

**Trio Relationships:
Desire, Identity, and Power in Beauvoir's *L'Invitée* and Truffaut's *Jules et Jim***

by

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Rose Gardner, Bachelors of Philosophy in French

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This study focuses on the emergence of two trio relationships during and after the Second World War in France. The first work, a piece of literature written by Simone de Beauvoir in 1943 entitled *L'Invitée*, illustrates the story of a trio relationship between two women and a man that ends in murder. The second work, a film directed by François Truffaut entitled *Jules et Jim*, gives the account of another fatalistic trio relationship (however, this time between two men and a woman). In both of these works, the trios become the loci of a reflection on the ways in which the chaos and confusion of war enter into the lives of the individual characters. The asymmetry present in the trio relationships perpetuates violence, and the specific kinds of struggles for power coincide in antagonistic ways as the characters strive to re-invent love.

The triangular relationships are observed in relation to three main elements—desire, identity, and power. Chapter one explores how several mechanisms of desire function in relation to crises of identity and the confusion of the individual in French society: this includes an examination of aspects such as marriage, games of seduction and rejection, and platonic conceptions of love and unity that are marked by hostility and destruction. Chapter two examines several ways in which bonding manifests itself in relation to war, male homosexuality, and male homosociality in Truffaut's film. Namely, the chapter explores how two sites of power—one, the physical location of a gymnasium, and the other, the conceptual place of war—illustrate a kind of violence displayed towards women and homosexuals that is made particularly visible through

male bonding and several kinds of patriarchal allegiances. Chapter three focuses on the ways in which the “third” body itself in the trio comes to represent a kind of spectacle in Beauvoir’s *L’Invitée*. Through an analysis of scopophilia and voyeurism, the third body becomes the focal point of the characters own fantasies—however, these fantasies carry out and engage in destructive forms of masochism and sadomasochism.

The emergence of these two works in France symbolizes a kind of resistance against bourgeois values during mid-century France. Yet, although the two triangular relationships attempt to subvert normative social values that constrain the individual within society—constraints that surround the family unit, love, sexuality, gender roles, homosexuality, and identity—the trios represent instead the symbol of different forms of “loss” in a war-torn France where political upheaval disturbed the nation and the individual.

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INTRODUCTION

The question of the triangular relationship has been the object of critical enquiries, both in the context of gender studies with Eve Sedgwick's seminal work *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, and in the wider anthropological theses of philosopher René Girard's *Mensonge Romantique et Vérité Romanesque*. Both these thinkers envision the trio as the locus of an asymmetry, where as Sedgwick writes "the bond that links the two rivals is as intense and potent as the bond that links either of the rivals to the beloved: that the bonds of 'rivalry' and 'love,' differently as they are experienced, are equally powerful and in many senses equivalent" (21). It is clear that Sedgwick borrows directly from Girard, but also that in doing so she opens up new possibilities for understanding triangular relationships. As she notes, Girard doesn't really broach the subject of sexuality, limiting himself to an analysis of power that is economical in nature: "Girard's account, which thinks it is describing a dialectic of power abstracted from either the male/female or the sexual/nonsexual dichotomies, is leaving out of consideration categories that in fact preside over the distribution of power in every known society" (22). Further on in her seminal essay, she distances herself even more from the earlier models available for thinking the trio: "[...] both Girard and Freud (or at least the Freud of this interpretative tradition) treat the erotic triangle as symmetrical—in the sense that its structure would be relatively unaffected by the power difference that would be introduced by a change in the gender of one of the participants" (23). By filling up this gap in Girard and Freud (whose

theory of the oedipal triangle she addresses), Sedgwick in effect renders possible a re-conceptualization of the figure of the trio as an expression of desire and identity that is both gendered and sexual.

Without a doubt, my work here is heavily indebted to these theories of triangular relationships. Yet, in many ways, I am resistant to some of the theses proposed by Sedgwick, in particular to the idea of a fundamental social and sexual difference in the way the passage from the merely homosocial to the homosexual is perceived in men and women. Questionably in my view, she suggests that there is a continuum between female homosexuality and homosociality that doesn't exist in men: "It is clear [...] that there is an asymmetry in our present society between, on the one hand, the relatively continuous relation of female homosocial and homosexual bonds, and, on the other hand, the radically discontinuous relation of male homosocial and homosexual bonds" (5). In effect, what Sedgwick says is that women's "homosocial" relationships are not as nearly differentiated from the "homosexual" as they are in men. I would tend to disagree with such an interpretation, to the extent that in proposing it, Sedgwick seems dangerously close to falling into a historical blind spot. To suggest that women's homosocial relationships are not as nearly differentiated from the homosexual would at least need a thorough effort of socio-historical contextualization. As many theorists have claimed, heterosexuality is and continues to be, in most relations, the reinforcing infrastructure of social norms in women's and men's homosocial relationships. Female homosociality, then, is not in my opinion as relatively continuous as Sedgwick seems to propose, in the sense that just as male homosociality is often dominated by a heterosexual standard in men's relations, female homosociality is also dominated by a heterosexual social norm that often disregards, discounts or overlooks female homosexual relations.

Although I do not refer to Sedgwick's and Girard's work directly in the body of my project, they certainly make up the conceptual horizon from which I develop my own readings: in a way, my work will offer both an affirmation and a refutation of some of their ideas. To develop my own reflection around the concept of the trio, I have chosen two distinct "texts," a novel and a film, which have the advantage of providing us with two very different and yet symmetrical instances of trio relationships.

Simone de Beauvoir's first published novel, *L'Invitée* (1943), depicts a love triangle between two women (Françoise, Xavière) and a man (Pierre). Written during WWI, this work is particularly interesting for the questions we have just raised, announcing some of the themes that will only be fully developed six years later in *Le Deuxième Sexe* (1949): within this story of a rivalry between two women around the same man, questions of gender equality, social power structures, socio-historical constructions of the domestic sphere, biological and cultural determinism are all at least implicitly at play. In this sense, the text will serve precisely to put into question the theory of female "continuity" proposed by Sedgwick.

François Truffaut's 1962 film *Jules et Jim* describes the story of a trio relationship between two men (Jules, Jim) and one woman (Catherine). It is an adaptation of a 1953 novel by Henry-Pierre Roché, a book that had passed unnoticed by critics at the time. Two years after the novel was published, Truffaut found the book in a secondhand bookstore, became a fan, wrote a review about the book and eventually corresponded with Roché. It was after his death that

Truffaut finally decided to take on the project of turning *Jules et Jim* into a movie. With this attempt at presenting a love triangle where the public would equally love all three of the trio characters, Truffaut set about to create a film that would make audiences stumble when making emotional and moral judgments about the trio characters and their bohemian lifestyles. This film resonates with the ideas of Girard's and Sedgwick's work and explores some of their ideas in detail.

If I have chosen to focus on these works, it is because they stage, through the figure of the trio, two unique homosocial and homosexual situations, which explore the boundaries of desire, identity, and power in complex ways. In *L'Invitée*, the homosocial relationship between the two women—Françoise and Xavière—ultimately fails, in parts because Françoise is not allowed to expand her desire into homosexual desire when Françoise, Pierre, and Xavière finally decide to form a trio. The relationship is unsuccessful because Françoise's and Xavière's jealous rivalry grows as Pierre becomes more and more fascinated with Xavière. The women (who were originally friends) become enemies, while Pierre's domination is never really criticized. In Truffaut's work, on the other hand, the homosocial relationship between the two men, *Jules et Jim*, forms openly and without restraints: they are able to build the intimacy of their friendship in a way by setting themselves up *against* the third member of the trio, the enigmatic Catherine.

In chapter one, *Desire in the Trio*, I discuss how desire functions in both of these works. In *L'Invitée*, I study how the fantasy of “merging” becomes destructive as each of the characters suffers because his/her desires cannot be fulfilled and his/her identity becomes threatened by the presence of the others. I pay particular attention to the character of Françoise, whose fantasy is to merge with the woman who is threatening to destroy her relationship with her long time lover Pierre, in order to arrive at the perfection of the trio. This dream of achieving complete

“triangular” unity, I argue, brings her to a state of emotional disarray, because the asymmetry of the trio ultimately cannot be overcome. Ultimately, identity (sexual and otherwise) can only be achieved by Françoise through the destruction of the other, of the one who threatens the stability of her couple. In a sense, the trio brings into view the suppressed violence that is latent in human relationships, the addition of the “third” (maybe a metonymic representation of “social” life) that forces one to affirm the preeminence of one’s own life to the detriment of others. Staged by de Beauvoir, the trio is thus marred by a fundamental violence, one that needs to be interpreted in light of an anxiety towards what is ambiguous, exterior, what cannot be reduced to oneself. In *Jules et Jim*, I examine how the characters engage in complex games of alliances, preferences, and rejections, in order to manipulate their own desires. The trio is here based on quasi-sadistic processes of seduction and rejection, where the male homosocial desire at times constitutes an alliance with which Catherine has to contend, while at other times it is she who deploys her own strategies of seduction and power by switching her desire from one man to the other. In both the works examined, I argue, the trio leads to destruction and failure because of the characters’ inability to contain or master the desires of others: there is always at work in the trio a sort of “supplement” that tips the balance of desire towards pain and death.

In chapter two, *Love at War: Bonding through Violence*, I examine the question of male bonding within the trio in Truffaut’s film. I argue that the relationship between Jules and Jim, in order to be fully understood, has to be replaced within a network of social belongings that determines in part the behavior of the two male characters. Jules and Jim bond through violence, be it at the gym, which is the locus of a certain form of homosocial interaction, or at war, fighting as citizen of enemy nations and yet living in fear of killing each other. Here, the trio relationship is traversed by other systems of allegiances that render its dynamics both more

complex and more interesting. Violence creates ties which reinforce the male relationship within the trio, leaving Catherine on the margins of a fundamentally masculine economy.

In chapter three, *L'Invitée: The Body as Spectacle*, I show how Xavière's body elicits a certain kind of attention from Françoise and Pierre that reveals in part the nature of their own relationship and their relation towards Xavière. Both Françoise's and Pierre's scopophilic and voyeuristic gaze unveil their own insecurities about their bodies and their sense of identity. In effect, Xavière's body represents a kind of an outlet—or stage—through which they are able to conceal the problems they have with each other and with their own bodies—her body gives them the possibility of perversely refashioning their world and fantasies.

Through these three thematic angles—desire, bonding, and spectacle—the present work aims at providing new ways of conceptualizing representations of the trio. Its complex dynamics, its shifts in power are explored as signifiers of a structure that is in some ways representative of society as a whole: the trio is in a sense a metonymy for the social fabric in place during WWII and the following decades. The trio raises questions about gender equality, the family unit, homosexuality, citizenship, national identity, repression, and violence. There is also a spectacular dimension to the trio: it stages these questions at the crossroads of literary and cinematic drama, psychology, and politics. Triangular relationships fascinate the readers and the spectators because they break the norm, threatening, destabilizing, and rupturing the dominant moral discourse.

1.0 CHAPTER ONE: DESIRE IN THE TRIO

1.1 THE DESIRE TO MERGE IN *L'INVITÉE*

In Simone de Beauvoir's *L'Invitée*, "desire" can be first understood as a form of willingness to merge with others, at least on the part of Françoise, the central character of the novel. Throughout the text, Françoise indeed strives to become one with the objects of her desire. At first, this fantasy of unity, of communion almost, is only directed towards Pierre. Soon, however, when Xavière appears, desire expands into a new configuration, that of the trio.¹ As the story unfolds, it becomes clear that Françoise's desire translates both as heterosexual desire for Pierre *and* as homosexual desire for Xavière. But the pursuit of unity, of becoming "one" psychologically and physically with another person (or two other persons), is an abstract and self-constructed ideal, which soon enough shows its limits. Motivated by the quest of happiness and perfection in regards to "love," Françoise finds herself caught in a situation where her desire to merge overcomes her and eventually becomes destructive: the asymmetry inherent in the trio makes this desire for inclusive unity highly problematic, bringing Françoise to a state of emotional and destructive confusion. As her desire comes into contention with the desires of those around her (in particular Xavière's), Françoise becomes so trapped in her own ideal of unity that, paradoxically, she finds the only way she can separate herself from Xavière is to destroy her. The desire to become one, in this sense, ends up leading the subject to an unspeakable "huis-clos," a stifling and claustrophobic prison which one can only escape through a violent and murderous act of self-affirmation.

¹ The character Gilbert also creates several point of contention within the trio; however, there is not space in this section to discuss his role within the novel.

On ne fait qu'un

In a striking passage, at the beginning of the novel, Françoise makes explicit one of the governing modalities in her relationship with Pierre; namely her desire to merge. At first, it would seem that this desire for merging concerns only the couple—a common-place idea when it comes to thinking and writing about love. However, what makes this novel so singular is the ways in which the concept of merging is extended to the figure of the trio.

Françoise and Pierre, considered a couple, appear to commit to one another and accept the love given and taken from each other. They define their existence through each other, repeatedly saying that they are “one” (“on ne fait qu'un”) (29-30). Yet, Pierre’s and Françoise’s conceptions of fidelity are distinctly different:

- Ça ne m’amuse plus, ces histoires, dit Pierre. Si au moins j’étais un grand sensuel ; mais je n’ai même pas cette excuse. Il regarda Françoise d’un air confus. Ce qu’il y a, c’est que j’aime bien les commencements. Tu ne comprends pas ça ?
- Peut-être, dit Françoise, mais moi ça ne m’intéresserait pas une aventure sans lendemain.
- Non ? dit Pierre.
- Non, dit-elle, c’est plus fort que moi : je suis une femme fidèle.
- On ne peut pas parler de fidélité, ou d’infidélité entre nous, dit Pierre; il attira Françoise contre lui. Toi et moi, *on ne fait qu'un* ; c’est vrai, tu sais, on ne peut pas nous définir l’un sans l’autre.
- C’est grâce à toi, dit Françoise. Elle saisit le visage de Pierre entre ses mains et se mit à couvrir de baisers ces joues où l’odeur de la pipe se mêlait à un parfum enfantin et inattendu de pâtisserie. *On ne fait qu'un*, se répéta-t-elle. (29-30, my emphasis)²

As Pierre engages in short-lived affairs with other women, Françoise is rather comfortable in claiming that she is faithful (“une femme fidèle”). Whereas she is—allegedly—not bothered by Pierre’s search for what he calls “commencements” (seducing other women); she is not interested either in a passing relationship (“une aventure sans lendemain”). At the beginning of

²Several interpretation of *L’Invitée* have commented on the fact that Françoise appears unsure of her desire in this passage because of the way she repeats “on ne fait qu’un” to herself which suggests hesitancy and doubt. I am not rejecting this account; rather my analysis in this chapter will be to explore other ways in which one can understand this text.

the novel, Françoise and Pierre thus impose what appears to be an almost non-negotiable condition upon each other; namely they must merge together to make “one.”³ However, this desire for unity appears to be absolutely necessary for Françoise and she states it repeatedly throughout the novel. As Pierre draws Françoise toward him in the physical act of unity (“il attira Françoise contre lui”), symbolically making their bodies “one,” together they appear to agree that they would be incomplete without each other: “on ne peut pas nous définir l’un sans l’autre.” Furthermore, when he states “on ne peut pas parler de fidélité, ou d’infidélité,” he makes it appear as if their love for each other had been pre-destined or given all along, and was impossible to debase (their “love” is thus projected as eternal) In accordance with the classic depiction of love where two halves make a whole (a platonic “cliché,” here taken up with strange melodramatic undertones), they profess their love by “defining” themselves as one—structuring their desire as a unity that can never be broken or breached.⁴

The invitation of Xavière into their relationship (inadvertently by Pierre and directly by Françoise), however, brings this notion of oneness into contention. Hailing from Rouen, Xavière is the “invited” guest who “comes to stay” with Françoise in her hotel.⁵ Clearly, Xavière is already here a symbol of instability within the trio, since she is the outsider, the stranger, the one through whom trouble comes. At first, in a gesture of hospitality and friendship, Françoise invites Xavière to join her in Paris, so she may escape her bleak and boring life in Rouen. She persuades Xavière to rid herself of her fear of breaking with her bland routine (“petites habitudes”) and to gain her autonomy and freedom: “Au fond, c’est simple, vous avez peur ;

³ Although many interpretations have been made concerning the imposition Pierre appears to have over Françoise in this scene and throughout the novel, I posit that Françoise possesses her own subjectivity. She is not just the passive agent of some hegemonic model. Pierre influences her and she also influences him.

