

# “Potential Lesbians at Two O’Clock”: The Heterosexualization of Lesbianism in the Recent Teen Film

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IN HER 1995 INTRODUCTION TO *IMMORTAL, INVISIBLE: LESBIANS AND THE Moving Image*, Tasmin Wilton comments on the invisibility of lesbian sexuality throughout the history of mainstream television and cinema. Beginning with a discussion of early American film, Wilton posits that despite the odd cinematic lesbian moments, such as when Greta Garbo kisses her maid servant in *Queen Christina* or Marlene Dietrich kisses a female night clubber in *Morocco*, lesbian sexuality in the starlet era has remained invisible primarily because the actresses who comprise the pantheon of early Hollywood goddesses were conferred their immortality precisely as heterosexual icons (2). Wilton also argues that these types of “fleeting moments of lesbianism” continue to make up the “flickering shape” of cinematic lesbian (in)visibility, a problem that she argues is augmented by the protracted failure of feminist and film theorists to address these notions of invisibility in the moving image.

In the last eight years, however, lesbian sexuality has become more explicitly manifest in mainstream film, and since the debut of the August 1993 issue of *Vanity Fair*, which features Cindy Crawford erotically shaving country singer k.d. lang, several critics have marked a trend in popular culture that promotes the idea that “lesbian sexuality is hot” (Garrity 193). One of the most popular genres of the moving image that provides evidence for the continued momentum of this trend is a recent string of successful mainstream teen movies, including *Wild Things*, *Cruel Intentions*, *American Pie 2*, and *Not Another*

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*Teen Movie*.<sup>1</sup> Given the inclusion of at least one girl-girl sexual encounter in each of these films, it is important to ask whether or not these teen movies are helping to welcome a new era in lesbian visibility, or if these movies merely capitalize on male heterosexual fantasies, further epitomizing the male gaze as described in Laura Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and the Narrative Cinema." In addition, there is the important question of why these girl-girl sex scenes appear frequently in movies aimed at teens and young adults in the first place, especially since close to half of all box office tickets are purchased by 16- to 24-year-olds.<sup>2</sup>

To answer these questions, it is essential to realize that most (if not all) of the mainstream teen films that include lesbian sexuality do not portray those women as traditionally lesbian. For example, Kelly Van Ryan and Susie Toller in *Wild Things*, Cecile Caldwell and Kathryn Merteuil in *Cruel Intentions*, and Merteuil's parody, Katherine Wyler, in *Not Another Teen Movie*, are all sexually interested in both men and women, and the two friends in *American Pie 2*, Amber and Danielle, only pretend to be lesbians in order to teach the male cast a lesson in assumptions. While all of these characters appear comfortable engaging in lesbian sexual practices, none of them is exclusively interested in the homosexual lifestyle, which contrasts with the more authentic lesbian depictions found in independent and foreign teen films, such as *But I'm a Cheerleader* and *Heavenly Creatures*. This contrast suggests that mainstream producers are uncomfortable incorporating authentic lesbianism on screen, but are simultaneously willing to depict a type of "watered-down" lesbianism in order to capitalize on the femme-chic trend.

One way that mainstream producers dilute their lesbian portrayals is by heterosexualizing these scenes in order to promote the conventional straight male's lesbian fantasy. The casting of the "lesbian" role in these teen films bolsters this argument because each of the films discussed in this article features conventional, heterosexually desirable women, and many of these leading actresses are, much like Dietrich and Garbo before them, earning their reputations as heterosexual icons. For example, Denise Richards, who plays Kelly Van Ryan in *Wild Things*, also stars as the James Bond girl in *The World Is Not Enough*, and Sarah Michelle Geller, star of *Cruel Intentions*, is well known for her heterosexual appeal in works like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. And while many would consider Neve Campbell's character in *Wild Things* as butch, her "manliness" is only an act put on to advance the group's plot to scam

Kelly's mother out of millions. At the end of the film, once the plan is seen as an official success, Campbell's character both looks and acts in much more femininized ways, completely shedding her butch gothic look by dressing in white high-cut bathing suits and dying her hair blond. Additionally, Campbell is mostly known for her heterosexual roles in the *Scream* series and the television show *Party of Five*. These casting selections, then, work to exclusively portray "luscious lesbianism" on screen and speak to the idea that lesbianism is acceptable to mainstream audiences as long as it is heterosexualized for the straight male audience.

