these scholars haven't covered, however, is teen

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[70] Sedgwick 1985; Babuscio 1975; Holmlund 1993; Tasker 1993

homosociality, desire, and eroticism. Barbara Creed (1995, 88) even dismissed teen homosocial desire as a phase – the exact attitude which has prevented sustained analysis of the topic in the past. This thesis has sought to insert the liminality and temporariness of teen relationships into the formulas of buddy love and female friendship to test the relevance of these models. Just as many teen films borrow representational strategies for homosocial heteronormative friendships from 'adult' genres, this thesis has found that many of the strategies of denial of the eroticism and desires of these relationships can be seen in representations of teenagers. However, that most final strategy, the death of one of the 'buddies', frequently cited by scholars as the ultimate foreclosure of the possibilities of queer identity in film, is where representations of teenagers really differ. Teens, according to the findings of this thesis, do not have to die to deny homoeroticism and queer desire; they just have to grow up and apart.

Part of the impetus of the thesis, as stated above, is the perceived need for more representations of gay and lesbian teenagers, or for more opportunities to recognise the possibilities of queerness for teen characters. This thesis has argued that the social mores around teenagers, though they do not prevent the often graphic depiction of heterosexuality, curtail the ability of mainstream films, or films which seek mainstream distribution, to represent queerness on screen in similar ways to the Classical Hollywood production codes. The thesis has found that there is certainly a similar level of homoeroticism and queer desire under the heteronormative surface; the primary difference being the increasing irony and knowing-ness which accompanies such covert contemporary expressions of queerness in teenagers.

The topic of liminality has caused some concern for scholars interested in gay and lesbian representation, in that the implied state of becoming denies agency and identity for gay and lesbian youth, and denies the experiences of real gay and lesbian teens via the temporary 'phase' of queer desire in the lives of otherwise heteronormative teens. This thesis, however, has attempted to defend the concept of liminality as an open-ended term which allows for more possibilities, rather than fewer. The focus on the fictional teen as a socially symbolic figure rather than the representation of actual experiences and identities of teenagers has been a strategy aimed to avoid essentialising actual teens while providing a somewhat coherent subject of study. The final analysis chapter of the thesis tried, therefore, to provide a model of comparison with the

previous chapters, rather than analysing all representations of gay and lesbian teens – the focus has remained homoeroticism and queer desire within dyadic *friendships* throughout.

Certainly there should be no shock that film representation should be susceptible to discourses around gender, behaviour, and identity. It is important to note, however, that the queer possibilities which exist in films about dyadic teen friendships are rooted in discourses of gender as are the mechanisms for denial and displacement of those possibilities. Representations of teen girls throughout this thesis have centred on visuality, appearance, performance, and masquerade. Though this works differently within each film and particularly within each relationship type, the larger patterns remain. Though of course this speaks to Mulvey's theory of woman as an image which serves to 'connote to-be-looked-at-ness' (1975, 11), these teen girls are not passive objects, but rather active subjects within their own narratives. What this visuality suggests, then, in terms of representations of teen girls, is that a legacy of woman-as-object remains within more contemporary understandings of female agency.

Visuality in representations of teen girls works in two ways across the thesis: first as a way of linking, pairing, and doubling the two members of a homosocial friendship; and second as a way of visually differentiating them in order to create a heterosexualised dynamic of difference within their relationship. These two different axes of visuality each serve to create queer possibilities in different ways, as well. Where lesbianism has been understood to be narcissistic, in which one's own image is chosen as the object of desire, the visual patterns of linking, pairing, and doubling, and the use of editing to create mirroring between characters provides ample foundation for understanding teen girls' friendships in terms of homoerotic or lesbian desire. On the other hand, in understandings of desire as predicated on difference, the use of visual differentiation provides that kind of heteronormative structure as a basis for queer possibilities.

These issues are taken further in films which present antagonistic friendships between girls. Beyond the widespread association between women's aggression and sexuality, primarily lesbian sexuality, the films which depict frenemy relationships also relate to aspects of visuality to undermine heteronormative values and to provide queer possibilities. This, I have argued here, relates to the aggressive teen girl's donning of an excessive feminine

masquerade which not only points out that femininity is a mask, but that it is a mask worn to cover over that (masculinised) aggression which insinuates lesbian desire. While protagonists in these films are used as a vehicle to promote a more 'authentic' femininity which is naturalised and reinstates the heteronormative order, their obsessive relationship with their masquerading frenemy throughout the narrative, as well as their ability to put on and then take off her mask, continues to disrupt the heteronormative narrative of gender and desire.