⁴ It is important to note that one can already see the seeds of destruction as Françoise and Pierre cling (in their own ways) to a platonic cliché of unity.

⁵ This is a pun from the English translated title of *L’invitée*, *She Came to Stay*.

peut-être pas de votre famille ; mais peur de rompre avec vos petites habitudes, peur de la liberté” (43). Françoise’s friendship with Xavière begins with a desire to make her happy: “Je la rendrai heureuse, décida-t-elle avec conviction” (45).⁶ Embodying the figure of the feminist heroine who takes charge and would like to carry Xavière through life, Françoise attempts to keep control over her relationship with Xavière, even though she is not very attached to her and even pities her at first: “...mais ce qui l’enchantait surtout c’était d’avoir annexé à sa vie cette petite existence triste ; car à présent [...] Xavière lui appartenait ; rien ne donnait jamais à Françoise des joies si fortes que cette espèce de possession [...] les gestes de Xavière, sa figure, sa vie même avaient besoin de Françoise pour exister” (23). She is thrilled with having Xavière in her power and at the same time looks with condescension at her sad little existence (“cette petite existence triste”). Viewing her as slightly pathetic and in need of help, Françoise considers Xavière an object of interest. Yet, just as a toy loses its charm, Françoise’s concern for Xavière fades. Her curiosity (mostly based in self-interest) and her hospitality (which is not altogether altruistic) eventually turn into annoyance, downright frustration or jealousy as she recognizes that the happiness of Xavière cannot be easily produced, controlled or possessed.

While Françoise’s altruistic heroism flops, her annoyance rises in proportion: “Ça m’agace, tout ce temps que je perds avec elle et elle n’est même pas contente” (65). However, when Pierre’s attitude unexpectedly changes (his philosophical outlook on life, his plans for the future), one detects—simultaneously and in reaction to this change—the first transformations of Françoise’s desire toward Xavière. Françoise is shocked by that the fact that Pierre enters into “real” and “honest” discussions with Xavière, since it is not in his habits to show so much

⁶ « - Ma petite Xavière, murmura Françoise ; Xavière la regardait, les yeux brillants, les lèvres entrouvertes ; fondante, abandonnée, elle lui était tout entière livrée. C’était Françoise désormais qui l’emporterait à travers la vie.

- Je la rendrai heureuse, décida-t-elle avec conviction. » (45)

earnestness in casual friendships. In fact, she is completely taken aback (“déconcertée”) when Pierre’s discourse alters around Xavière, and Françoise ends up expressing feelings of betrayal: “[il] n’avait pas le droit de changer d’avis sans prévenir” (67). Not only does Xavière become a threat, but Pierre’s inconsistency and unpredictability expose Françoise’s lack of authority and power over him—he becomes an uncontrollable external element, no longer “one” with her. To some extent, he becomes the sign of power for Françoise as she appears to lose her sense of confidence without him.

At this point, Françoise becomes uneasy with Xavière. Because the newcomer possesses the ability to influence Pierre’s thoughts, Françoise suddenly perceives her as a powerful and disruptive presence. However, she tries to deny this and at first appears more concerned with figuring out what Pierre is seeking in his interaction with Xavière: “Que voulait-il au juste avec Xavière? des rencontres courtoises dans les escaliers de l’hôtel? Une aventure, un amour, une amitié ?” (76). This anxious process of *questioning* is important because it reveals the fact that Françoise perceives Xavière as a kind of interference to her couple with Pierre, one that becomes more and more powerful as the story unfolds.⁷ It is precisely in this questioning that we detect the first transformations of Françoise’s desire: as Pierre changes—disrupting their unity—she is soon overtaken by self-doubt and begins to alter her own opinions, self-conceptualization and desire, to all extents acting as “a woman under the influence” of both Pierre and Xavière.

Destabilization and Transformation: Heterosexual and Homosexual Desire

⁷ For Françoise, Xavière appears to be a source of both general and specific interference. On the one hand, she seems to subconsciously know that Pierre wants to have a sexual relationship with Xavière; yet, on the other hand, in the quote above, her questioning of the situation between Xavière and Pierre is described in a way that is general and beyond definition (not love, not friendship, not casual, etc.).

Unsure of herself, Françoise rethinks her relationship with Pierre and Xavière. Because of the influence, authority, and power that Pierre holds over Françoise's judgments and the choices she makes, she finds it difficult to rely on her own judgment when his opinions unexpectedly differ from hers and he sides with Xavière. This doubt begins to form in Françoise's psyche when Pierre casually declares in a conversation with Xavière that he and Françoise are just "deux individus distincts" (76).⁸ Françoise is unsettled physically and emotionally by his sudden "separating" proclamation of independence: "...son cœur était un peu serré ; on ne fait qu'un, c'est très joli ; mais Pierre revendiquait son indépendance ; naturellement qu'en un sens *ils étaient deux*, elle le savait très bien" (78, my emphasis). Françoise's attempt to logically understand Pierre's statement that they are "deux individus distincts" is here suffused with bitterness and mistrust. However, it becomes clear that she still values Pierre's opinion because at times she seems to see Xavière through his point of view: "D'ordinaire les insinuations de Xavière la laissaient froide, mais ce soir ce n'était pas pareil; l'attention que Pierre leur portait donnait du poids aux jugements de Xavière" (69). Because of Pierre's persuasive discourse, and perhaps most importantly, because of Xavière's influence on Pierre and Pierre's interest in Xavière, the nature of Françoise's desire begins to change. Not only does she start to understand Pierre differently but she also reevaluates Xavière's place in her life: Françoise begins to see Xavière and form new opinions about her. In a sort of self-induced epiphany, Françoise even appears "surprised" by Xavière's presence: "Elle la regarda avec *un peu de surprise* ; la robe bleue moulait un corps mince et épanoui et c'était un fin visage de jeune fille qu'encadraient les cheveux bien lisses ; cette Xavière féminine et déliée, elle ne l'avait *jamais revue depuis leur première rencontre* (65, my emphasis). Seeing Xavière in a different

⁸ In some sense, the platonic cliché of unity (on ne fait qu'un) that Pierre evoked earlier with Françoise is put into contradiction as he proclaims that he and Françoise are two distinct individuals.

light altogether (a light that appears to be highly influenced by Pierre), Françoise describes Xavière in homoerotic terms as she “discovers” a body that she begins to desire. Her “discovery” is an expansion of her desire to a third person, opening the possibility of a trio love relationship.

But how does this transformation really occur? One of the most noticeable reasons why Françoise’s transformation of desire occurs is because of the pressure Pierre puts on her to like Xavière as his attitude changes towards her; this strain, in some sense, influences Françoise to start seeing Xavière in a new light:

Certainement, par paresse, Françoise avait simplifié Xavière ; elle se demandait même, avec un peu de malaise comment elle avait pu pendant les dernières semaines la traiter en petite fille négligeable ; mais est-ce que Pierre ne la compliquait pas à plaisir? En tout cas ils ne la voyaient pas avec les mêmes yeux [...]. (77)⁹

Questioning her own ability to seize her up and blaming it on “paresse,” Françoise practically convinces herself that she must have misjudged and underestimated Xavière. She wonders how she could have treated her as insignificant (“une petite fille négligeable”). Yet, interestingly, Françoise is not entirely convinced that Xavière is indeed all that Pierre makes her out to be. She doubts his judgment and wonders if he hasn’t deliberately “complicated” Xavière, rendering her more interesting than she really is. Most importantly, she realizes that she and Pierre do not “see” eye to eye (“avec les mêmes yeux”) in regards to Xavière. The theme of “seeing” here reveals Françoise’s desire to be one with him: she wants Pierre to “see as one” and in the “same way as her” (just as Pierre, in his own way, would like Françoise to see the situation through his eyes). This aspect in turn reveals her anxieties about Pierre and pleasing him, while at the same

⁹ I will not discuss the problems of age here between Françoise and Xavière (such as when Françoise calls Xavière “une petite fille négligeable”); however, in chapter three, I examine the fixations Françoise has with Xavière’s body (her young body) which will clarify some of the issues of “age” and how it comes to function within the trio.

time displaying the central element—merging—which motivates Françoise’s transformation and creates the possibility of the trio becoming “one.” Before Françoise decides to directly “accept” and “invite” Xavière in the hope of forming a trio and a tri-merging relationship, it is precisely Françoise’s doubts (as Pierre influences her to “like” Xavière) that enable her to transfer her own fantasies of oneness from the couple to the trio. Doubts are what give Françoise room for ambiguity and allow her to make another person the object of her desire; and they are what allow Françoise to transform and expand her desire. In a way, it is as if the transformation of the nature of her desire could only be enacted through a process of destabilization of her own identity.

As she detects the signs of Pierre’s changing desire and the danger this implies regarding her couple (a potential ruin), Françoise indeed begins to doubt herself and to experience a state of utter confusion and despair: “Pierre et Xavière s’étaient dressés en face d’elle, elle voulait à son tour se dresser en face d’eux ; se ressaisir, que ressaisir? Ses idées fuyaient. Elle ne trouvait absolument rien à penser” (215). Incapable of stemming the flow of her ideas, Françoise is overwhelmed by uncertainty and doubt. It appears as if she is no longer able to think for herself; she acts in a confused manner and no longer seems to know what system of values she holds in her life. She doubts her own authority “en face d’eux;” and in due course, it is clear that she is no longer able to discern who, in fact, she *is*. She even states that she is no longer a subject or a person, that she is faceless: “Ça faisait des années qu’elle avait cessé d’être quelqu’un ; elle n’avait même plus de figure” (216). No longer having a “figure” or ceasing to be “quelqu’un,” Françoise’s identity becomes completely destabilized: she enters a state of confusion that forces her and allows her to transform and transfer the nature of her desires.

Facing either the potential ruin of her couple or the potential success of a trio, Françoise thus makes the choice to pursue the trio. However, it is important to observe that Françoise

desires above all to sustain her ideal of merging. Her fear of loss and her fear of separating with Pierre (the person with whom she was originally “one”) are precisely what drives and forces her to change her initial hope of being “one” in the couple. Pierre is thus one of the main influencing factors in Françoise’s behavior.

When Françoise finally decides to incorporate Xavière into her life, to form a trio, she does so out of a faint hope of “resurrecting her happiness”: “ce n’était plus Xavière qu’elle attendait, les mains moites et la gorge sèche ; c’était sa vie, son avenir, et la résurrection de son bonheur” (215). Deciding to understand her desire as something that she is able to change through choice, Françoise resolves that she “loves” Xavière (even though one can distinguish huge contradictions, for example, in the description of her own hand which shows her inconsistent desire): “C’était tellement simple ; cet amour qui soudain lui gonflait le cœur de douceur, il avait toujours été à portée de sa main : il fallait seulement la tendre, cette main peureuse et avare” (264). Just as she can reach her hand out and take something (an image of force, will and choice), Françoise decides that she can “love” Xavière.

Interestingly, however, before she decides to “love” Xavière and initiate a trio relationship, at a loss for meaning, Françoise falls sick both literally and psychologically as she allows her doubts and confusion to take her over. Emotionally distraught because she is “separated” from Pierre, herself and everyone else (“Elle demeurait là, séparée de lui, séparée de tous, et sans lien avec soi-même [...]”) (216), Françoise practically induces her own sickness: “Je suis malade, pensa-t-elle avec une espèce de soulagement. Elle fit signe à un taxi. Il n’y avait plus rien à faire qu’à rentrer chez soi, à se mettre au lit et à essayer de dormir” (217). Here, Françoise’s statement suggests that she is almost welcoming the illness, which is both psychosomatic and real, since she is eventually hospitalized with a pulmonary infection. In an act

of self-renunciation, she “abandons” herself physically as well as psychologically to her sickness, literally and figuratively suffocating. Not only does her sickness epitomize the paradox of her transition into the trio and of her change, it also becomes a metaphor for the ambiguity of the trio itself. As Françoise sleeps, enclosed in the blank walls of a hospital room—an image of her state of mind perhaps—away from her own room (“sa chambre, sa vie”) which she didn’t want to leave (“elle ne voulait pas la quitter”) (218), she allows the sickness to seep into her, to invade her, and most importantly, to “transform” her: “Les draps étaient frais, les murs blancs, et elle sentait en elle un immense bien-être ; voilà, il n’y avait qu’à s’abandonner, à renoncer, c’était si simple, pourquoi avait-elle tant hésité?” (223). Believing that something has occurred (“Quelque chose s’était passé pendant qu’elle dormait”) (221), when Françoise finally leaves her room and is transported to the hospital, she becomes incapable of making decisions (“une masse inerte”). Both psychologically and physically, she is no longer able to care for herself.

As I have already suggested, it is through sickness that Françoise’s transformation becomes possible. In order to form the trio, she allows her sickness (which is at least partially self-induced) to completely convert her body—it comes into her body as a kind of “outside” element and it infects her mind/body and desire.¹⁰ I read this episode as a metaphor for Françoise and Xavière’s relationship—Xavière being the infection, “l’invitée” (as the title of the novel suggests) who comes into Françoise’s life. What is more important, however, is *how* Françoise attempts to deal with this invited infection/person in her life.

The symbolic cure Françoise ends up taking for her sickness is “love.” She decides to engage in “loving” Xavière in order to cure her infection and she does this through an exalting and glorifying act (in effect, “loving” Xavière acts a kind of “vaccination model” for Françoise).

¹⁰ Françoise’s sickness is also a way of forcing the others to pay attention to her and it is, in some way, forcing them to assume a kind of responsibility.

No longer fighting her presence, in a sort of immunological reflex, she welcomes her fully. Lying in bed, caught in a “prison” of doubt and utter despair, she even decides that Xavière is her “delivering angel:”

Jamais elle ne s’était doutée que Xavière fût si attentive à sa présence ; comme elle l’avait méconnue ! Comme elle allait l’aimer pour rattraper le temps perdu. Elle pressa sa main et la regarda en silence. Les tempes bruissantes de fièvre, la gorge sèche, elle comprenait enfin quel miracle avait fait irruption dans sa vie. Elle était en train de se dessécher lentement à l’abri des constructions patientes et des lourdes pensées de plomb, lorsque soudain, dans un éclatement de pureté et de liberté, tout ce monde trop humain était tombé en poussière ; il avait suffi du regard naïf de Xavière pour détruire cette prison et maintenant, sur cette terre délivrée, mille merveilles allaient naître par la grâce de ce jeune ange exigeant. Un ange sombre avec de douces mains de femme, rouges comme des mains paysannes avec des lèvres à l’odeur de miel, de tabac blond et de thé vert.