In fact, a scene in *American Pie 2* explicitly speaks to this idea when the boys announce over their walkie-talkies that they are watching two lesbians in action. In this scene, a male truck driver who overhears their conversation blurts back over his CB, "Lesbians?"—as if he can't understand why someone would want to watch such exhibitionism. Oz, however, quickly qualifies his statement, announcing that these women are "hot lesbians," which satisfactorily justifies their viewing pleasures to the truck driver. In this scene, even the "every man" understands the difference between acceptable and nonacceptable lesbianism for voyeuristic consumption. Additionally, the use of the luscious lesbian is so common in the teen film that *Not Another Teen Movie*, a piece devoted entirely to the spoofing of the genre, uses the trend to create one of its most crude yet humorous scenes. More specifically, in its parody of the kissing scene between Cecile and Kathryn in *Cruel Intentions*, *Not Another Teen Movie* features a similar scene between Catherine Wyler, played by a heterosexually attractive young actress, and an approximately sixty-year-old woman who loses her dentures during the lip-lock and leaves several strings of slobber dangling from her mouth once the kiss has finished. The role reversal in this scene causes many viewers to squirm in their seats because they are explicitly forced to recognize that sexual exhibitionism involving even one nonluscious lesbian is unpalatable at best. While this distaste, as well as the scene's comedic effect, is heightened by the casting of an elderly actress, the foundation for the comedy rests in its understanding of the mainstream's taste for younger, conventionally attractive women engaging in lesbian practices.

Of course, the almost exclusive use of the lipstick lesbian in mainstream cinema has drawn criticism from many queer theorists. For example, in "Making Her (In)visible: Cultural Representations of Lesbianism and the Lesbian Body in the 1990s," Ann Ciasullo posits that

mainstream media, including film, magazine, and television, produce and reproduce the image of the luscious lesbian, while the image of the butch lesbian continues to remain invisible—an image that Ciasullo argues is better equipped to challenge conventional notions and perhaps even prejudices involving female homosexuality. This cultural trend, she states, is much akin to the “white” representations of women of color before the 1960s, because the feminized, heterosexualized lesbian in popular culture appears more palatable, more consumable to mainstream audiences. “What we are left with, then,” Ciasullo states, “is a landscape of lesbianism that is at once incredibly full and altogether empty,” and that audiences would do well to consider the ways that the 1990s love of lesbians “is channeled through commodification and consumerism, through identification and desire, and helps to determine not only who gets seen but what it means to be seen after all” (605). However, she continues, the increased representation of lesbians in mainstream media, even if almost exclusively portrayed as luscious lesbians, has helped to present female homosexuals in a relatively positive light. Ciasullo points out that feminized versions of lesbians disrupt the past conventional narrative associated with the “relatively rigid image of the lesbian that has dominated for decades: the angry, militant, lesbian feminist, the butch, the woman who deep down wants to be a man and thus eschews all accoutrements of femininity” (585). While there are certainly such merits in forms of popular culture that broaden the range of lesbian visibility, one should be cautious about claiming too much for the teen film in this regard. In the teen movie, the lipstick lesbian primarily represents a diluted version of female homosexuality that consciously appeals to a heterosexual audience; it does little to depict authentic or nonheterosexualized lesbianism, a depiction still absent from mainstream film.

