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Girls Will Be Girls

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Abstract

This is a film review of *Girls Will Be Girls* (2024), directed by Shuchi Talati.

Keywords

Coming of Age

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Author Notes

Chris Deacy is Reader in Theology and Religious Studies and former Head of Department of Religious Studies at the University of Kent in Canterbury, UK. His PhD (University of Wales, 1999) was in the area of redemption and film, and Chris has published monographs which include *Christmas as Religion: Rethinking Santa, the Secular, and the Sacred* (Oxford University Press, 2016); *Screening the Afterlife: Theology, Eschatology and Film* (Routledge, 2012); and *Screen Christologies: Redemption and the Medium of Film* (University of Wales Press, 2001). Chris also writes regular film reviews, is writing a book about nostalgia and religion and has been hosting a podcast since 2018 called *Nostalgia Interviews with Chris Deacy*: <https://audioboom.com/channels/4956567>



Girls Will Be Girls (2024), dir. Shuchi Talati

Girls Will Be Girls is a Hindi and English language coming-of-age drama, set and filmed in India, which plays on the conflict between the pursuit of academic excellence, set in a privileged boarding school in the foothills of the Himalayas, and first love. We are introduced to sixteen year old Mira (Preeti Panigrahi) as the newly appointed Head Prefect at her school, the first time a female has held the position, and we see her as dedicated, conscientious, and a paragon of virtue for her classmates who is unafraid to get them into trouble if they break any of the rules, as when some of her male classmates take inappropriate photos of the girls, and they are suspended—and later seek revenge.

But Mira is herself not immune to the blossoming of a love she feels for one of the boys in her class, and is at risk of falling foul of the very rules that she herself has so painstakingly set out for others. Her relatively young mother is very much on the scene, and there is a tension between the two as the mother is conscious of her daughter living a life that she herself didn't get to

experience, marrying when she was not much older than Mira, and a degree of competition then unfolds between Mira and her mother which creates an additional source of conflict.

The mother sees her own youth being rechannelled and reinvigorated through her daughter's new beau, and they share not just precious time but in a couple of scenes even the same bed. Mira starts to fall below par at school, leading to her falling off her pedestal, yet her mother is also the one person she can turn to in a crisis, leading to a sense of stasis, of truncated growth, as the two need each other but are jealous of each other at the same time. A fall of innocence is simultaneously experienced as a mother and daughter reunion, a symbiotic relationship indeed, as the two women from different generations come of age due to the same life experience.

This blurring of the boundaries makes for a more intricate and unique take on a familiar story, in which, in ways that mirror Jane Austen's novels, the forces of repression and conservatism come into deep conflict with female emancipation. The intimacy of holding hands is one of this film's most innovative aesthetic flourishes which become conversational forms of their own during periods of breathtaking silence. *Girls Will Be Girls* is an enriching and at times quite transgressive drama.