– Précieuse Xavière, dit Françoise. (264-65)

Here, Françoise obviously comes to desire Xavière. Physically affected by her illness (“les tempes bruissantes de fièvre, la gorge sèche”), she suddenly sees the “light” and the possibility of freedom (“dans un éclatement de pureté et de liberté”). The candid gaze of Xavière (her “regard naïf”) delivers her from the “prison” in which she lives. Xavière becomes the “ange exigeant” and the “ange sombre” who opens Françoise to her newly transformed desire. Ultimately, Xavière is double: she is both an infection *and* a delivering angel—the infection that makes Françoise ill and the angel that is able to free or cure her.¹¹

Françoise thus accepts both Pierre *and* Xavière as she exalts the “beau trio” and *invites in* a change of desire—homosexual desire—which she does by engaging in “loving” Xavière and encouraging her to be part of a trio: “Voyez, s’il y a aussi un amour entre [Pierre] Labrousse et vous, comme ça fait *un beau trio*, tout bien équilibré, dit-elle. Ce n’est pas une forme de vie

¹¹ There is also a link between traditional representations of homosexuality as a disease/infection here that take on double meaning in Françoise’s case as Xavière represents two kinds of images for Françoise: she is possibly the cure and the infection.

ordinaire, mais je ne la crois pas trop difficile pour nous. Ne pensez-vous pas?” (264). Lying sick in a hospital bed, she expresses her desire to “merge” in order to regain her happiness, simultaneously liberating herself from doubts about Pierre, Xavière and the physical and psychological “sickness” that was invading her.

Yet, there is clearly a paradox in Françoise’s desire here, because her invitation (which she understands as a choice) is also “forced” both physically and psychologically by Pierre and Xavière’s desires. Françoise’s invitation thus becomes a kind of temporary resurrecting tool of her happiness; and “transforming her desire” towards Xavière proves extremely difficult, since she often finds herself fluctuating between wondering how Xavière will love her to being completely frustrated by her presence. In the end, Françoise chooses to desire Xavière because of her need to please Pierre and to see “eye to eye” with him (for he also desires Xavière); this choice allows her to alleviate the feeling of rejection she is experiencing.

Seduction and Rejection: the Failure of the Trio

In the end, Xavière rejects Françoise’s attempt at seducing her. The question of belonging, of *participation* in the trio, thus becomes even more problematic for Françoise, as she attempts to transform the nature of her desire: she oscillates between experiencing feelings of complete unity to experiencing feelings of complete alienation and rejection. She wonders at times how she could be loved in return (“comment m’aimerait-elle”), just as she wondered how she could participate in Pierre’s life earlier in the novel (“[...] il n’y avait aucun moyen d’y participer”) (192).¹² More specifically, she questions the very possibility of expanding to homosexual desire in face of Xavière’s spurning of her attempts at seducing her.

¹² “Le soir de leur première rencontre, il y avait eu dans les yeux de Xavière une flamme ivre, elle s’était éteinte, elle ne renaîtrait jamais plus. Comment m’aimerait-elle? pensa Françoise avec souffrance.” (312)

The scenes in the novel in which dancing occurs illustrate perfectly Françoise's longing to merge with Xavière. Dancing together as a couple—a symbol of a unity without the added third person—interestingly enough, becomes a way of expressing the ambiguity of Françoise's desire, the difficulties she experiences in negotiating both a new configuration of the couple *and* an expansion into the trio. In order for Françoise to impose herself as part of a trio relationship, she dances as a “couple” with Xavière and tries first to create intimacy one-on-one with her. Yet, what their dancing really illustrates is Françoise's failure to impose her will on the others. We see how dancing represents the confusion inherent in Françoise's heterosexual, homoerotic and homosexual desire when she is with Xavière, since Françoise herself is unsure of what she feels:

...ce n'était pas sans intention qu'elle serrait Françoise plus fort que de coutume et qu'elle lui souriait avec une coquetterie appuyée. Françoise lui rendit son sourire. La danse lui faisait un peu tourner la tête. Elle sentait contre sa poitrine les beaux seins tièdes de Xavière, elle respirait son haleine charmante ; était-ce du désir? Mais que désirait-elle? Ses lèvres contre ses lèvres? Ce corps abandonné entre ses bras? Elle ne pouvait rien imaginer, ce n'était qu'un besoin confus de garder tourné vers elle à jamais ce visage d'amoureuse et de pouvoir dire passionnément : elle est à moi. (310)

As Françoise feels Xavière's breasts (her “beaux seins tièdes”) against her chest and breathes her in (“elle respirait son haleine charmante”), we perceive that her own desire is not entirely transparent to her. In fact, she wonders if she really longs to be one with Xavière, if she really wants to feel her lips against her own (“ses lèvres contre ses lèvres”). Dancing is at once what brings Françoise and Xavière together to form intimacy and what separates them.

In the symbolic act of two halves joining to make a whole, Xavière pulls Françoise closer to her. Françoise's head spins and Xavière tightens her grip on Françoise. In many respects, this gesture is accepted as an act of seduction by Françoise, who is contemplating having a homosexual experience with Xavière. And yet, the very fact that her own desires are so

ambiguous reveals that this fantasy of homoerotic merging will not be successful or even fulfilled.

Consequently, Françoise's attempt at creating a trio relationship is struck down when she realizes that Xavière is not willing to conform. This lack of a real bond and investment from Xavière leaves Françoise experiencing alienation.¹³ Feeling rejected, Françoise not only needs the affirmation of Xavière's body in order to justify her own identity but she also desires to literally possess her ("elle est à moi"): her physical and psychological need of exerting control over her own body and the bodies of others becomes overwhelming. In her attempt to form a union, Françoise ends up becoming increasingly possessive. Her desire to merge as a couple (through dancing) becomes almost solely limited to Xavière even though, ironically, she earlier claimed she was incapable of dancing:

- J'aurais aimé savoir danser, pensa Françoise.
- Il y avait dix ans qu'elle avait abandonné. Il était *trop tard* pour reprendre. Elle souleva un rideau et dans l'obscurité des coulisses alluma une cigarette ; ici au moins elle aurait un peu de répit. *Trop tard*. Jamais elle ne serait *une femme qui possède l'exacte maîtrise de son corps* ; ce qu'elle pourrait acquérir aujourd'hui, ça n'était pas intéressant : des enjolivements, des fioritures, ça lui resterait extérieur. C'était cela que ça signifiait trente ans : *une femme faite*. Elle était pour l'éternité une femme qui ne sait pas danser, une femme *qui n'a eu qu'un amour dans sa vie*, une femme qui n'a pas descendu en canoë les cañons du Colorado ni traversé à pied les plateaux du Tibet. (179-80, my emphasis)

Skeptical at first of her ability to learn how to dance, Françoise reveals the volatility of her identity alongside her insecurities, reservations and disappointments. At thirty (older than Xavière), she considers she has completed her development (she is "une femme faite"), and experiences her age as a signifier of stagnation, presuming that it is too late for her to learn ("trop tard"). She assumes that she can never possess mastery over her own body ("l'exacte maîtrise de

¹³ In comparison with Françoise, Xavière is a young flirt; this is important because it displays in some sense why Xavière does not require the same kind of attachment that Françoise (or even Pierre) do.

son corps”). Xavière, on the other hand, is both young and an excellent dancer who has an extreme amount of control over her body—putting Françoise in a position of inferiority. Yet, Françoise *does* dance.¹⁴ She attempts to attain intimacy as a couple with Xavière *through* dancing.¹⁵

Because of these experiences, which are linked to the body, Françoise encounters the complexity of her own desire to be “one” with the others. More precisely, she faces the barrier of bodily estrangement because Xavière does not readily comply with *her* fantasy of merging into the trio. Françoise recognizes that Xavière’s body (just as Pierre’s body) is completely different from hers and that it always will be; however, she is still disturbed by her powerlessness to become one with her. Estranged from herself as an object within a world of other discreet objects, Françoise struggles to belong (whether it be in a trio or one-to-one with Pierre and Xavière). Even when she tries to “recognize” the other(s) as a part of herself, she struggles to do this for the obvious reason that it is physically impossible to merge with other bodies, and ironically, it is this *participating* element of recognizing the other(s) within herself that transforms Françoise’s obsession of merging into a destructive process. Françoise understands (at least on some level) the impossibility of realizing a union with Pierre and Xavière’s physical and psychological worlds, but she still obstinately and blindly desires to fuse into a trio relationship with the objective of achieving a perfect unity. Françoise becomes so obsessed with achieving this union that she blurs her own identity with that of those around her, to the point that she not only wants to merge with them, but also wants to possess them. Interestingly,

¹⁴ In chapter three, I explain in more detail how the metaphor of dancing functions in relation to Françoise and Xavière.

¹⁵ One could also interpret Françoise’s participation in Xavière’s love of dancing as an act of symbolically attempting to overcome, escape or conquer old age and mortality through a merging with youth (that is to say with the youthfully Xavière).

Françoise both acknowledges and suppresses the signs that tell her this project of fusion and unity is doomed from the start. Her project leads her into a process of self-destruction, which will culminate in the murder of Xavière.

Till Death do us Part

Françoise's "love" for Xavière, which initially appeared to be shrouded in good intentions, eventually turns into a destructive process of possession and jealousy when Françoise realizes that no real homosexual relationship is possible and that Xavière cannot be controlled.¹⁶ She comes to this realization in her first real and conscious homosexual attempt at connecting with Xavière:

Le silence retomba lourdement, ce n'étaient pas les mots qui pouvaient quelque chose; Françoise ne trouvait aucun geste, paralysée par la grâce intimidante de ce beau corps qu'elle ne savait même pas désirer.

Les yeux de Xavière se plissèrent et elle étouffa un bâillement enfantin.

– Je crois que je m'endors sur place, dit-elle.

– Je vais vous laisser, dit Françoise. Elle se leva, sa gorge était serrée, mais il n'y avait rien d'autre à faire: elle n'avait rien su faire d'autre.

– Bonsoir, dit-elle.

Elle était debout près de la porte; dans un élan, elle prit Xavière dans ses bras.

– Bonsoir, ma Xavière, dit-elle en effleurant sa joue.

Xavière s'abandonna, un instant elle resta contre son épaule, immobile et souple; qu'attendait-elle? Que Françoise la laissât aller ou qu'elle la serrât plus fort? Elle se dégagea légèrement.

– Bonsoir, dit-elle d'un ton tout naturel.

C'était fini. Françoise monta l'escalier, elle avait honte de ce geste de tendresse inutile, elle se laissa tomber sur son lit, le cœur lourd. (315-16)¹⁷

Incapable of verbally formulating her desire and paralyzed by the intimidating grace of Xavière's body, Françoise does not understand how to act. In some sense, Françoise wishes to position

¹⁶ In some sense, Françoise takes out some of her anger, jealousy and vengeance onto Xavière when she sleeps with Gerbert (who is firstly Xavière's lover). However, Françoise does not just solely sleep with Gerbert for this reason; she also finds him to be the young and attractive kind of man that she sexually desires.

¹⁷ One could also posit that, instead of really desiring Xavière, Françoise "longs" to desire her.

herself as a lover: the possessive pronoun “*ma*” cannot be simply viewed as a term of endearment; it is in many ways the expression of her attempt at uniting with Xavière. But Françoise cannot make Xavière play her part in this scene of seduction. What could be misconstrued as a state of willed abandon—after all, Xavière is described as passive (“immobile” and “souple”)—in fact turns out to be a most powerful expression of resistance.

Françoise understands that her “*geste de tendresse*” is useless. Shameful and with a heavy heart, she realizes that everything is over (“*c’était fini*”). In fact, from this moment onward, Françoise’s desire undergoes yet another transformation. Because of Xavière’s lack of interest in her as a sexual object, Françoise finds herself cornered: this rejection on the part of the object of her desire eventually forces her to turn her own dream of unity and perfection into a destructive process of possession. Françoise, who has tried to transform her own identity in order to make the trio possible, becomes maniacally frustrated. At that point, it is only by killing Xavière that Françoise will be able to restore the disrupted order of her life. Again, to return to the metaphor of disease and immunological processes, we could say that what cannot be assimilated must be destroyed. The paradox of this story thus lies in the fact that Françoise has “invited in” precisely the element which she eventually feels she has to eradicate.

In a scenario reminiscent of a psychological thriller (e.g. Alfred Hitchcock’s *Psycho* or John Woo’s *Face off*), Françoise not only allows Xavière to “enter” her identity (a reminder of the title of the book – *l’Invitée*), but also literally comes to believe that Xavière is the “substance” of her life. She tries to take on the identity of the other woman and thus becomes in danger of losing herself entirely, of being stripped of her own sense of self:

Qu’elle le voulût ou non, Xavière était *rivée* à elle par *un lien plus fort que la haine ou l’amour* ; Françoise n’était pas devant elle une proie parmi d’autres, elle était la substance même de sa vie, et les moments de passion, de plaisir, de convoitise n’auraient pas pu exister sans cette trame solide qui les soutenait ; *tout ce qui arrivait à Xavière lui arrivait*

à travers Françoise, et fût-ce en dépit d'elle-même, Xavière lui appartenait. (315, my emphasis)

Riveted to Xavière by a connection stronger than hate or love, Françoise is not only trapped in her desire to “possess” Xavière who is the “substance” of her life, but also seems to no longer be able to conceive of her happiness and identity separately from Xavière. Anything that happens to Xavière happens *through* Françoise: “tout ce qui arrivait à Xavière lui arrivait à travers Françoise.”

Ultimately, Françoise cannot prolong this state of mixed identities. Xavière is the sort of alter ego one has to kill in order to continue existing. Her only way out is to “separate” from Xavière by asphyxiating her (a reaction to her own incapacity to breathe freely in the trio relationship that she has failed to create): “Françoise posa sa main sur le réchaud à gaz et ouvrit le robinet” (502). Françoise’s pulmonary infection earlier in the novel, in fact, mirrors her “sickness” here as she desires to rid herself of her infection. Xavière appears to be the sign of an invisible, threatening and suffocating infection which invades Françoise’s body. Yet, the gas that Françoise turns on in Xavière’s apartment, can be seen as a sign of the invisible and threatening substance that Françoise is to Xavière. When Françoise finally kills her, the peace that descends upon her signals the fact that she can be herself again, that she has separated herself from this foreign body and is again able to reach a state of unmitigated purity:

Elle n’existera plus.

Soudain un grand calme descendit en Françoise. Le temps venait de s’arrêter. Françoise était seule dans un ciel glacé. C’était une solitude si solennelle et si définitive qu’elle ressemblait à la mort.

C’est elle ou moi. Ce sera moi. (501)

As Xavière dies within her, Françoise is liberated. She has chosen to reclaim her life: “Ce sera moi.” In fact, Françoise had become so metaphorically merged with Xavière that her identity struggle literally becomes a struggle of *separating* from Xavière. She continues to state,

as if she needs to reassure and justify herself, that Xavière is not with her anymore: “elle se refusait à toute emprise, elle était l’absolue séparation” (503). However, even as she states, “Elle ou moi” (503), it is obvious that she doesn’t separate from Xavière psychologically nor does she separate from her abstract ideal of merging with Xavière. This lack of a real separation is perceivable because of the fact that Françoise believes she must annihilate Xavière in order to free herself. It is in this way that she makes her strong attachment visible.