Across genres, this masquerade takes similar forms. Again, this is focused on visuality, so that hair, make-up, and costuming are recurring tropes. Mirrors are also used frequently across these films, and emphasise the focus on girls' appearance, as well as their own concern with their appearance. The masquerade also implies, across genres, power not only over other teen girls, but over teen boys as well; however the power exerted over teen boys seems most frequently to double back as a mechanism for power over teen girls in the homosocial sphere. As such, girls like Regina in *Mean Girls* and Marina in *Me Without You* engage in heterosexual interactions in order to prove a point to another girl.

Representations of teen boys' friendships also hinge on appearance and visuality, and the hierarchy of good/authentic femininity and bad/aggressive/masquerading femininity also has a corresponding hierarchy within representations of masculinity. In films about teen boys' friendships, a hierarchy of masculinity is set up not only between the protagonist and his best friend, but between the protagonist and all other male characters. As such, the protagonist and his best friend are set within a heterosexualised relationship wherein the more masculine protagonist is compared favourably with his less masculine and/or more feminine counterpart. The feminisation of the 'less masculine' aspects of the hierarchy corresponds, then, with the masculinisation of aggressive female subjecthood, and both are associated with homosexuality in various ways, whether insinuated or stated outright by the narrative.

In terms of homosocial worlds inhabited by representations of teenagers, these differ quite significantly between the genders. Though there are elements of competition and conflict in both settings, these issues take quite different shapes for teen boys and teen girls. Girls, as seen in the 'Best Friends' and 'Frenemies' chapters, are associated with homosocial cultures of consumption and appearance, though they do not necessarily interact directly with other

girls. Rather, they interact with girlhood, with technologies of gender, and with visual understandings of femininity. The conflict is contained, particularly in the frenemy films, within the primary teen girl friendship. Boys, on the other hand, are shown vying directly with other boys for dominance in a wider group. The friendships discussed particularly in the 'School Friends' chapter are a relatively solid unit, and conflict in the narrative is introduced by other boys or masculine figures from outside the core group.

In mapping the ways that relationships in this thesis move across the gendered spectrums of homosociality, I have argued that even heteronormative films about teenagers make the spectrum visible. They do this by illuminating the kinds of bonds developed between same-sex friends, which slip between friendship and romance, as I have demonstrated. Even so, homophobic denial plays an important role in reinstating heteronormativity as the endpoint of narrative teleologies of proper adulthood. This creates a double bind for queer readings of narratives about teenagers. As much as it is vital to provide evidence of queer possibilities within these films, it remains dangerous to valorise narratives which use homophobia as a mechanism of policing the boundaries between friendship and romance. The analysis in this thesis has therefore tried to point to these mechanisms as both substantiation of the queer possibilities they deny as well as the reinforcement of normative heterosexual representational practices.

Susan Driver has echoed Catherine Driscoll's arguments that contemporary teen girls are queer in their fluid identities and their malleability in public discourse. Driver points out that

> a convergence of popular, commercial, and theoretical discourses valorizing the nonfixity of girls intersects with public representations of queer girls as not only fathomable but as symbolically special and convenient in displaying the unique uncertainties of adolescent desires. (2007b, 7)

I have further argued that those 'uncertainties of adolescent desires' within teleologies of normative adulthood create a space of liminality which marks the teen more broadly as a queer figure. This impacts on teen film studies work in particular, which has most frequently focused on typologies and generic histories. Teen film studies moves through popular and mainstream texts to outline already obvious aspects of teenage representation such as heterosexual romance, the impact of genre, and tropes such as delinquency and

intergenerational conflict. This thesis demonstrates that there is more ambiguity present in these films than these typologies suggest, and therefore more complex analytical work to be done in this field.