The question now is why so many teen films incorporate images of luscious lesbianism, and why teen audiences receive these films so favorably.<sup>3</sup> To start, the exclusive use of the lipstick lesbian suggests that mainstream teen audiences represent a new demographic that is both old enough and young enough to understand and accept the trendiness of femme-chic, yet also possess a cinematic taste for explicit sexual content in both comedies and drama. The teen audience, in other words, represents a way for producers to side-step the presumed distaste for lesbianism among older mainstream audiences, because teen tastes reflect a paradigm shift with regard to what is and is not

acceptable to watch on screen. For example, the teen audiences of the 1980s, who viewed such "brat pack" films as *Pretty in Pink*, *Sixteen Candles*, and *The Breakfast Club*, possessed very different tastes from today's anything-goes/American-Pie-eating demographic; modern teens are much more apt to find pleasure in themes revolving around explicit sexuality and crudity, such as the threesome scene in *Wild Things* or the raunchy humor that fills *American Pie 2* and *Not Another Teen Movie*. This audience's tastes are also reinforced, if not partially created by, the erotic heterosexual images shown on television, the Internet, and print advertisements, which are consistently marketed at younger demographics. By delivering luscious lesbianism to this audience, then, movie producers are able to capitalize on this demographic's acquired tastes. However, producers are simultaneously forced to present more palatable versions of homosexuality in order to appeal to both sexes of this younger audience. More specifically, producers, of whom the overwhelming majority are male, are forced to present a type of lesbianism in their scenes that caters to the heterosexual males' lesbian fantasy, while simultaneously equipping heterosexual females with an exploitative tool to attract these same men. For women, in other words, these scenes do more to encourage women to "act lesbian" in order to attract men than they do to promote the viability of an exclusively homosexual lifestyle.

To illustrate this point, the predominant way that teen films work cinematically to heterosexualize their representations of lesbianism explicitly echo Laura Mulvey's notion of the male gaze as outlined in "Visual Pleasure and the Narrative Cinema." Here, Mulvey argues that film caters to viewers'—especially male viewers'—scopophilic preferences, and that the role of the viewer can easily develop into a narcissistic one, creating an "erotic basis for pleasure in looking at another person as an object" (17). The very experience of moviegoing, she states, aids in this phenomenon because cinema, viewed in a dark auditorium, presents a world that "unwinds magically, indifferent to the presence of the audience." As the movie is playing, viewers are forced to separate themselves from other audience members, which erodes the boundaries between the moviegoer and the film. While this phenomenon enables both male and female viewers to psychologically enter a film, Mulvey argues that women in cinema, "in their traditional exhibitionist role," are almost always the looked at, while men are able to reserve the role of the looker. More specifically, mainstream film

displays women in such a way that their appearance is coded for a “strong visual and erotic impact so they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness” for the male gaze (19).

The relevance of Mulvey’s theory to the recent string of teen movies, then, is that viewers must see these films’ portrayals of lesbian sexual encounters primarily as vehicles to fulfill the heterosexual male’s desire. *Wild Things* features one of the most explicit examples of this idea, when high school student Susie Toller (Campbell) visits her cohort, Kelly Van Ryan (Richards). These two characters, along with Sam Lombardo, the girls’ high school guidance counselor, are working to scam Kelly’s mother out of eight million dollars, and Susie, who has just received a visit from Detective Duquette, fears that the police are on to them. Consequently, she comes to Kelly for reassurance, but Kelly is only upset that Susie would risk the two girls being seen together, and as a result, a fight in the pool occurs.