Conclusion

In this section, I have shown how desire is linked to the question of sexual identity. The object of desire is understood as an intrusion, a radical other that cannot be assimilated. Xavière resists any reification: whereas Françoise, from the start, perceives her as someone on whom she is going to be able to impose her will. In the end, Xavière cannot be mastered. Françoise finds that her identity is destabilized by this two-way process of resistance. Xavière, the *invitée* (the “invited guest” who does not comply) becomes mixed up in a “dual personality” fantasy that Françoise engages with: even the title *L’Invitée* suggests that Xavière is this other personality Françoise desires to have, because Xavière is at the center of a process of identification that challenges her idea of self. Desire, in this sense, is to be understood as power or a lack thereof. Xavière becomes the object that must either unite with Françoise or be destroyed. Not being able to control Xavière, Françoise escapes her fantasy of a “dual unity” and gains her specificity by annihilating this “other” through a violent act of separation. De Beauvoir’s quote of Hegel, at the beginning of the novel, sums up nicely this obsession for power and absolute control Françoise desires to have over Xavière: “Chaque conscience poursuit la mort de l’autre.”

1.2 GAMES OF DESIRE IN *JULES ET JIM*

One could view François Truffaut's *Jules et Jim* as a careful psychological investigation of the ways in which desire operates within a trio relationship. Indeed, the film explores in detail the dynamics that lead the three main characters to *intentionally* discriminate one "object of desire" from another "object of desire," thereby allowing them to use this process of preference and rejection to influence others. Because there is an inherent instability within the trio—as its asymmetry always implies exclusion (for example, when the homosocial desire of Jules and Jim casts aside Catherine)—it becomes clear early on that desire implies here the possibility of manipulation.

The configuration of the *triangle* (the trio) specifically allows the three main characters to influence each other in a variety of ways: each character resorts to using a strategy of "alliances" to help him/her seduce or reject the one that he/she desire to possess or sadistically hurt. In order to perpetuate their desire and keep the erotic element in their relationship(s), the characters become passively and aggressively manipulative. As they indulge in fantasies and ideals, the lop-sided power relationship of the trio soon becomes problematic, especially when their passions take over and "go bad." Here lies the source of most of the real and symbolic violence that pervades the film: in order to carry out their fantasies, the characters seek to manipulate and control the objects of their desire. They must do this not only in order to dominate the individuals they desire, but also to *sustain desire* within their relationship(s). Jules, Jim, and Catherine thus perform different acts of discrimination throughout the film: they move from one partner of desire to another (they "circulate"), giving "life" to each other's fantasies. In the end, however, they become subjected to their own capricious whims and are caught up in a violent storm (a *tourbillon*) of sadistic and masochistic acts.

The Economy of Desire: Marriage as Competition

An early example of how desire manifests itself in the trio occurs when Jules and Jim make a pilgrimage to a Greek island to see a statue of the face of a woman. Both characters declare that they “will follow” (“ils la suivraient”) any woman with the same calm smile (“sourire tranquille”).¹⁸ It doesn’t appear to be by chance that in the following scene, both Jules and Jim “discover” such a woman—Catherine. Invited to a dinner party with two other women, Catherine becomes the incarnation of their vision. However, it is exactly here that one of the first acts of discrimination is made by Jules and Jim as they *simultaneously* notice Catherine. As if one person, they glorify and concurrently choose to distinguish her from the two other women at the dinner party, deeming her the perfect, ideal woman. Even though Catherine, in fact, decides to choose Jules first when she touches his feet under the table (letting him know that she is interested in him), this act does not deter Jim’s admiration for her, nor does it prevent Catherine from covertly acknowledging that Jim is interested in her. One can perceive Catherine’s hidden acknowledgement when she asks Jim (instead of Jules) to help her button her dress and carry her baggage to the train station.

What starts as simple and harmless courting games, aimed at selecting desired love objects, soon develops into a competition, a power struggle for attention, between Jules, Jim and Catherine. As I have already said, by privileging a specific love object, the characters manipulate one another in order to perpetuate and sustain desire. Marriage is a perfect example of this process of discrimination. In order to create boundaries which enable the perpetuation of

¹⁸ The novel of *Jules et Jim*, written by Henri-Pierre Roché in 1953, describes this smile as an archaic smile (“sourire archaïque”) in the character Kathe. This suggests that history and myth play a more important role in the novel.

desire, Jules, Jim and Catherine use marriage as a symbol which allows them to *display* and *manipulate* desire. The obvious reason for marriage—arguably to unite two individuals in love—is not to be dismissed in this analysis; however, one of the goals of this study will be to see how marriage becomes a tool, or rather a weapon, used by the three characters to manipulate each other. It is in the scene at the beach, when Jules proposes to Catherine, that we see how marriage—perhaps the most emblematic and selective alliance of all—becomes a tool for these games “à trois” rather than an end in itself. As Jules desires to keep Catherine and the ideal image he has of her, it turns out that, in fact, he desires Catherine specifically *because Jim desires her*. In his dialogue with Jim, explicitly understanding and perceiving that Jim desires Catherine, Jules “discusses” (as one could posit in a passive aggressive manner) his proposal of marriage with Jim, stating that “elle a presque dit oui.” Wanting to display his achievement of winning over Catherine and desiring the approval of Jim, Jules appears to desire Catherine *because* of his homosocial desire for Jim. Yet, this homosocial desire is rendered more complex by these games of competition and rivalry. The fact of “having” Catherine (the desired object) is what, interestingly, becomes a crucial aspect of Jules’ relationship with Jim, since it allows both of them to keep active desire within *their* own relationship.¹⁹ Rivaling over Catherine permits them to perpetuate their own homosocial bond in a form of competition. As Levi-Strauss has observed, women become an object of exchange between men.²⁰ Thus, when Jules appears to

¹⁹ It is easily arguable that desire is always active; however, my implication of “active desire” here puts an emphasis on the *production* of eroticism and the implicit and explicit mental distinctions made by the subjects who desire.

²⁰ I should remark that I am not in any way implying that women do not fight back or against such patriarchal systems, for they evidently do; they are after all subjects themselves.

momentarily assert his authority over Jim by marrying Catherine (and thus symbolically “owning” her), he appears to be more concerned with impressing Jim.²¹

The marriage proposal takes an interesting turn, however, when Catherine breaks her “vows” by sleeping with other lovers and when we discover that she has even “left” Jules for months at a time. Catherine disrupts Jules’ conception of faithfulness (that women must be faithful and not men) and she upsets the order of desire purportedly initiated by their marriage. Instead of keeping the model version of marriage that Jules desired (in order to distinguish Catherine from all other women by making her *his* wife in front of Jim), Catherine dislocates desire within their couple by not only having her own view of alliances and how to keep them, but also by setting up her own “segregating rules” of discrimination in order to show who she desires. Thus, just as Jules’ intention in marriage appears to be driven by his desire to boast to Jim about the woman they both desire, Catherine constructs and maintains (both consciously and subconsciously) her own form of desire within their couple.

Accordingly, both Catherine and Jules use the alliance of marriage as a tool of manipulation in order to achieve power and assert their desire. Jules deploys marriage as a means of asserting his ownership when he is “showing off” Catherine to Jim (who desires her). By producing friendships where the systematic acquisition of socially desirable objects (i.e. women, children, property)²² and the systematic acquiring of talents (i.e. being a translator, a writer) represent the desired norms that Jules and Jim would like to incarnate, the use of

²¹ I use the word “owning” here instead of the word “possessing” because of the aspect of marriage. This is not to say that there are no aspects of possession involved. I am making this small distinction because in *l’Invitée* the problems between the two characters Xavière and Françoise (or even Pierre) did not involve the element of marriage whereas in *Jules et Jim*, marriage is a major element of discussion and it is a key structure in forming status.

²² Both Simone de Beauvoir and Gayle Rubin discuss this issue; however, through diverse ways. See de Beauvoir’s fiction work *La femme rompue* or her treatise *Le Deuxième Sexe*, for example; and Rubin’s “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the ‘Political Economy of Sex.’”

marriage is thus only another tool that helps Jules gain status, protect his friendships and perpetuate homosocial desire with Jim. In addition to this element, by “acquiring” Catherine, Jules and Jim are more homosocially attracted to one another—especially Jim, because Jules has Catherine (the acquired and desirable object). This implies that mutual attraction is manifested by Jules and Jim *through* the acquisition of desirable objects (such as Catherine) and by cultivating different skills valued by society. This element, accordingly, helps both Jules and Jim produce active desire within their relationship, while at the same time allowing them to maintain their idolization of Catherine. Marriage permits Jules (and later Jim, when he attempts to marry Catherine) to engage and perpetuate desire in a “friendly competition” (although they are, in fact, engaging in a power game in order to sustain desire).

Beginnings and Endings: Catherine and the Circulation of Desire

Catherine also uses marriage as a tool of manipulation in order to get the attention of both Jules and Jim. However, we see nuances in *her* style of alliances and differences in the manner in which she discriminates when she chooses whom she desires. Starting at “zero” (she keeps a tally of her conquests and men’s betrayals) when she feels she has been wronged by Jules, Jim or any of her other lovers, Catherine is unfaithful to those she desires to possess and/or hurt. Yet, if we take a closer look at the mechanism of how she perpetuates desire, we find that she, in fact, seems to be attracted to the idea of “beginning” and “ending” relationships. Opposed to Jules, who likes the imaginary boundaries that the alliance of marriage creates (ill-using Catherine in order to display his homosocial desire towards Jim), Catherine, on the other hand, likes to abruptly start and end relationships (or at least she pretends she does) just for the sake of disturbing and hurting the individuals involved (which are usually Jules and Jim).

Some of the alliances Catherine creates in order to perpetuate desire are visible in the scene where, cross-legged and flirtatious, Catherine sings the “Le Tourbillon de la vie,” a song written by Albert (George Bassiak). It is by all means an important moment in the film, since it gives for the first time an explanation, albeit veiled, of what the structure of desire might be in the trio. The words to the song provide us with a good example of these “beginnings” and “endings” that Catherine uses, but they also illustrate some of the “unsaid prevailing rules” of the trio: the pattern of Jules, Jim and Catherine’s relationship appears to mimic the words of the song as they alternate between uniting and separating. Embodying the archetypal image of the *femme fatale*, Catherine sings:

On s’est connus, on s’est reconnus,
On s’est perdus de vue, on s’est r’perdus d’vue
On s’est retrouvés, on s’est réchauffés
Puis on s’est séparés

Chacun pour soi est reparti
Dans l’tourbillon de la vie
Je l’ai revue un soir, aie, aie, aie, aie !
Ça fait déjà un fameux bail {x2}

The words seem to reflect the ambiguity of Catherine’s side of the relationship. She is, in fact, always somehow at once united *and* separated from Jules and Jim. It is precisely this paradoxical position that causes Catherine to become so frustrated. Enticingly glancing at Jules, Jim, and Albert (one of her lovers and a friend of Jules and Jim), Catherine sings the first stanza about knowing (or getting acquainted with) a lover, losing sight of a lover, finding him again, and again separating. The nuances of knowing a lover (“connaître,” “reconnaître”), losing sight of a lover (“se perdre de vue”), finding or meeting the lover again (“se retrouver”) and separating from the lover epitomize the mechanisms that Catherine use to perpetuate active desire within the trio. By evoking both physical and psychological *movement* (i.e. “partir,” “se séparer,” “se

retrouver,” “perdre de vue”), Catherine sustains desire—she nourishes her own fantasies of enticing Jules, Jim and herself. Catherine does this by *circulating* her desire. She literally alternates and/or switches her desire between different lovers in order to manipulate them and sustain active desire. The word “tourbillon”, which suggests the symbol of a whirlpool and the hustle and bustle of life, highlights this circularity and necessity for movement that Catherine uses to maintain her desire. If one conceives of the “tourbillon” as a metaphor, it becomes, in fact, an excellent image of how all of the characters in the trio produce desire: by shifting desire and/or switching their objects of desire, Jules, Jim, and Catherine *circulate* power amongst each other.

We can see more of this in the scene where Jim is just about to take the place or position of Jules with Catherine (just before he attempts to marry and have a child with her).²³ As Jules, Catherine, and their daughter Sabine show Jim to the inn (“auberge”)—a small distance away from their house where Jim will temporarily stay, one is already able to foresee Jim’s and Catherine’s soon-to-be relationship.²⁴ Hugging, playing and tossing Sabine about, one begins to visibly perceive Jim *demonstrate* his desire to have what Jules has—a family. Holding onto the hand of Sabine (and metaphorically taking Jules’ position as father), Jim rolls down the hill with her.²⁵ This scene also exemplifies the circular and shifting desire visible within the trio. As Jim rolls down the hill clutching Sabine in his arms—an image of the *tourbillon* and a metaphor for Jim’s transitioning into a relationship with Catherine—we see Jim, Sabine and Catherine form

²³ The war can also be viewed as a metaphor for Jules’ loss of Catherine to Jules (for the Austrians lose to the French in WWI and Jules (who is Austrian) fights and loses in the war with Jim (who is French)).

²⁴ The inn (“auberge”), as a symbol of temporality, also demonstrates that Jim’s stay will be short (for he moves into Jules and Catherine’s house shortly after, filling in the position of Jules).

²⁵ If this act of rolling down the hill with Sabine is interpreted as sexual (which it arguably can be), Jim and Sabine form a sort of couple. This suggests perhaps that Jim is transferring his desire for Catherine onto Sabine.

the image of a “new trio family” as Jules stands off in the distance (almost as if he is permitting Jim to enter into this new trio formation).

Desire thus manifests itself within the trio through a process of *seduction* and *rejection*. The image of the *femme fatale* which Catherine personifies is perhaps the most obvious illustration of this phenomenon.²⁶ As she sings “Le Tourbillon de la vie,” her attempt to entice and manipulate Jules, Jim, and Albert is apparent (she tantalizes them in the same room at the same moment). She is breaking the rules of what she is supposed to be—the good wife. She is both seducing them and rejecting them at the same time. Although Catherine is the archetypal figure of the *femme fatale* who allures men into dangerous and compromising situations by charm and mystery, Jules and Jim also use seduction as a tool of controlling and influencing desire. Even though Jules and Jim are fascinated by Catherine, a fascination that is most visible in the *confused* picture they have of her (for example, in exhibitionist moments, when she dresses in drag as “Thomas”), they still desire to seduce her.²⁷ One sees this aspect in their refusal to really acknowledge Catherine as an equal (a behavior they reproduce with Thérèse and Gilberte). As the film unfolds, Jules and Jim adopt a paradoxical stance: by ignoring her, they attempt to seduce Catherine (it infuriates her and therefore makes her desire them even more), but they are also rejecting her, since they are using her as a tool to add an erotic element to their own relationship. Even though Jules and Jim often act as though they are indifferent to her, they are not. In fact, they seem to “like being liked” while at the same time, they “like refusing” her

²⁶ Simone de Beauvoir discusses myths about women and some of the social implications of the “woman” who is able to embody “all” in her treatise *Le Deuxième Sexe*. The *femme fatale* is a paradigmatic image (if discussed in relation to these myths).

²⁷ The fact that Catherine dresses in “drag” also brings up many interesting questions. The obvious question of course being: does Catherine actually *feel* like a man and is it this which creates so much of the self-conflict she experiences? Or is it more likely that she wants to be considered as a man for social privileges that men receive? The latter appears more likely. Homosociality seems to play a big role here as she desires to participate in the realm of the men around her (although not always just in the attempt to achieve equality).

(perhaps to charm and frustrate her). Identifying with patriarchal models, Jules and Jim refuse to consider Catherine an equal. In the end, they engage in a manipulative power game of seduction and rejection. I might also posit that they personify a sort of *homme fatal* for they also represent the classic figure of the man that brings women into dangerous and compromising situations.