Driver in particular has provided an innovative addition to work on gay and lesbian teens in her *Queer Girls and Popular Culture*. This work, which provides audience research into the impact of gay and lesbian cultural products on real teenagers, helps to open another set of questions for the present thesis: if queer possibilities are present in films about teenagers, even heteronormative narratives, how do actual gay and lesbian teens understand these queer possibilities? How do they negotiate heteronormative representational practices to create space for themselves? A project embarking on audience research around these themes would help to further fill in the gaps in this field.

Throughout this thesis, I have argued that the mechanisms for representation of dyadic homosocial friendships as well as the denial of homoeroticism therein are different for teen girls than for teen boys. From the outset, the critical discourse supported this differentiation, as Rich's proposed lesbian continuum assumed an unbroken spectrum of female homosociality, while Sedgwick's spectrum of male homosocial desire was, importantly, discursively *broken*; it was against this brokenness which her arguments were positioned. Thus for women, Rich argues, and Sedgwick concurred, love and desire are always already possible in dyadic relationships between women, while for men homosociality and homosexuality are defined in opposition to each other, so that one cannot contain the other. For boys, this boundary is most often guarded by homophobia, as evidenced by the analysis in this thesis, while for girls the boundary is much more fluid and often a hetero-romance is presumably enough to dispel any threats posed by intense same-sex bonds.

Primarily theories around homosociality and particularly the differentiation from homosexuality have been focused on adult representations.[71] That these patterns have been observed in representations of teenagers shows that such gender specific homosocial boundaries are prevalent before adulthood. In fact, in representing the liminal pre-adult years in which heterosexuality, heterosociality, and heteronormative homosociality are established, it is telling that these patterns are already in place. Despite arguments such as those posed against Rich's lesbian continuum, which protest that this 'fluid' boundary

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[71] Rich (1980) and Sedgwick (1985) but also de Lauretis (1988), Stacey (1987), and Storr (2003)

between female homosociality and lesbianism excludes the sexual aspects of lesbian desire, and that specifically anti-lesbian homophobia is a prevalent issue, the evidence of this thesis suggests that in terms of representational patterns of dyadic female friendships, the boundary between female homosociality and female homosexuality *is* more fluid and less rigidly policed than that between men. This is not to say that homophobia does not exist in films about teen girls. *Mean Girls*, for example, positions lesbianism as socially unappealing, but not wrong, while *Superbad*, a similarly popular teen text, positions male homosexuality as impossible and polices this with dialogue frequently peppered with homophobia.

The focus on the dyad in this thesis has been useful in locating these particular patterns of homosociality, particularly as the dyad is most likely to resemble patterns of heterosexual romance. Likewise, the narrative focus on the dyad allows for the intensity of the relationship to develop, rather than being subsumed by a personal journey or ensemble dynamics.

This thesis has argued that queer possibilities are available in a wide variety of otherwise heteronormative films. The arguments here have centred on love and desire within dyadic homosocial friendships, drawing attention to structures of desire and denial in heteronormative films, as well as to the similarities between queer possibilities in heteronormative representations of dyadic homosociality and those present in gay and lesbian narratives. The way that these are able to come through are gender specific, and also seem to be age specific, given the differences between films certified for older teens and for younger teens. By bringing out the denied and repressed homoerotic desires in these films, this thesis has demonstrated their existence in various forms and across various genres. Given the continued dearth in overt gay and lesbian teen representations, finding recognisable moments, friendships, and narratives in otherwise heteronormative films about teenagers is vital in destabilising the way that such narratives function as normalising discourses, and showing that even ostensibly heteronormative films contain queerness at their core.

This thesis reclaims films about teenagers as worthy of in depth, textual study, rather than broader generic histories. This is done in part by putting these films into conversation with 'adult' films, rather than isolating them, and also by putting the teen genre films into conversation with other films about teenagers

whose generic elements are not so often considered 'trivial.' Primarily, however, this reclamation emerges through the fruitful in-depth analysis undertaken in the text-based chapters.