The ensuing aggression serves primarily as foreplay for both the characters and the viewers as the girls frantically try to grab and wrestle one another in the slippery water, calling each other rude yet sexually charged names such as “cunt.” During this fight, however, Susie soon begins to cry, and Kelly’s eventual recognition of her vulnerability leads her to understand that Susie is truly shaken by the detective’s visit and wishes to be comforted. As a result, Kelly incites a make-out session, and the girls are later seen undressing each other in the water. More interestingly, however, Detective Duquette has followed Susie to the Van Ryan home and is hiding in the bushes, videotaping the girls in the pool in the hopes of collecting evidence of their conspiracy. Because only the audience members are aware of Duquette’s presence, they feel as if they too are active voyeurs in this scene. This feeling is further enhanced when the girls’ eroticism is displayed to the moviegoer on the screen of Duquette’s video camera, and this choice of cinematography forces viewers, despite their own sexual or gender identities, to place themselves in the heterosexual male’s viewing perspective. However, these technical choices both bolster and complicate Mulvey’s theory of the male gaze. For example, Mulvey’s argument that the role of the objectifier in film is assigned to the male while the role of the objectified is assigned to the female is blatantly apparent. However, Mulvey also suggests that because audience members lose themselves *in* a movie, viewers are not usually conscious of their role as voyeur. By displaying much of this lesbian scene on Duquette’s video

screen, however, viewers are forced to understand that they are merely the watcher of a watcher, and this realization works to remove them from the film, taking them out of the story and placing them back in their seats. This removal works to remind viewers that the lesbianism occurring in the pool is more about the pleasure that others—especially male heterosexual others—take in viewing such overt displays of sexuality, and that it is not about an authentic moment of lesbian passion.

In *American Pie 2*, a similar scene occurs when the male characters Stiffler, Finch, and Jim break into the home of two females they suspect are lesbians in order to garner proof of the girls' homosexuality. When the women unexpectedly return home, the boys hide in the bedroom closet, where they witness the women helping each other out of their clothes and showing off their new bras and panties. Much of this scene is shot through the metal flaps in the closet doors through which the boys can peer, giving the shot an explicitly Peeping Tom feel, and again forcing audience viewers to adopt these males' visual perspectives. (Unlike *Wild Things*, however, viewers are allowed to remain in the closet with the boys and are not forced to recall that they are merely moviegoers outside the scene.) When the girls finally discover the boys hiding in the closet and learn that they are suspected of being gay, the two decide to "mess with" the boys by pretending to be homosexual and literally perform lesbian acts in front of them. During this part of the scene, the girls kiss one another and rub each other's thighs and breasts, but more important, they narrate their behaviors into the boys' walkie-talkies. Because the devices are broadcasting on a CB frequency, the girls' conversation is overheard by a male police officer, a male fast-food worker, a male truck driver, the boys' other male friends who are looking in through the windows of the house, and a middle-aged father who has taken the walkie-talkies from his young son. That few women are actively listening to and interested in the conversation speaks again to the idea that viewing—or in this case, overhearing—lesbian activity is a common male fantasy. It also suggests, however, that women are conscious of their own power to excite men by performing such lesbian activities, and thoroughly understand how to use those actions to cater to and enhance men's scopophilic pleasures.

This idea is further enhanced later in the scene, when the women use the boys' desire to view lesbian action as a way to exact their revenge on the male characters for breaking into their home. While this scene

works to promote the objectification of women by men, it also, much like the kissing scene in *Not Another Teen Movie*, uses role reversal to create a comedy that capitalizes on the discomfort that men feel when placed in the role of the objectified. More specifically, in this scene, the male characters are aroused, as aforementioned, by the presence of “potential lesbians” and, after a long comedy of errors, they eventually ask the women if they can watch them sexually engage with one another. The women say they will consent, but only if they, in return, can watch the boys perform the same sexual activities with each other. As Danielle explains, “You go, then we go.” As the scene progresses, the women kiss and caress one another, and even though they are heterosexual, they are in no way embarrassed or repulsed by their actions. On the other hand, the guys who agree to kiss one another and grab each other’s butts for the mere viewing pleasure of the ladies engage in their activities with extreme repulsion. They spit after they kiss one another, and close their eyes and clench their teeth when they touch. Additionally, the boys’ friends, Oz and Kevin, who are observing the girls’ sexual encounter through the window, decide they “can’t look” at their friends participating in homosexual activity and leave their viewing platforms. Such role reversal reminds viewers that it has become culturally acceptable to view luscious lesbians in order to excite heterosexual males, but that it is not acceptable to view male homosexuality in an equal way. This scene also suggests that women have become so accustomed to their objectification by men that they have learned to not only accept this role, but also how to use it to advance their own agendas.