Although Catherine struggles to achieve “acknowledgement” within a male social sphere (seemingly impossible to penetrate), she *also* employs seductive mechanisms in order to gain attention within the trio. One possible interpretation of the drag scene (with Catherine dressed-up as “Thomas”) would be to see it as a reaction against the alienating male social sphere which Jules and Jim support (and this would be a fairly accurate interpretation in regards to the social conventions and rules that traditional women observed at the time the film was made). However, the difference with Catherine, as opposed to Jules and Jim, is that she repeatedly and expressly takes a reactionary position *because of her desire* and she attempts to appeal to Jules and Jim by contravention: by contradicting the rules that determine what a “good woman” should be, she exoticizes and eroticizes herself (both consciously and subconsciously), personifying the woman who is able to embody “everything” (as the representation of the *femme fatale* suggests). She is an iconoclastic woman—she is the exotic, the mother, the lover, etc.—and it is this quality that becomes her greatest tool of seduction and rejection. She is able to become anything Jules and Jim desire, and it is this plasticity that enables her to both charm and harm.

Before concluding this section, it is important to note that Catherine, Jules and Jim are essentially creating imaginary and real *boundaries* in order to sustain and manipulate their objects of desire. They not only like to create limitations within their relationship—for example through marriage—but their relationship exists solely because of these borders: Catherine needs Jules and Jim to gain attention and a feeling of self-worth and they need her to sustain their

homosocial desire. However, as all three of these characters viciously get caught up in a system where their circulating and shifting desire becomes the only way in which they are able to associate and perpetuate desire within their relationship, the asymmetry of Jules and Jim's homosocial desire takes over, foreshadowing the film's tragic end.

Desire, Language, Fluidity, and Death: the Metaphor of Water

The imagery of water in *Jules et Jim* acts as a metaphor for identity and desire in the trio. Water, which represents life, death, resurrection, power, reincarnation, purity, violence, fertility, and much more, is one of the principal images used to symbolize the struggles that the main characters undergo. However, for this study, I will only be analyzing three key ways in which water reflects the self, desire, and death in the character of Catherine. I will firstly examine how water acts as a mirror for her "voices," or more precisely, how it acts as a type of language through which Catherine is able to communicate her frustrated desire. I will then go on to explore how Catherine's frustrated desire becomes dangerously unstable and ambivalent and how it is this ambivalence that causes her to gradually lose her ability to communicate. Finally, I will analyze how Catherine's loss of her ability to communicate and to "combat through language" causes her to lose authority and power in the trio until eventually her frustrated desire consumes her. This decline in power not only becomes destructive for Catherine, but also comes to be a representation of death for her: the death of language, the death of her desire and her actual life when she commits suicide.

In order to tackle the question of how Catherine's desire is symbolized by water, I must first discuss her conflict of identity. As Catherine struggles to be understood by Jules and Jim or more accurately, as she desires to be "heard" through language by Jules and Jim (through bodily

acts of expression, oral speech, etc.), we realize that water acts in the film as a mirror for her conflicting “voices”. Gaston Bachelard’s quote of Tristan Tzara provides us with a good example of how the symbolism of water acts as a mirror for these voices. He states, “De tous les éléments, l’eau est le plus fidèle ‘miroir des voix’ ” (216). By this Bachelard means to say that everything echoes everything else in nature, and that, for example, the song of the blackbird reproduces the sound of a stream of water. But another way of understanding Tzara would be to say that water is not only echoed in nature, but that it also has something to do with human speech (doesn’t Narcissus talk to his own reflection, and ultimately lose his voice as he drowns?) In the case of Catherine, water seems to be exactly this: a mirror of “voices” (voices that not only characterize *her* “voices” but also the voices of Jules and Jim). We can see one of these voices evoked in a striking scene where Catherine jumps into the Seine (literally making “une scène”).²⁸ An act of protest against Jules and Jim (who are arguably attempting to suppress and silence her), the jump into the river becomes a type of voice for Catherine as she uses the water as a tool to be “listened to” by Jules and Jim. A mirror for her identity struggle, *water* becomes one of the symbols of expression or language that Catherine uses to communicate. By this jump, Catherine makes water into the *language* which she uses to express *her frustrated desire* towards Jules and Jim. As Bachelard states, “L’eau est la maîtresse du langage fluide, du langage sans heurt, du langage continu, continue [...]” (209). If water is a type of language which Catherine utilizes to express her frustrated desire (which continually transforms, as the fluidity of water suggests), water announces the development of her identity problem in the trio:

²⁸ The homonym (or “jeu de mots”) that “Seine” and “scène” play here can also be linked to Jules and Jim who make just as much of “une scène” next to the “Seine”. The type of symbolic violence they display, however, is represented in oral speech rather than through a physical act like Catherine who literally jumps into the Seine.

it appears to act as a sign of Catherine's instability when her frustration increases and her desire becomes more ambiguous and dangerous.

As Catherine expresses herself through the language or "voice" of water (which mirrors her frustrated desire), the current of the Seine (the river that flows through the heart of Paris) becomes another symbol of communication for Catherine. If we posit that the current of the Seine is a metaphor of the social milieu in which the film is situated (that is to say the social values that Catherine has to deal with), it appears only natural that she would desire to jump in this "current" (in order to be "heard" and included within that society). However, a problem arises for Catherine because of the patriarchal values, scattered throughout the film, which Jules and Jim often incarnate. Jules' and Jim's openly sexist rant, just before Catherine's jump, explains her reaction:

Jules

Dans le couple, l'importance c'est la fidélité de la femme, celle de l'homme est secondaire. Qui a écrit la femme est naturelle, donc abominable ?

Jim

C'est Baudelaire, mais il parlait d'un certain monde et dans une certaine société

Jules

Non, mais pas du tout. Il parlait de la femme en général.

Attempting to be heard, Catherine jumps in an effort to *disrupt* and challenge the "flow" of Jules and Jim's misogynist discourse (which is so explicit in the above quote).²⁹ However, one can also interpret her jump into the Seine as an act of actual submersion *into* the "current" of such

²⁹ It is ironic that Catherine decides to marry Jules right after this incidence. Instead of "leaving" Jules and Jim and breaking off her association with them, she decides to stay with them. One can argue that this has to do with her methods of seduction and perpetuating desire and there is validity in this statement as argued above; yet, it is not conclusive. It also seems to foreshadow Catherine's confusion about whom she desires.

patriarchal discourse.³⁰ Even though Catherine is able to swim in the Seine—a sign of her strength and resistance against such values—her jump demonstrates the way in which this discourse has already flooded and saturated her thought and diminished her resistance against it. In fact, Catherine’s jump appears more than anything to signify her gradual loss of language and power (especially since language is her major outlet in gaining power).

One can discern this loss of language with the imagery of hats used in the film. A hat, according to J.C. Cooper’s *An Illustration Encyclopaedia of Traditional Symbols*, signifies power and authority. Here, interestingly, it becomes a metaphor for the ambivalent state of Catherine’s identity and desire. One can perceive this, for example, after Catherine’s hat gets swept away in the Seine and the male voice-over states “le chapeau de Catherine suivait tout seul le fil de l’eau.” From this point on, the gradual deterioration of Catherine’s language becomes really visible. Jumping into the “flow” or social milieu of patriarchal values, Catherine loses her hat: as it follows the current of the Seine (where we assume it will eventually disappear), it foreshadows Catherine’s loss of power and identity. One can distinguish this even in an earlier scene, just before Catherine, Jules, and Jim go to a play at the theater. One sees Catherine and Jules playfully switch hats that Jim has brought as gifts. Although the power between Catherine and Jules appears to be equal in this gesture of exchange, and although there is an affinity created between them, the hats are, in fact, *men’s hats*—a detail which suggests that Catherine is at a disadvantage within a trio composed of two men and one woman. The imagery of the hats thus seems to foreshadow the difficulties Catherine will encounter with Jules, Jim, and their trio.

³⁰ Catherine’s ability to swim in the Seine also seems to be a metaphor for her “jumping” into the role of a character in a scene (“scène”); however, it is arguably a scene that she cannot control (for like water, it is unmanageable).

As the film unfolds, Catherine becomes more symbolically violent and her desire becomes fraught with ambivalence as she loses her ability to combat with Jules and Jim through language. As mentioned above, a good representation of this instability and volatility is perceptible in her attempts to break social conventions, switch and circulate her desire (i.e. marriage, the trio relationship, dressing as “Thomas”); and we are, of course, able to interpret Catherine’s jump into the Seine as a way in which she seduces and rejects both Jules and Jim.³¹ Yet, if we take a closer look at her desire and its relational link to identity, we can see another metaphor of water, another example of how Catherine experiences frustration as her voice is not heard.

Catherine loses her ability to make Jules and Jim listen to her. She desires to be understood at almost any cost, and the imagery of water—fluid and always moving—typifies another way in which we can look at the *structure* of Catherine’s desire: namely her desire becomes (like water) transitory and metamorphic. The natural instability and movement of water mirrors the structure of Catherine’s desire (this is to say it mirrors her constant frustration with Jules and Jim) as it continually metamorphoses in her attempts to gain attention from Jules and Jim. Most importantly, it characterizes her psychological instability which becomes extremely destructive and eventually leads her to commit suicide and murder.

Bachelard, who quotes Heraclitus, provides us with a nice example of how Catherine’s desire eventually comes to represent death itself: “...la mort, c’est l’eau même. ‘C’est mort pour les âmes que de devenir eau’” (69). If we read Catherine’s desire as “becoming” like water—this is to say constantly fluid and changing—water comes to be a symbol of death for Catherine, and

28 If analyzed from a traditional viewpoint of men’s roles, Catherine’s unfaithfulness in marriage can be seen as a switching of roles. Jules statement that “l’importance, c’est la fidélité de la femme” and “celle de l’homme est secondaire” is arguably a good cinematic indicator of one of the patriarchal views held by men and women.

especially the death of language and communication. It becomes a symbol of death, because, frenziedly disturbed, Catherine loses all sight of her desire, including her desire for herself. No longer able to communicate with Jules and Jim (who ignore her and use her as a tool to perpetuate their own homosocial desire), the “voices” of Catherine drown her literally.³² Her struggles become so wrapped up in a need for approval and recognition from Jules and Jim that she is no longer able to live without their affirmation. In the busyness of life (“Le Tourbillon de la vie”), Catherine gets swept into a position where she is entirely dependant upon Jules and Jim who, in fact, become the *meaning* of her life. No longer feeling she is truly able to converse with them, Catherine erupts in a final act of communication: through water (a tool she uses to express her voice) she commits suicide and murders Jim by driving off the edge of an unfinished bridge with her car (the image of the bridge representing perhaps her inability to make a connection, a bridge, with both Jules and Jim). The metaphor of water thus suggests not only the instability of Catherine’s frustrated desire and identity, but it also symbolizes the real and figurative drowning of her body/mind. Paradoxically, water becomes thus both a material of communication (we could understand it as Catherine’s last communicative act) *and* the death of communication (for both her and Jim die in the crash). Catherine’s murder-suicide also aims at harming Jules, whom she knows will be affected by her homicidal act.

The final stanza in the song “Le Tourbillon de la vie” shows how and why Catherine becomes so trapped and caught up in a situation over which she feels she has no control:

Alors tous deux, on est repartis
Dans l’tourbillon de la vie
On a continue à tourner
Tous les deux enlacés

³² The singing of Catherine in “Le Tourbillon de la vie,” ironically, foreshadows her actual loss of “voice.”

Both drowning in the car, Catherine and Jim literally become “enlacés.” Yet, there still remains a larger question: which two individuals are really more “enlacés” within the film? Evidently, it is Jules and Jim (as the title of the film suggests). The homosocial desire Jules feels for Jim is never lost. We see this in the last scene when Jules is disturbed by Jim’s death (believing there is no love equivalent to the relationship he had with him). As opposed to Catherine’s death (which is even a relief for him), Jules is only really affected by *Jim’s*. This quote thus seems to show how Jules is really only “enlacés” with *Jim* and it illustrates how, in fact, Catherine never was really united as a true couple *or* a trio with Jules and Jim.

Catherine, the *femme fatale*, ironically fulfills her role (however, with tragic undertones) as she lures Jim into the car and to his death. Her seduction is not only successful, but it is *too successful* as she smiles in a passionately crazy calm before committing her murder-suicide. Unfortunately, the situation in which Catherine finds herself appears to be destined for failure, because Jules and Jim—characters who incarnate the image of the *homme fatal*—also lure Catherine into a dangerous situation for she is never allowed to participate in their world (due to the social boundaries that Jules and Jim have created in order to keep her out). The true tragedy in this story is that Catherine is never able to separate herself from Jules and Jim; and although Jules and Jim are “enlacés” (forming practically one person), she is also “enlacés” to them. It is this element that pushes Catherine literally over the edge as the car disappears into the water: we see only a *tourbillon d’eau* break and disturb the water—a metaphor perhaps for how her frustrated desire only agitates the flow of the river, but never is able to really stop the *tourbillon de la vie*.

In this chapter, I have looked at the ways in which desire operates in two works, a novel and a film, centered around the question of “amour à trois”. In De Beauvoir’s work, I have explored the conceptualization of desire in the principal character Françoise. I have analyzed how her effort to unite (or merge) with Xavière goes awry as she tries to transform the structure of her desire. In *Jules et Jim*, I explored several of the ways in which the three main characters, Catherine, Jules, and Jim manifest desire. I studied specifically how they used manipulation (i.e. seduction and rejection) as a means to sustain their desire. However, in both of these works, I came to the conclusion that desire is imbalanced from the start and that, in the end, the trios failed.

There are two main explanations for this imbalance: firstly, both *L’Invitée* and *Jules et Jim* are fraught with problems of homosociality and secondly, the asymmetrical structure of the triangle (trio) configuration inherently causes conflict within the trios.

In *L’Invitée*, it is precisely the *lack* of homosocial desire that creates so many difficulties between the two women: Françoise and Xavière never form a real bond and it is this which renders their trio inoperative. In *Jules et Jim*, however, this process works in a different manner: it is specifically the homosocial desire between the two men which hinders Catherine from truly entering into the trio (Jules and Jim’s homosocial desire is, in fact, *too strong*—it takes on a form of passive-aggressive misogyny).

The trio relationships fail in both of these works because of the asymmetry of the trio: the graphic configuration of the triangle inherently creates problems *because* of its structural element. The fact of having a third person—always two bodies against one (in any gendered arrangement)—creates an atmosphere of conflict. In fact, in both of these works, it is exactly this

third person which initiates both the pleasure and difficulties the characters experience: the third person adds an erotic element which permits the trios to both thrive and perish.

2.0 SECOND CHAPTER

LOVE AT WAR: BONDING THROUGH VIOLENCE

In the first chapter, “Desire in the Trio,” I discussed the problem of structuring desire in de Beauvoir’s *L’invitée* and François Truffaut’s *Jules et Jim*. I argued that desire, ultimately, was unable to be arranged, configured or maintained in the formation of the couple or the trio, and that none of the characters was able to *stabilize* desire or power within their relationships. Françoise’s attempt to “merge,” Pierre’s authoritative influence, the flirtatious persuasion of Xavière, the connection between Jules and Jim, and Catherine’s sporadic outbursts were not enough to control and balance the bonds they all strove to hold over each other. Even as they created boundaries and limits to attain their goals, each of the characters within the trio succeeded only in manipulating others, and in the end, none was able to tame or discipline their own desires or those of others.