As the thesis is structured by relationship type, it provides a potential model for other studies of friendship and character relationships in film and television studies. Each of these types can be extended beyond the teen years, to think about how they might function, stagnate, or develop in depictions of adult relationships. For instance, as the Harry Potter films conclude, Harry and Ron are shown in an adult homosocial relationship, their closeness having been tested throughout the film series by imagined competition over Hermione and then safeguarded by each's hetero-marriage. By looking at relationship types, scholars can analyse structures of emotion, of interactions between friends and others/group, of gender roles, etc. The particular relationship types discussed in this thesis, applied to adult homosocial relationships, can help add to and complicate readings of adult same-sex friendships. Many of the patterns discovered in the arguments here are particularly relevant for recent discussions of 'bromance' and male friendships in films, such as *I Love You, Man* (Hamburg, 2009), as well as friendships among women in films like *Bridesmaids* (Feig, 2011).[72]

The thesis is able to expand the use of the concept of the masquerade, following writers like Christine Holmlund, by thinking about it as an expression of gender in film, rather than just as a spectator position. The masquerade, in this figuration, both questions and reinforces gender norms. One of the major benefits of looking at masquerade in this way is to reveal structures of power which are bound up in the relational gender performance and expression of characters. In fact, it is here that the masquerade itself most closely resembles its cousin, 'the makeover': when a girl is made over in a film, and/or when she takes on a feminine masquerade, she gains power over her peers and over the opposite sex and social approval (Moseley 2002; Hentges 2006; Ferriss 2008). The makeover calls attention to the transformation of the masquerade. Certainly, analysis of the masquerade not only reflect patterns found in adult gendered relationships as discussed in the literature review, but the findings of this thesis can help illuminate the workings of gender in those adult genre films. The links

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[72] For an example of recent work along these lines, see Karen Boyle & Susan Berridge (2012).

between excessive femininity and social and sexual aggression in the films in this thesis have expanded the work done in studies of films such as *Single White Female* (Shroeder, 1992) by showing similar links and gendered patterns of friendship among teen girls. In turn, the more recent films discussed in this thesis can help illuminate adult female friendships. Returning to *Bridesmaids*, this film presents both long-term and brand new female friendships, including the kind of obsessive 'frenemy' relationship discussed here. An interesting question of films about adult female friendships, as framed by my research, could be: are the limitations and antagonisms of teenage female friendship extended into adulthood? How do the expectations of mature sexuality alter these friendships?

Finally, this thesis has insisted on the value of queer reading practices outside of Classical Hollywood texts, and even applies them to texts with gay and lesbian protagonists. Indeed, one of the most interesting conclusions developed from this research is that it isn't just heteronormative texts which display the patterns of friendship, desire, and denial. Therefore, queer possibilities are present across texts, across genres, across both hetero and homo narratives. Queerness and liminality here complement each other handily, as both are in between categories, not one, and not the other. Indeed by highlighting the alignment between queerness and liminality, I hope to have made clear that the liminality of the teen years should be understood to encompass sexuality and desire as much as age and social maturity. Likewise, queer possibilities are existent even in films whose narratives include and accept homosexual identities and behaviours. Queer readings practices are relevant for contemporary films whether those films are about heterosexuals or gay and lesbian characters, or both.

Filmography

10 Things I Hate About You (Junger, 1999)

All Over Me (Seidel, 1997)

All the Boys Love Mandy Lane (Levine, 2006)

American Pie (Weitz, 1999)

Angus, Thongs and Perfect Snogging (Chadha, 2008)

Animal House (Landis, 1978)

Another Gay Movie (Stephens, 2006)

Aquamarine (Allen, 2006)

Basic Instinct (Verhoeven, 1992)

Beautiful Thing (Macdonald, 1996)

Bend it Like Beckham (Chadha, 2002)

Blue Gate Crossing (Chih-Yen, 2002)

Bound (Wachowski & Wachowski, 1996)

The Breakfast Club (Hughes, 1985)

Brick (Johnson, 2005)

Bridesmaids (Feig, 2011)

Bring It On (Reed, 2000)

But I'm a Cheerleader (Babbitt, 1999)

Butterfly Kiss (Winterbottom, 1995)

Camp (Graff, 2003)

Can't Hardly Wait (Elfont & Kaplan, 1998)

Carrie (de Palma, 1976)

The Children (Shankland, 2008)

Clueless (Heckerling, 1995)

Confessions of a Teenage Drama Queen (Sugarman, 2004)

The Covenant (Harlin, 2006)

C.R.A.Z.Y. (Vallee, 2005)