Another scene in *American Pie 2* that speaks to the notion of the heterosexualized lesbian scene in the teen film occurs when Stiffler, whose very name suggests an erect penis, feels the need to immediately reaffirm his heterosexuality after the boys’ “homosexual” incident. He accomplishes this by delivering his friends a box of pornographic videos, announcing that “Just so there’s no confusion,” he has brought “some heterosexual entertainment.” Here, Stiffler aims to remove the boys from their role of the objectified and back into the role of the objectifier, thus re-establishing the boys’ heterosexual identities. What is interesting, however, is that when Jim later watches one of these “heterosexual films,” viewers discover that it features two lesbians in a bathtub and is entitled *Pussy Palace*. Stiffler’s selection of pornography suggests that the desire to view luscious lesbians is a defining

characteristic of heterosexual men, but his selection also works to nullify any notion of authentic male or female homosexuality. More specifically, his selection works to rid the boys of the discomfort they feel as a result of their earlier homosexual encounter, but by using the lesbian film to achieve these goals, the lesbianism works only to meet the boys' agendas, and the actual lesbianism taking place is belittled or dismissed as authentically meaningful.

A final, more subtle way that teen filmmakers heterosexualize their lesbian content is to insert a male presence directly into a lesbian scene. For example, in *Cruel Intentions*, Cecile expresses her desire to learn how to kiss a man properly, and Kathryn agrees to show her how. While this scene only features the girls erotically kissing, the very purpose of the exchange is for Cecile to learn how to please a man, thus adding a heterosexual element to the scene and eradicating the possibility of authentic lesbian content. In *American Pie 2*, Stiffler, while searching through Amber and Danielle's home for proof of their lesbianism, finds a blue rubber dildo and proceeds to run throughout the house, screaming "Holy shit, dude, I found a dildo! . . . Dildo! Dildo! Dildo!" and then announces that he will look for other "lesbian artifacts." That Stiffler assumes that a rubber phallus is automatic proof of female homosexuality speaks to Mulvey's idea that in order for a man to "gaze" at a woman or to accept lesbianism without a fear of castration, he must first substitute or associate a woman with a fetish object. More important, however, by finding the dildo, Stiffler is able to heterosexualize what he, at the time, believes is authentic lesbian practice, and his comments emphasize his notion that the penis is an essential component of any woman's sexuality, thus reconfirming his own sexual essence. Finally, *Wild Things*, which, in addition to the aforementioned pool scene, features another explicit sexual encounter, incorporates both a physical male presence and a metaphorical one. Here, Kelly, Susie, and Sam Lombardo wish to celebrate a successful stage in the plot to scam Kelly's mother. During the scene, Sam tells the girls that he would like to witness them engage in homosexual activity and pushes the girls' heads together, after which he finds a comfortable viewing stance. Obviously, Sam's very presence, in addition to his "calling the shots," explicitly heterosexualizes the scene, placing him at the center of the girls' desires, but Kelly's outfit, which consists of a girlish school uniform (even though Blue Bay High School does not require them), further enhances the elements of the male fantasy. Finally, Susie, during

most of the foreplay in this scene, holds onto a champagne bottle, which serves as a phallic symbol as she metaphorically ejaculates on Kelly by spraying the champagne over Kelly's breasts, and then swallows the remaining liquid. Susie's performance of such heterosexual drag further enhances the male presence, especially because it is the only allusion to a male release in the entire scene.