In this chapter, I will focus on exploring how the desire to *bond*, to create ties between individuals, functions in Truffaut’s film *Jules et Jim*. As I have already discussed in the preceding chapter, the homosocial relationship between Jules and Jim is one of the driving forces at work within the trio. But what is exactly the nature of this homosocial bonding? How does one recognize the other as close, as kin? In the case of Jules and Jim, it is obvious that certain social situations serve as backdrops and structuring factors for their relationship. Jules and Jim interact with one another, bond together, but not outside of society, not in a void or bubble. Being lovers,

citizens, soldiers, writers, translators, etc, they are forced to contend with the world around them—in a way, it is as if their bonding could only be understood within a wider socio-historical context. What does it mean for them to be friends (or lovers?) on different sides of the frontlines? Also, if we are to take seriously the idea that they might be in a homosexual relationship, how do the social constraints imposed on such relationships affect the way they bond? Reopening the question of Jules' and Jim's sexual identity, I thus propose to tease out how their homosocial/sexual relationship manifests itself not only within the trio, but also within the community and the nation.

My contention is that bonding, in Truffaut's film, is fashioned through violence, and that this very built-in violence of relationships is precisely what allows Jules' and Jim's social existence to be maintained: violence is both imposed upon them by their socio-historical situation and created by them as agents within this situation. The WWI scenes and the boxing scenes are examples of such bonding processes, determined by very specific constructions of sociability and violence. What I will try to show is that Jules' and Jim's struggle to bond echoes a precise patriarchal social order, a much larger sexist structure which uncovers a complete economy of pleasure and everyday violence. Jules' and Jim's relationship (whether homosexual or homosocial) supports a model that works against females and ultimately, homosexuals. Homosexuals are forced to create and carry on relationships in a dominant heterosexist patriarchal context in order to interact socially; and the female (and more specifically, Catherine) is socially subjugated to objectification. This is not to say, for example, that Catherine does not fight back or resist objectification (for evidently she does); nor is this to say that Catherine takes a complete pleasure in being objectified, for her murder-suicide is enough evidence to persuade us otherwise. Rather, there is a system of protection and preference that underlies much of Jules'

and Jim's model of bonding, which ultimately corners and traps females and homosexual males in an unnecessary social conflict or even a "guerre sociale." The system described here attempts to maintain an economy of pleasure and sexual gratification which, because it is dominated by the social model of male bonding, leaves many in a "no-exit" position which is not only destructive, but in the end, appears almost impossible to undermine.

2.1 HOMOSOCIALITY, HOMOSEXUALITY, AND VIOLENCE

The action of bonding (the formation of close personal relationships) functions as one of the governing social structures in François Truffaut's film, *Jules et Jim*. As I have suggested, the way *love* manifests itself in Truffaut's work highlights a system of "bonding" between men that supports socially accepted forms of competition and violence, thereby excluding women and reinforcing aggressive behavior between men at the individual and the national level. Jules and Jim (almost always) confess their love indirectly. They engage in methods of bonding that, in reality, reveal the presence of a much larger patriarchal social order at work within Truffaut's film—a social model of "bonding through violence" that carries sexist forms of heroism hidden behind a representation of *love*.

It is perhaps best to start analyzing the least visible forms of "bonding through violence" in the film, which filter in through seemingly innocuous social activities. "La boxe française" — a combative sport where one engages the entire body—provides us with a good example of how Jules and Jim's bond rests on the association of pleasure, competition and violence. In an attention-grabbing scene at the beginning of the film, we find Jules and Jim practicing their skills in a gym only filled with men, boxing and sparring at each other. Dressed in skin-tight light-

colored gym uniforms and boxing gloves, Jules and Jim punch and kick at each other in a playful manner: they behave as would two “buddies” enjoying each others’ company. But there is more, here, than just good fun. Why exactly do Jules and Jim go to the gym? What symbolic signification the *locus* of the gym holds within the economy of this film? Doesn’t the gym represent a place where not only heterosexual, but also homosexual males can interact?

Before one can begin to understand how Jules, Jim and other men create and maintain emotional attachments in the film, one must discuss the question of sexual orientation, which is one of the most important subject-matters evoked by the film.³³ Are Jules and Jim homosexuals? Is the gym just a façade to cover-up the fact that Jules and Jim wish to engage in a *homosexual* relationship? Or do their interactions only correspond to *homosocial* affection? While it seems as if the question of whether Jules and Jim’s experience of bonding is homosocial or heterosexual shouldn’t matter, there are several reasons for insisting on its relevance. If the two men do wish for a *homosexual* relationship (which they never act upon directly albeit there are numerous signs suggesting there is an homosexual attraction), Catherine then merely becomes a pure object that they use to sustain socially destructive norms which work against her as a woman and against other homosexual males who do not want to hide their sexual orientation.³⁴ As a result, Jules and Jim are assisting in a social system where homosexual and heterosexual men are forced (although for different reasons) to use women as objects in order to meet oppressive norms.³⁵ They abuse Catherine while pursuing homosexual or heterosexual

³³ I use the term sexual orientation here because it suggests an essentializing view of sexuality; namely that one is “naturally” born with a sexual orientation. However, my interpretation of “sexual orientation” will include the notion of “sexual preference” as well, for it gives space to conceptions of fluid and changing sexuality that many post-modern authors have promoted (i.e. Judith Butler).

³⁴ We have already discussed how this destruction affects Catherine in chapter one, but it also can be obstructive to homosexual men.

³⁵One thinks Marcel Proust’s famous passage, in *Sodom and Gomorrah*, when he suggests that “sodomists”, if they were brought back to a new Sodom, would pretend not to be part of it: [...] a peine

interactions and maintaining a structure that attempts to keep homosexuals “in the closet.”³⁶ On the other hand, if Jules and Jim are *heterosexual* and only have homosocial affection for each other, the scene is just as important because the gym then comes to represent something more than just a hang-out where men, to the exclusion of women, come together—it symbolizes a place where *all men* may come together to *bond* and express their *affection* and *love* regardless of their sexual orientation.³⁷

Before discussing more in depth the space of the gym and its signification as a locus of control and power, let us take a closer look at the boxing scene. It is a key moment in the film, which helps make us realize that the ambiguities involved in Jules and Jim’s relationship are, in fact, part of a larger problem—we discover that their strongest moments of affection and love are in scenes of combat, fighting, competition and conflict:

Jim

- Vous êtes un gentleman Jim.
(*Jules playfully kicks at Jim who falls to the ground after trying to block. They both laugh and move to the side of the gym.*)

Jules

- C’est bien. Et votre livre, ça avance ?

Jim

- J’ai pas mal travaillé oui. Je crois qu’il sera assez autobiographique. Notre amitié y jouera un rôle important. Je voudrais bien vous en lire un passage.

Jules

- Avec plaisir.
(*Jim runs off to grab his work.*)

arrivés, les sodomistes quitteraient la ville pour ne pas avoir l’air d’en être, prendraient femme, entretiendraient des maîtresses dans d’autres cités où ils trouveraient d’ailleurs toutes les distractions convenables. Ils n’iraient à Sodome que les jours de suprême nécessité, quand leur ville serait vide, par ces temps où la faim fait sortir le loup du bois. C’est dire que tout se passerait en somme comme à Londres, à Berlin, à Rome, à Pétrograd ou à Paris” (Proust, 632).

³⁶ However, we evidently perceive that Catherine resists the destructive influence and behavior of Jules and Jim; she by no means allows them to simply exploit her as object of exchange. This refutes in many ways Lévi-Strauss’ claims because it suggests that women are also agents of action and change and not just men.

³⁷ There are also social situations in which women try to exclude men such as child-rearing which can be alienating and destructive towards men who desire to bond in this manner with their children. It perpetuates traditional stereotypes and norms that both men and women believe they have to carry out in order to perform successfully in society.

Jim

(Coming back, Jim takes off one of his boxing gloves and reads the following passage from his story.)

- Jacques et Julien ne se quittaient plus. Le dernier livre de Julien avait eu du succès. Il y décrivait dans une atmosphère de conte de fée des femmes qu'il avait connues avant le temps de Jacques et même de Lucienne. Jacques était fier pour Julien. On les surnommait Don Quichotte et Sancho Pansa et les gens du quartier leur prêtèrent bientôt à leur insu des mœurs spéciales. Ils mangeaient ensemble dans des petits bistros, les cigares à leur dépense et chacun choisissait les meilleurs pour l'autre.

Jules

- C'est vraiment très beau, si vous me laissez, je voudrais le traduire en allemand. Et maintenant, à la douche!

This dialogue is extremely rich and could be unfolded in a variety of ways. However, for our purpose, I would like to discuss how *translation* comes to act as a supplement or enhancement of the act bonding that occurs between Jules and Jim.³⁸ Taking out a piece of his writing in the gym (already a seemingly misplaced behavior considering the location), Jim removes one of his boxing gloves (unveiling his naked “hand of power”) and reads his “autobiographical” work to Jules—a work which seems, in fact, to be about them both. The words Jim “speak,” however, are not the only language used here. Jim’s exposed and unprotected hand—the “tool of tools” which is able to express everything from affection to violence—also becomes an object that is able to communicate meaning. From the moment Jim removes his *boxing glove* (a symbol of combat and violence that normally protects his “hand of power” from being jeopardized in some way or another), we foresee that a scene of intimacy or affection is about to happen. Because the hand is exposed, without protection, it is clear that Jim has let “his guard down” and is “opening up” to Jules. And interestingly enough, affection and love do come from Jules. However, they do so in an indirect manner which I will call here “coding”: instead of telling each other directly what affection or love they have for each other (regardless of their sexual orientation), Jules and Jim

³⁸ I use the word translation here rather than both translation and writing because the act speaking is, for the Other, always understood by interpretation and thus needs to be translated.

engage in a game of translation and trans-positioning (“trans-” entailing a change, a transfer into or a crossing into). They engage in a game (to a certain extent, a competitive game) of creating symbols or signs that specifically demand to be “decoded” by the other person. Accordingly, they “code” *in order to be translated*, meaning that both Jules and Jim like transferring one set of symbols into another in order to (trans)-position themselves into different roles which allow them to express love and/or a different sexual role and identity.

For example, is it clear that Jim is trying to “trans-position” himself and Jules in his “autobiographical story.” One way that we see this is through his ambiguous “naming” of the two male characters in the story—“Julien” (Jules?) and “Jacques” (Jim?). The names of course resemble both Jules’ and Jims’ and start with the letter J; however, we are never entirely sure which names are attached to whom. We know that the character “Julien” is a writer, but attempting to link Jules or Jim to this character is difficult because we find that both fit the depiction (both Jules and Jim are writers).³⁹ Even the woman, Lucienne, to whom Jim refers in his description above, is ambiguous. Is Jim referring to Gilberte, the lover he frequents most regularly? Or is he alluding to one of Jules’ past lovers in Austria—Lucie, whom Jules mentions in an earlier scene? Much in the same way, Jim’s use of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza—a couple that mirrors theirs—is unclear. Who is Don Quixote and who is Sancho Panza in the story—Jules or Jim? Which of them is the man who fights imaginary battles with windmills and searches chivalrously for lovers? And who among them is Sancho Panza, the “sidekick squire” who acts as a loyal companion in the same battles, dreams and voyages? Is it Jules or Jim or them both?

³⁹ Jules does, however, “give-up” writing after the WWI scenes in the film.

It becomes rather obvious at this point in Jim's story that he is engaging in a game of translation and trans-positioning. Jim has affection for Jules as he "speaks out" to him *through* these metaphors. But what is Jim trying to reveal through these games? When Jim states that "les gens du quartier leur prêtèrent bientôt à leur insu des mœurs spéciales. Ils mangeaient ensemble dans les petits bistros [...]" he is evoking not only his affinity or desire for Jules, but he is literally summoning Jules to participate in a trans-positioning of sexual roles; namely he is beckoning Jules to change, transfer or cross into a different sexual identity (at least psychologically, although there are hints among Jules and Jim of *physical* sexual intentions when, for example, Jules says "à la douche"). Jim's direct reference to homosexuality when he mentions "des mœurs spéciales" is his attempt (at least in some way) to summon Jules either to change into a new sexual orientation or to realize his sexuality.⁴⁰ In fact, Jim's *speech* appears to be the signaling symbol for Jules to translate what Jim is insinuating.

Through this language game where Jim codes, creates metaphors and alludes to homosexuality, it appears that Jim is inciting Jules to engage in a translating game whose function is to express (although ambiguously) affection and love.⁴¹ And indeed, Jules does engage in Jim's game; he not only decodes Jim's metaphors, but he also proposes to *literally translate* his autobiographical work into his own native language, German: "C'est vraiment très beau, si vous me laissez, je voudrais le traduire en allemand. Et maintenant, à la douche!" By desiring to translate Jim's work into German and calling out to go to the showers (a location where men undress and expose their naked bodies), Jules consents, at least to some extent, to the summoning that Jim has proposed (although he does this indirectly by his suggestion to translate

⁴⁰ This depends upon conception of sexual identity (i.e. a constructionist or essentialist point of view).

⁴¹ Jules, Jim and even Catherine engage in this language game of coding and translating. However, I am only focusing on the scenes between Jules and Jim.

Jim's story). In fact, Jules' agreement to translate Jim's work into German functions as a sort of "co-signature," and it appears to finalize his story as "their story" and perhaps even as their "fairy-tale" (it is as if they have written the same story and Jules is a co-author).⁴² But what have Jules and Jim really finalized through such ambiguous translating games? Evidently, Jules and Jim wish to bond through this obscured form of communication; however, it is not just a question of asking whether or not they aim at connecting through these games. It is also important to inquire into the reasons why Jules and Jim prefer a relationship that *demand*s these translation games which create ambiguity and confusion in regards to sexual identity, orientation, bonding, and love.

There are two major interpretations that will shed some light on this question: either Jules and Jim are both flirting with each other through translation games *because* they have *homosexual* intentions or they are choosing to express their *homosocial* affection and love through these games. Interestingly, in both cases, the translation games are linked to an expression of love that Jules and Jim display towards each other (the fact that they convey their affection and love *through* these games is proof enough that there is love because one who does not love shows indifference). But why is there such a necessity for *supplementary* codification or *enhanced* ambiguity in Jules and Jim's communication between each other? Why is it that they (regardless of their sexual orientation) rely on this codification to express affection and a desire to bond? And lastly, why does all of this take place in the gym while boxing?

Let us return to the question of the gym and analyze several major factors that will provide us with a few potential explanations for why Jules and Jim rely in such a way on

⁴² There is another example demonstrating that Jules "co-signs" Jim's story at the end of the film when he mentions Don Quixote and Sancho Panza in the crematory scene (this reveals his identification with the story).

translation games *and* the gym in order to bond. Firstly, the gym, as we already know, becomes in the film a meeting place for men to bond. It symbolizes a location where sexuality is at least ambiguously expressed and recognized. This highlights a significant aspect about the gym. Not only does it act as an enclosed, protected space for men (a little bit like the metaphor of the boxing glove protecting Jim's "hand of power"), but it also acts as a place where men are able to enhance and maintain a tradition of bonding through competition and violence that extends out into the community and nation (the best example of this being war which I will discuss below). The gym, in fact, functions as a site of power and control where traditional roles of both men and women are sustained individually and communally. Although it appears as if the gym could be read as a positive social structure for men—especially considering the fact that all men, regardless of sexual orientation, are able to come together in a place and make a connection—there are many problems with this assumption. Perhaps Jules and Jim meet at the gym to bond, but what kind of bonding is occurring? Although the scenes in which Jules and Jim box seem rather innocent, the fact is, they are still engaging in a game of fighting; and even though they may come to the gym with "other intentions" (homosexual or homosocial), they still come to the gym to play a competitive sport. After all, if they just wanted to talk or flirt, they could go to a café or dine together. It thus seems clear that the location of the gym functions in a *double manner*, where competitive sports are used as a type of incentive. The gym acts as a site where Jules and Jim are able to engage in a specific form of violence linked to love and sexual identity, protected from the gaze of women or strangers. It functions as an isolated location where traditional forms of "bonding through violence" are maintained and enhanced.