Cruel Intentions (Kumble, 1999)

Drillbit Taylor (Brill, 2008)

Duck Season (Eimbcke, 2004)

Dumb and Dumberer: When Harry Met Lloyd (Miller, 2003)

Edge of Seventeen (Moreton, 1998)

Eurotrip (Schaffer, 2004)

Evil (Håfström, 2003)

Ferris Bueller's Day Off (Hughes, 1986)

Final Destination (Wong, 2000)

Freeway 2: Confessions of a Trickbaby (Bright, 1999)

Friday Night Lights (Berg and Pate, 2004)

Fried Green Tomatoes (Avnet, 1991)

From the Edge of the City (Giannaris, 1998)

Fun (Zelinski, 1994)

Gasoline (Strambini, 2001)

Get Real (Shore, 1998)

Girl Interrupted (Mangold, 1999)

Go Fish (Troche, 1994)

Goodbye Charlie Bright (Love, 2001)

Gridiron Gang (Joanou, 2006)

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 1 (Yates, 2010)

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire (Newell, 2005)

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix (Yates, 2007)

Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban (Cuarón, 2004)

Heavenly Creatures (Jackson, 1994)

Herbie Fully Loaded (Robinson, 2005)

High Art (Cholodenko, 1998)

High School Musical (Ortega, 2006)

The History Boys (Hynter, 2006)

The Hot Chick (Brady, 2002)

I Know What You Did Last Summer (Gillespie, 1997)

I Love You, Man (Hamburg, 2009)

The Incredibly True Adventures of Two Girls in Love (Maggenti, 1995)

Jennifer's Body (Kusama, 2009)

Julia (Zinnemann, 1977)

Juno (Reitman, 2007)

Krampack (Gay, 2000)

Liberty Heights (Levinson, 1999)

L.I.E. (Cuesta, 2000)

Lords of Dogtown (Hardwicke, 2005)

Lost and Delirious (Pool, 2001)

Ma Vraie Vie a Rouen (Ducastel & Martineau, 2002)

Mädchen in Uniform (Sagan, 1931)

Mean Girls (Waters, 2004)

Me Without You (Goldbacher, 2001)

Mysterious Skin (Arraki, 2004)

My Summer of Love (Pawlikowski, 2004)

Napoleon Dynamite (Hess, 2004)

Not Another Teen Movie (Gallen, 2001)

Paranoid Park (Van Sant, 2007)

Personal Best (Towne, 1982)

Porquoi por moi? (Giusti, 1999)

Presque Rien (Lifshitz, 2000)

Porky's (Clark, 1982)

Pretty in Pink (Deutch, 1986)

Pretty Persuasion (Siega 2005)

Queer as Folk

Quinceañera (Glatzer & Westmoreland, 2006)

Real Women Have Curves (Cardoso, 2002)

Rebel Without a Cause (Ray, 1955)

Remember the Titans (Yakin, 2000)

Road Trip (Phillips, 2000)

The Rocker (Cattaneo, 2008)

Saved! (Dannelly, 2004)

Scream (Craven, 1996)

She's All That (Iscove, 1999)

Show Me Love (Moodysson, 1998)

Single White Female (Shroeder, 1992)

Sisterhood of the Travelling Pants (Kwapis, 2005)

Sisterhood of the Travelling Pants 2 (Hamri, 2008)

Sister My Sister (Meckler, 1994)

Sixteen Candles (Hughes, 1984)

Sky High (Mitchell, 2005)

Slackers (Nicks, 2002)

Slap Her… She's French (Mayron 2002)

Some Kind of Wonderful (Deutch, 1987)

Suddenly (Lerman, 2002)

Summer Storm (Kreuzpaintner, 2004)

Superbad (Mottola, 2007)

Teeth (Lichtenstein, 2007)

Thelma and Louise (Scott, 1991)

Thirteen (Hardwicke, 2003)

Trainspotting (Boyle, 1996)

Twelve and Holding (Cuesta, 2005)

Water Lilies (Sciamma, 2007)

Weird Science (Hughes, 1985)

Whale Rider (Caro, 2002)

Wild Child (Moore, 2008)

The Wood (Famuyiwa, 1999)

Y tu Mamá También (Cuarón, 2001)

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