As Julia Knight points out in her essay "The Meaning of Treut?" the incorporation of phallus symbols into more traditional or authentic types of lesbian movies is also common. For example, *Virgin Machine* features a scene where Susie Sexpert, a striptease aficionado played by Susie Bright, proudly shows off her impressive dildo collection to the character Dorothy. And in *Henry & June* (1990), a movie based on the sexual encounters of Anais Nin, there is a scene where Nin and Hugo watch two women perform "lesbian exhibition." However, at one point in the scene, after Nin asks the women to "stop making love like a man," one of the women appears to take off a harness, and then, "almost too quickly to see what has transpired, a pink dildo flashes in the upper-left corner of the screen" (Garrity 215). However, unlike the teen movies in which a phallus appears, Anais objects to the dildo's presence, which suggests that its appearance works only to show how the phallus marks lesbianism as simulated heterosexuality, while simultaneously making space for "more authentic lesbian lovemaking" (215).

Given the ways in which mainstream teen films reflect the heterosexualization of lesbianism, then, one may wonder if these films have any merit for a lesbian spectatorship, or if these scenes should even bear the name "lesbian" at all. These questions are especially relevant given the criticism of Mulvey's work by some feminists and queer theorists, who argue that her phrase "the male gaze" has become a cliché used to identify the way that men look at women, and provides a limited form of cinematic analysis. As Jane Garrity points out in "Mediating the Taboo: The Straight Lesbian Gaze," "there is little space [in Mulvey's work] . . . to conceptualize active lesbian relations of looking or to explain changes in some contexts where women's experience cannot be incorporated into the psychoanalytic discourse of heterosexual relations" (197–98). In other words, Mulvey's theory leaves little or no space for the looking at women by women, and the pleasure that the lesbian spectator can derive from observing a woman on screen is not equivalent or reducible to the male viewing position. According to Barbara Hammer, for a film or scene to be dubbed "lesbian," its form

must be radical and innovative. Therefore, despite the homosexual content in films like *Personal Best* (1982), *Desert Hearts* (1985), and *Lianna* (1982), Hammer still denounces these films as lesbian because they offer "no lesbian to deconstruct, as the discourse of the gendered subject is within a heterosexist authority system" (qtd. in Wilton 4). However, Garrity states that despite Hammer's contributions to the field, it is still possible to argue that other lesbian pleasures can be found in seemingly conventional structures. More specifically, she states that these "other pleasures" can include the viewer's identification with overt lesbian content, the delight that stems from reading for a homoerotic subtext that is not visible to other viewers, and the processes "by which the lesbian spectator has been able to claim as queer such cinematic heroines as Thelma and Louise" (192).

In response to Garrity's list of alternative pleasures, teen films, regardless of the "true" sexuality of the characters, do provide overt lesbian content—especially *Wild Things* and *Cruel Intentions*, whose sexual scenes are more explicitly erotic than those found in the comedic *American Pie 2* or *Not Another Teen Movie*. In fact, one could argue that such overt display of girl-girl sexual encounters is one of the most apparent merits that these teen films can provide a lesbian spectator, especially because these audience members are presently unable to view similar scenes in any other mainstream form of a moving image. For example, explicit lesbian content is virtually absent from mainstream television. A good case in point, as Garrity points out, is *Ellen*. Here, despite the successful ratings of the "coming-out show," television executives ultimately understood that audience members are still uncomfortable with visible lesbian characters and, as a result, *Ellen* was canceled soon thereafter. As one television executive states in Garrity's piece, "Ellen and a girlfriend hanging around the house in funny situations would be fine, but I don't think [audiences] want Ellen in bed with another woman. Anything sexual would be a real problem" (196). According to Garrity, *Ellen* reflects the larger tension between the depiction and denial of lesbian sexuality in television and, as mentioned, reflects the producers' dilemma of "how to capitalize on the current fascination with lesbian chic" while simultaneously expanding the representational parameters to overcome middle Americans' presumed distaste for lesbian sexuality (196). Of course, *Ellen's* featuring of a traditional or exclusively lesbian character presents the biggest problem for television executives because of the prohibition of an