This brings us to a much larger problem—war—which (similarly to the gym) acts as a coded site of "bonding through violence." Not only do the WWI scenes perform as a location of

conflict and battle amongst Jules and Jim, the other men and the nations that we see go to war in the film, the WWI scenes also act as a site of power and control where specific traditional roles (i.e. heroic chivalry) are maintained by men. Ironically, Jules' and Jim's most explicitly expressed moments of bonding appear around and in scenes of violence (i.e. the scenes of WWI and "boxe française"). It does not seem to be a coincidence that of all places, Jules and Jim come together and bond where they may also physically fight with each other. The WWI scenes, where they battle for their own countries, demonstrate this affinity for what appears to be what I will call here "love at war," a term that reflects the fact that they both worry about killing each other and yet ironically are located in a place of battle and conflict. Below is a war scene where Jules writes a love letter (in German) to Catherine which makes visible the ironic juxtaposition of love and war in Jules' manifestation of bonding with Jim:

Jules

(The viewers hear German; however, French subtitles appear on the screen.)

Mon amour,
Je pense à toi sans cesse...
et non à ton âme
car je n'y crois plus...
...mais à ton corps, tes cuisses,
tes hanches :
Je pense aussi à ton ventre
et à notre fils qui est dedans
Comme je n'ai plus d'enveloppes,
Je ne sais pas comment
te faire parvenir cette lettre.

Je vais être envoyé
Sur le front russe ;
Ce sera dur...
...mais je préfère cela car je vivais
dans l'angoisse
...de tuer Jim
Mon amour...
Je prends ta bouche, violemment.

This scene evokes the romanticized and classical depiction of a “Man at war.” It illustrates Jules’ penchant to idolize and “sculpt” Catherine’s *body* to his own image of “woman,” and it even makes visible Jules’ desire to transform Catherine into more than her body, as she also becomes (for him) a vehicle for a “descendant” which he assumes will pass on his name accordingly to the tradition of patriarchal lineage (he also assumes the child in Catherine’s stomach will be a boy, which follows with his sexist views). And yet, this letter represents even more than this. It epitomizes a tradition that has existed in various forms throughout western history, the traces of which have helped maintain hierarchal roles between men and promote the objectification of women; namely Jules’ letter characterizes a specific tradition of chivalry and bonding through violence that is linked to love and war.

It is not incongruous that we find Jules’ fear of killing Jim juxtaposed with his supposed love for Catherine. As pride in bravery echoes from his speech, Jules embodies the role that many men have incarnated—the man in love at war, as he professes his love for Catherine. But to and for whom is Jules really professing his love? Jules’ choice of words suggests something else: “...mais je préfère cela car je vivais dans l’angoisse...de tuer Jim. Mon amour...Je prends ta bouche, violemment.” Jules’ words, which are spoken in German and translated on the screen in the French language, suggest that, in fact, Jules is writing and speaking *for Jim*. There are several indications of this. To begin with, it is important to remark that throughout the entire film, German is the language that Jules uses to “speak in a code” to Jim. This indicates that Jules uses his native tongue, German, to both profess/confess his affection and love to Jim *and* to obscure his communication with Jim (who does not speak German). Hence, Jules’ use of German functions in two major ways: it acts as a mode in which Jules conceals his love for Jim *and* it helps him hide his anger and jealousy toward Jim. Accordingly, Jules’ use of German assists

him in both bonding *and* engaging in battle with Jim. This is perceptible in the scene where, realizing that Jim is going to “take” Catherine from him because he has just kissed Catherine’s neck, Jules, standing atop his balcony (in his chalet in Austria), speaks out loud in German and makes Catherine translate in French *to Jim* what he is saying. Catherine functions as the vehicle that Jules uses to express his anger *and* desire towards Jim; and Jules’ use of German works as a language of obscuring both his desire to bond *and* combat with Jim (because Jim does not speak German).

Another indication that Jules is, in fact, indirectly writing the letter to Jim lies in the fact that Jules chooses to use a specific sequence of words. When he writes “mon amour...Je prends ta bouche, violemment” *just after his declared fear of killing Jim*, it appears as if he were speaking of his love for Jim and not necessarily for Catherine. He speaks of passionately “kissing” Catherine’s lips (a facial feature often deified by lovers and which is able to utter speech); but perhaps his “kiss” (arguably one of the most physically connecting gestures) is, in fact, pre-allotted to Jim.⁴³ The kiss, where the mouth joins with another (and languages are metaphorically merged or mixed), is symbolic of Jules’ thoughts, language and expression: it suggests that his desire to unite or mix with Jim is not only physical but also psychological. And just as we saw Jules “co-sign” Jim’s story in the gym (as a kind of symbolic gesture of bonding and love), Jules’ letter also appears to be a written testimonial of his desire and love for Jim.⁴⁴ Love is also reciprocated by Jim when he confesses to his lover Gilberte, during a military leave,

⁴³ Due to the fact that the lips are able to utter words, this suggests that the power of Jules speech, which is in German, is quite strong.

⁴⁴ Although interestingly, Jules also knows that the letter will never reach Jim or Catherine because he has no envelopes to send it off. This suggests that he writes the letter in a moment of desperation as his life is put into jeopardy (especially since in the scene, a bomb explodes just outside his window). It also suggests that he is being more honest since it is likely that knows no one will read his letter.

that he is afraid of killing Jules (Gilberte is yet again another woman used as a vehicle through which the two men to socialize and bond).

There are several reasons why Jules and Jim profess and give a confession of their *love* for each other *during the war*. If we return to the metaphor of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza (Jules and Jim's "fairy-tale"), we are able to see and decipher a few of these reasons. To begin with, just like the two characters in Miguel de Cervantes' novel, Jules and Jim are demonstrating a history of heroic chivalry and bonding that perpetuates a misogynistic and romanticized view of women and a hierarchal structure between men and differing nations. In fact, Don Quixote and Sancho Panza are the model examples of what I have named "love at war", for they represent a tradition of *bonding through violence*. Accordingly, Jules and Jim are, in fact, fighting to gain the position of Don Quixote in their relationship—the knight who is not only devoted to the service of a lady, but is also, more importantly, the voyager and conqueror of other nations and the knight who is elevated to a higher social class (the knight usually being a man who is inducted into special military rank after completing service as a page or a squire). Thus, though Jules and Jim bond, just as Don Quixote and Sancho Panza do, they are caught within and perpetuating a social structure—where men bond through symbolic and competitive violence—that seeks to *colonialize* the Other: i.e. women, fellow buddies, citizens and other nations. The fact that Jules and Jim identify with the knight and the squire archetype reveals that they are agents in a social structure that perpetuates chivalrous sexism as they personify men at war who take a certain pride in bonding through violence, in order to pursue imaginary enemies (xenophobic pursuits) and chase after venerated fair ladies (sexist gallantry).⁴⁵

⁴⁵ The question of madness and folly is also alluded to with Jules' and Jim's identification of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. And one wonders if homosexuality is again linked to notions of madness, folly, disorder, confusion, etc.

Secondly, even as Jules and Jim perpetuate a form of “heroic chivalry” that sustains a “colonializing” and hierarchal social structure, this is only apparent due to the fact that *love*—in Jules’ and Jim’s conceptualization—derives its sense from its passage *into war*. In order to bond, Jules and Jim partake in processes of traversing and enduring socialized and politically honored tests. Just as the characters Don Quixote and Sancho Panza must bond together and fight the perilous enemy, Jules and Jim must pass competitive trials together, which act both as a proof of their suffering and free their consciences from the anxiety of the violence they have inflicted upon others. Thus, the bonding in which Jules and Jim engage is (almost always) in some form violent and it is almost always used as a “shield of justification.” It allows Jules and Jim to justify their violence because, for example, (just like in war) they are able to claim some sort of political honor and status from their actions. Just as the knight and squire characterize the voyager and conqueror of enemies in other nations, Jules and Jim also represent protectors and deliverers of the land or country from “harm.” It is this heroic image that Jules and Jim attempt to embody and it is this dangerous view of political *responsibility* that resonates throughout their discourse as they justify their actions through an ideology that puts the “responsibility of the individual” in patriarchal hands. Consequently, in Jules’ and Jim’s case, bonding is linked to a larger problem: it is associated with a form of individual and national heroism that demands the expression of love by men to be displayed through or in scenes of violence. This phenomenon perhaps even displays a powerful social anxiety visible in the men’s bonding behavior. Yet, the fact remains that the connection they make is more than often violent, inscribed in a social model where legitimate expressions of bonding and love are attached to everyday violence. We see this both at the communal level (i.e. the gym) and the national level (i.e. war)—it is a bonding which promotes and honors a political position, cause and responsibility that extends its sway into the

conquering and colonizing of others (individuals and nations), and it is also a bonding that is protected (i.e. the gym, the translation games, the war) defended and shielded by traditions of misogyny which extend their violence, power and sway, through veiled sexism, under the representation of love.

2.2 MAPPING THE TRIO: ALLEGIANCES

So how does “bonding through violence” fit into the trio? Markedly, due to the fact that Jules and Jim often use Catherine as a vehicle for their competition and relationship, *Catherine* is the one who is primarily affected by violence in the trio. The bonding in which Jules and Jim engage forces them to (at least in part) create powerful and destructive allegiances which work against Catherine. By allegiances, I imply two basic forms: firstly, there are allegiances made and identified by the characters *individually*—this includes, for example, how Jules, Jim, and Catherine come to conceive of themselves in their world, as well as how they perceive and are perceived as gendered individuals. Secondly, there are allegiances that are distinguished *nationally*—these allegiances include how the individual characters inscribe themselves into their community as a group and/or a nation and how they identify or lack to identify with their community and other groups, people or nations.

Allegiances are important individually in the film because in almost every scene, Jules and Jim will not allow themselves to break their allegiance to the male sex. This is to say that even when Jules and Jim idolize Catherine, their idolizations display a dangerous fetishism as they attempt to both build-up and construct their *own* relationship *and* at the same time, annihilate the threat Catherine poses (as a female). Even when Catherine dresses in drag as

“Thomas,” Jules and Jim still only understand “Thomas” as *Catherine* dressed in men’s clothing. When she is approached by what is most likely a male homosexual (who lights his cigarette from Catherine’s, suggesting his sexual interest), Catherine is again still only perceived as a woman who is able to do “all” (meaning that she is able to trick a man—a homosexual man—into believing that she is a man, even if she may come off as an “effeminate man”). We know that the man who hit on Catherine is most likely homosexual because of his sudden abrupt exit from the street urinal (“pissotière”) which, at the time the film was made, symbolized a privileged locus in male homosexuality and a meeting place for male homosexuals to have intercourse.

Jules and Jim fetishize Catherine in all cases (even when she dresses in drag as a male, she is fetishized as a *woman* in order to annihilate the threat she poses). In sum, it becomes clear with all of these indications that Jules and Jim pledge their allegiance first and foremost to their own gender. Consequently, they pledge their allegiance *towards each other*. This, of course, becomes evident through the acts of bonding already discussed above.

Alliances are also important nationally for several reasons. For example, because Jules and Jim feel so strongly for one another, they are willing to breach the pledges (at least on the psychologically level) to their own countries. They are willing to violate national allegiances for their duo. This is visible, for instance, in the scene right before Jules and Jim go off to war and Jules sings the French national anthem (the Marseillaise) to Jim on the telephone. Although Jim provokes Jules into singing the anthem by playfully criticizing his Austrian accent, the mere fact that Jules is able to recite *so much* of the anthem (a song of allegiance to France), and even his manner of reciting, suggest that he has an affinity for France (not to mention the fact that Jules and Jim’s bond itself seems to violate in some sense patriarchal views of national allegiance). Again, Jules’ allegiances are towards Jim and vice versa. Even though history appears to pull

them apart, their bond to each other is not broken. However, it is essential to note that Jules and Jim *do fight in the war* with their own nations, and in the end obey their national allegiances (even when these allegiances give them anxiety because they are worried about killing each other, they do not break the stereotypical chain that “men” must defend their country).

In sum, bonding reveals several aspects about the allegiances that Jules and Jim make. Firstly, the female sex (and specifically Catherine) is, in Jules and Jim’s *duo* relationship, always exteriorized as *a third*. Catherine always becomes the third object that is needed in order to make their twosome work. She represents this needed third for the following reasons: Jules and Jim use her to perpetuate their own pleasure and desire because she represents the “forbidden.” She symbolizes what they both *desire*, and what they both want to keep guarded and mythologized as *forbidden or prohibited* in order to maintain their desire. Catherine thus needs to be excluded (or exteriorized) from their duo since she represents both the forbidden *and* the desirous. Yet paradoxically, as I have already discussed in chapter one, she also needs to be included (or interiorized) in their duo in order for them to perpetuate their bonding. Catherine (the “third”) becomes what they exteriorize and interiorize in their duo relationship as she is both excluded from their relationship as an equal and also included in Jules and Jim’s twosome in order to perpetuate desire (*excluding* Catherine functions as a way of making her the “forbidden” and *including* her functions as a way of fetishizing her). Both facilitate the perpetuation of their desire, love, and bonding.

This concept of the “third” (in one sense) can also be viewed as analogous to Jules and Jim’s relationship in the war. If WWI represents the “third” to their bonding (this is to say a third source to which they identify as a duo), Jules and Jim both exteriorize (exclude) and interiorize (include) the war in order to maintain their love. Instead of embracing and pledging their

allegiance to their own countries, they exteriorize or exclude parts of the war from their identities. They do not allow their national allegiances to disrupt their individual allegiances to each other and they exclude the war in order to allow their individual desire to grow with and for each other. Interestingly, this form of exclusion (exteriorizing) also functions as a way of making their relationship “forbidden” (although differently from what we saw in the case of Catherine). It is not the war that performs as the “forbidden” (as we saw Catherine act in the above example), but it is Jules and Jim’s allegiance to each other which behaves as the forbidden.⁴⁶ They are symbolically breaking their national, stereotypical, and patriarchal allegiances. However, paradoxically again, it is important to remember that they also clearly *identify with the war* and their own countries because they do fight with and “alongside” their “own people” and their “own countries.” They also include (interiorize) the war into their sense of pride, self esteem, sexual identity, etc. As a result, the war also functions as a way of fetishizing their bonding. Their *fixation* on “bonding through violence” in and throughout the war (i.e. Jules’ letter) gives them (at least psychologically) sexual gratification and is thus highly essential to how they perpetuate their desire and love. Again, in both cases—where Jules and Jim exclude (exteriorize) the war by making their individual allegiances towards each other forbidden and where they include (interiorize) the war by fetishizing it in order to perpetuate sexual gratification in their bonding relationship—Jules and Jim are, in fact, generating an economy of pleasure.

⁴⁶ If one reads Jules’ and Jim’s sexual identity as homosexual, their “breaking of national allegiances”, in fact, suggests that national identity is not only limited to the country and the land itself. It also seems to suggest that sexuality and sexual orientation also play a role in the concept of how national identity is formed. Jules and Jim’s homosexuality unites them as they create their own sort of nation. In Marcel Proust *A la Recherche du temps Perdu*, he briefly alludes to this concept in his description of the descendants of Sodomites. He states that “Certes ils forment dans tous les pays une colonie orientale, cultivée; musicienne; médisante, qui a des qualités charmantes et d’insupportables défauts” (632).