explicit heterosexual representation of such lesbianism. And in this specific instance, Ellen DeGeneres would not be considered by most viewers as a luscious lesbian, thus shutting the doors to mainstream audience appeal. The teen movie, however, which is not bound by prime-time television's limited threshold for crudity and sexual explicitness, possesses more freedom in the ways that it can manipulate overt lesbian content and thus make it consumable to mainstream viewers.

In addition, in a culture in which positive gains in homosexual visibility often come in incremental baby steps, it is important to note that one reason lesbianism in the teen film appeals to audience members is that these characters, overall, possess likable personalities. In other words, neither these characters nor their homosexual activities are portrayed in an overtly negative light. For example, unlike the characters in *Basic Instinct* or *Single White Female*, who promote the old stereotype of the lesbian as psychopath, recent teen films offer viewers a range of favorable lesbian representations. Amber and Danielle in *American Pie 2*, for instance, appear sweet, giggly, and perky despite their desire to play a joke on the male cast. The characters in *Not Another Teen Movie* are such a spoof of their own genre, and the lesbians are so comical, they are hard to dislike. Cecile in *Cruel Intentions* is portrayed as a naïve, innocent—although at times doltish—teen. Even in *Wild Things*, where the female characters do sinisterly plot to scam Sandra Van Ryan out of a fortune, and where Susie kills both Sam Lombardo and Detective Duquette, the male characters are equally devious. The detective, after all, scams his own police force and kills Denise Richards's character, while Sam presumably talks the girls into the plot in the first place. In other words, the lesbian characters in this film are no more psychopathic than their male counterparts. (This holds true for Kathryn Merteuil's character in *Cruel Intentions* as well.)

Despite these small merits, however, these movies undoubtedly promote a heterosexualized view of female homosexuality, and women looking for the radical and innovative lesbian films as described earlier by Barbara Hammer, or even simple authentic lesbian depictions, would do better by searching elsewhere. However, these teen movies should not be entirely written off as a vehicle incapable of producing positive effects for homosexual women. After all, these movies are helping to bring a new and relatively positive type of lesbian visibility to mainstream cinema. As producers of other genres come to more

profoundly understand the success in capitalizing on the femme-chic trend, these films may help to open the doors of lesbian visibility in other mainstream media outlets. For example, explicit luscious lesbianism is slowly making its way into adult mainstream films. At the time this article was written, *Femme Fatale*, a movie starring Rebecca Romijn-Stamos, debuted and received unfavorable reviews in terms of direction and storyline. However, almost every reviewer has raved about the opening scene in which Stamos steals a ten-million-dollar diamond-encrusted "shirt" amid what several deemed "some vivacious lesbian sex." That reviewers understand lesbian sex scenes as capable of acting as a film's sole redeeming quality speaks to the continued power of the femme-chic trend in mainstream film, but also underlines the fact that authentic, nonheterosexualized lesbian visibility is much further down the mainstream road.

#### NOTES

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1. I define the teen movie as one whose main characters are teenaged, whose themes address primarily teen issues, and that is aimed primarily at teen and young adult audience members.
2. These figures date back as early as 1968, when Daniel Yankelovich conducted a survey that revealed that 48% of all ticket sales were purchased by 16- to 24-year-olds; recent estimates, though varied in degree, indicate that this number has increased slightly.
3. The box office sales figures alone speak to many of these teen films' success. *American Pie 2* earned over \$145 million dollars in US ticket sales and grossed \$282 million worldwide. *Cruel Intentions* grossed \$38 million in US sales; *Wild Things* earned just short of \$30 million; and *Not Another Teen Movie* earned \$38 million in US sales and \$62 million worldwide.

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