All of the characters engage and practice in allegiances (on some level) since they must all pledge for or against certain beliefs. Yet, it is the manner in which Jules and Jim practice their allegiances that is very distinctive. This is not to say (or conclude) that Catherine does not engage in destructive allegiances.⁴⁷ Jules' and Jim's formation of (individual and national) allegiances is arguably the most pervasively destructive element within the film.⁴⁸ Not only do their allegiances promote violence (especially towards the female sex), but they also protect one basic element—an economy of pleasure—that dominates almost all of their behavior. It appears that, in the end, it is Jules' and Jim's insistence on protecting a patriarchal economy of pleasure that governs and overshadows much of their bonding conduct, and it is their fixation with “protecting” this bonding that manifestly dictates how they use and abuse others.

⁴⁷ Catherine's drag scene can also be read as a way that she attempts to break allegiances with the female sex, for example, as she tries to gain power over Jules and Jim. One can also arguably posit that she fetishizes the role of Napoleon as she appears to desire a kind of dictatorship control and power. This, however, depends greatly upon the point of view. One can also easily suggest that she is only regrettably influenced by a patriarchal model of power and that it is this desire for a type of “Napoleon model” that becomes, in the end, highly destructive for her (especially considering the fact she is a female and perceived as a female by Jules and Jim).

⁴⁸ It is clear that she has on some level a sort of “Napoleon complex” that would be interesting to explore in conjunction with Jules and Jim's bonding behavior; however, there is not enough room in this chapter to analyze this aspect more in depth. Moreover, the fact that Catherine wishes in some sense to control and gain power like Napoleon does not refute the fact that she is excluded from real equality within their trio relationship. Even though she commits violence herself (i.e. murder-suicide), this violence should be understood as an attempt at fighting her loss of control over her life.

3.0 CHAPTER THREE

L'INVITEE: THE BODY AS SPECTACLE

There is no doubt that the image of body, in *L'Invitée*, serves as a symbolic marker in many different ways. In this chapter, however, I will focus solely on analyzing how the gaze (in French, *le regard*) comes to play a specific role in relation to the body—in particular Xavière's body. Although all of the characters in *L'Invitée* elicit a certain amount of attention or attraction, Xavière is the one who is the most seductive for Françoise and Pierre. It is therefore important to examine how her body functions in the economy of the text, how it is 'invited into' the trio and how it is eroticized under the gaze of others. Xavière is the character whom Françoise and Pierre watch, glorify, analyze, study, describe, spy upon and judge: she is the body that they both wish *to look at*. She is what is young, what distracts and diverts, what is multiple, what ruptures and changes tradition. Most importantly, she is at the limit between the real and the unreal for Françoise and Pierre. She is the body that they may gaze at and identify with in their own way, and she is the vehicle that allows them to "cross-over" existentially and symbolically into another life.

In the fourth chapter of the second part of *L'Invitée*, a striking scene develops in Beauvoir's novel, whose implications it is important to deploy if we are to really understand what the image of the body stands for in this text. Invited by their friend Paule, Françoise, Pierre and Xavière decide to go to a Spanish night club refashioned in the style of a "maison de danse

sévellane” (341). Knocking on the door of the secluded club with the letters “Sévellana” written across the front—a word that evokes a festive flamenco dance from Seville, Spain—the four characters enter a small, dark room where a dance floor has been lit up. They find a table and order drinks as a flamenco show of dancers, singers and guitarists erupts in the background. However, in the following moment, Xavière suddenly and unexpectedly starts burning herself with a cigarette while Françoise, Pierre and Paule sit tensely, distressed, confused, and unsure how to respond to this act. It is clear that, in some sense, Xavière’s gesture of self-mutilation has been provoked by Pierre, who is angry at her for spending the previous evening dancing with Gerbert (her soon-to-be lover). This has rendered Pierre irritable, even aggressive. Acting as if “betrayed” by Xavière, Pierre becomes malicious, jealous and spiteful the moment he sees her, and being in a Spanish night club does nothing to enlighten his mood. His anger grows even more when he catches sight of the rose that Xavière has kept pinned to her blouse, which was given to her by Gerbert the previous night. It is at this moment that, subjected to the furious gaze of Pierre, Xavière masochistically start to burn herself.

Throughout the novel, the themes of acting, drama, theatre, and dance serve to describe and define the ways in which the characters interact. Pierre is a playwright, director of a theatre and an occasional actor. Françoise is a writer trying to finish her book and helping Pierre in the theatre making revisions for his plays. Under the influence of Françoise and Pierre, Xavière is reduced to the role of the debutante, always in the process of becoming an actress while never really having performed. Xavière has no real artistic or intellectual pursuits per se and she is more-or-less convinced by the arguments of her mentors who would like to see her become an actress (this role, however, fits her theatrical and exhibitionist tastes quite well). In a way, the scene where Xavière starts burning herself is a condensation of all these themes (i.e. acting,

drama, theatre and dance). It brings to light the notions of the “body as spectacle:” through it are highlighted the social implications of how the body is gazed upon and exhibited and, more specifically, how the body in the trio is used as the central object of desire.

3.1 SCOPOPHILIA & VOYEURISM

Two key-concepts must be examined in conjunction with the scene mentioned above: scopophilia and voyeurism. Indeed, scopophilia—the love of looking, where gazing is a source of pleasure—and voyeurism—the practice of obtaining sexual gratification by looking at sexual objects or acts—are two recurrent activities in *L’Invitée*.⁴⁹ There is something very specific about the ways in which Françoise and Pierre ‘look at’ Xavière: their relationship with her, in fact, demands a form of visual inspiration, motivation and pleasure that is satisfied by her *body itself*. I would like to suggest that gazing at Xavière allows Françoise and Pierre to conceal their anxieties about their own bodies and to refashion the world around them. Their gaze towards Xavière’s body, in fact, “stages the body as spectacle”: they use it to create and “stage” their world, it becomes the means through which they are able to make their lives unique and different. An important passage from the scene evoked above will make more explicit what I have begun to suggest:

Xavière ne répondit rien. Dans ses contemplations passionnées, elle n’acceptait personne à ses côtés. Ses pommettes étaient roses, *elle ne contrôlait plus son visage et ses regards suivaient les mouvements de la danseuse avec un ravissement hébété*. Françoise vida son verre. Elle savait bien qu’on ne pouvait jamais se fondre avec Xavière dans une action ou dans un sentiment commun, mais après la douceur qu’elle avait éprouvée tout à l’heure à retrouver sa tendresse, il lui était dur de ne plus exister pour elle. *Elle fixa de*

⁴⁹ Xavière also performs similar acts of scopophilia and voyeurism in relation to Françoise and Pierre; however, they will be discussed in the section on exhibitionism and entertainment.

nouveau la danseuse. Elle souriait à présent à un galant imaginaire, elle l'aguichait, elle se refusait, elle tombait enfin dans ses bras, et puis elle fut une sorcière aux gestes pleins de dangereux mystère. Après cela, elle mima une joyeuse paysanne, tournant, la tête folle, les yeux écarquillés, dans une fête de village. La jeunesse, la gaieté étourdie évoquées par sa danse prenaient dans ce corps vieillissant, où elles s'épanouissaient, une émouvante pureté. *Françoise ne put s'empêcher de jeter encore un coup d'œil vers Xavière ; elle eut un sursaut de surprise : Xavière ne regardait plus,* elle avait baissé la tête, elle tenait dans sa main droite une cigarette à demi consumée et elle l'approchait lentement de sa main gauche. Françoise eut peine à réprimer un cri ; Xavière appliquait le tison rouge contre sa peau et un sourire aigu retroussait ses lèvres ; c'était un sourire intime et solitaire comme un sourire de folle, un sourire voluptueux et torturé de femme en proie au plaisir, on pouvait à peine en soutenir la vue, il recéait quelque chose d'horrible.

La danseuse avait fini son numéro, elle saluait au milieu des applaudissements. Paule avait tourné la tête, elle écarquilla sans rien dire de grands yeux interrogateurs. *Pierre avait remarqué depuis longtemps le manège de Xavière ;* puisque personne ne jugeait bon de parler, Françoise se contenta et pourtant ce qui se passait là était intolérable. *Les lèvres arrondies dans une moue coquette et mièvre, Xavière soufflait délicatement sur les cendres qui recouvraient sa brûlure ; quand elle eut dispersé ce petit matelas protecteur, elle colla de nouveau contre la plaie mise à nu le bout embrasé de sa cigarette.* Françoise eut un haut-le-corps ; ce n'était pas seulement sa chair qui se révoltait ; elle se sentait atteinte d'une façon plus profonde et plus irrémédiable, jusqu'au cœur de son être. (353-4, Italics mine)

One of the first striking elements that stand out in this quote, other than Xavière's act of self-mutilation, is Françoise's reaction to Xavière's performance. To be sure, Françoise is both shocked and horrified by Xavière's application and re-application of the cigarette against her skin. Yet, in her horror, she is unable to stop herself from *looking at* Xavière. In fact, she doesn't miss any of her movements and actions. Françoise's gaze, however, is also directed towards another figure—the dancer on the platform. This dancer is not just any kind of dancer, she is a *flamenco dancer*, an artist that stereotypically exudes a kind of wildness, exoticism, sexuality, control, and force that dancers from other traditions may not project in the same way. This is significant for the following reasons. Firstly, Françoise's gaze and identification with her gaze, although it is direct and active at times, is more than often *deflected* or *diffracted*. This is to say that when Françoise looks at the dancer, she really "looks at and interprets" Xavière. Although

her gaze is directed towards the body of the flamenco dancer, the representation of the dancer and her understanding of the dancer are, in fact, a reflection of how she feels about Xavière's body and her own body. The dancer hence becomes a kind of mirror for Françoise as she comes to represent both Françoise's body and Xavière's body. One therefore must ask: why is Françoise transforming and transferring the image of the flamenco dancer's body onto Xavière's body? What purpose does this serve in her own conceptualization of the body?

The description of the dancer in the quote above will perhaps help us elucidate these questions. As we have seen, the dancer projects two contrasting images or two roles—she projects both the dangerous, capricious, and mysterious flirt trying to seduce an imaginary lover, and she projects the happy, innocent peasant girl. These two opposing images are very telling. They reflect how Françoise identifies psychologically and physically with Xavière, and they reveal her apprehension concerning her own body. In these images, Xavière is in a way represented by the dancer: she is both the usurper treacherously and deceitfully trying to snatch up her gallant Pierre, and she epitomizes the pure and child-like youth that Françoise is no longer capable of exhibiting. Just like the dancer, Xavière has control over her body. She is the young and supple body. She is the iconic figure of youth. Françoise's jealousy thus begins to become apparent as her insecurities reveal themselves; namely Françoise is approaching middle-age (she is thirty) and she conceptualizes this age as a step further to death as she loses her youth.⁵⁰ Françoise is thus affected and her jealousy expands: it is a jealousy mixed with her attraction to Xavière (whether interpreted as heterosexual or homosocial), and it is a jealousy that is muddled with her bitterness, spite, and envy of Xavière. An example of this jealousy is made visible in the fifth

⁵⁰ During the time period when this novel takes place (the 1940's-50's), it is important to remember that a woman who was thirty, in fact, would socially be interpreted like a woman who is forty today.

chapter of the second section when Françoise wonders if Gerbert, a young and handsome actor, would be capable of liking her, even though he is, in fact, Xavière's lover:⁵¹

Les paupières de Françoise s'alourdissaient ; elle revit en un brusque éclair le visage de Gerbert, se joues brunes, ses longs cils de femme. Aimait-il Xavière? Était-il capable d'aimer? Est-ce qu'il l'aurait aimée, si elle l'avait voulu? Pourquoi n'avait-il pas su le vouloir? [...] En tout cas c'était Xavière qu'il embrassait. (385)

This passage nicely depicts Françoise's resentment and her feelings of lack. As an older woman, that is to say a woman who is older than Xavière, Françoise is apprehensive about her age and this insecurity becomes obvious as she considers her body deficient in many ways. It is deficient both because of its inability to perform in the way she would like it to perform: "Jamais elle ne serait une femme qui possède l'exacte maîtrise de son corps ; ce qu'elle pourrait acquérir aujourd'hui, ça n'était pas intéressant : des enjolivements, des fioritures, ça lui resterait extérieur. C'était cela que signifiait trente ans : une femme faite" (180).⁵² And Françoise's body is deficient because of its inability to attract others sexually (i.e. Gerbert, Xavière and Pierre). Françoise is thus unsettled by Xavière, for not only is she homosexually and/or homosocially attracted to Xavière, but Xavière represents what she herself feels she lacks. The description of the dancer illustrates what is almost a stereotypical longing for lost youth (which Xavière incarnates), and it demonstrates, in some way, how Françoise desires to view her own body: "La jeunesse, la gaieté étourdie évoquées par sa danse prenaient dans ce corps vieillissant, où elles s'épanouissaient, une émouvante pureté" (354). It is the dancer and the "corps vieillissant" which radiates a pure and happy youthfulness that Françoise wants to regain. However, it is Xavière who, in fact, embodies this role: she is the attractive, younger woman, and not to mention, the

⁵¹ However, Gerbert does, in fact, become Françoise's lover later in the novel.

⁵² Françoise struggles to control and maintain a certain image of her body; however, she is insecure and this is most visible when she desire to dance: it illustrates her inhibitions about her body and its ability to perform.

potential “usurper” of not only Pierre, but Gerbert (who she also desires sexually). The dancer is the double representation of old and young, of Françoise and Xavière.

3.2 STAGING THE SADOMASOCHIST SPECTACLE

As we have just seen, Françoise’s gaze reveals her desire to resemble both the dancer and Xavière, since they represent a kind of wildness, youth, power, control, and exoticism she believes she lacks. But the image of the flamenco dancer also illustrates something else about Françoise’s gaze: she embodies *the spectacle*—her body becomes the stage on which Françoise can project herself. In Latin, the etymology of the word “spectacle” derives its meaning from *spectaculum*, *spectare*, and *specere* which means ‘to watch,’ ‘to look at,’ or ‘spy.’ It also implies a scene that is exhibited in an unusual, notable, sacred, or entertaining way; the spectacle is eye-catching and it is publically displayed. The notion of the “spectacle” is important here in our discussion because it exposes how Françoise views and understands the flamenco dancer’s body and Xavière’s body as a *stage where a spectacle is being performed*. In this scene, the dancer performs and acts. She is exceptional in both her artistic and physical abilities, and people applaud her unique talent. Xavière’s body performs in a similar way. When she burns herself with the cigarette, she also becomes the stage and spectacle. Her sadistic and exhibitionist act, although disturbing and perverse, allows her to become unusual and different. It is a way in which she can publicly display herself in an atypical and eye-catching way. By intentionally burning herself, she not only makes herself the body to watch, to look at and spy upon but she becomes the drama, the stage, the exhibit, and the theatre. Thus, in the end, we see a sort of

double stage or a *spectacle within a spectacle* at work within this scene, with the dancer on the platform performing, and Xavière at the table performing.

The double stage is important in this scene for several reasons. Firstly, the description in this scene exposes how Françoise recognizes Xavière's body as a sign of youth and as a sign of glamour. Xavière is not just anyone. She represents something different and unusual for Françoise—she is spectacular. Secondly, the description of the scene above reveals how Françoise deals (or, shall we say, how she does not deal) with her anxieties concerning her own body. Instead of trying to reconcile herself with social conventions that stigmatize middle-aged female bodies and trying to come to terms with her age, Françoise hides behind her gaze. Instead of being satisfied or at least trying to be satisfied with her body as it ages in time, Françoise finds erotic and sexual stimulus from “looking at” Xavière's body which, just as the flamenco dancer's body, she finds glamorous and different from the rest.⁵³ The fact that Xavière is masochistic and perverse does not change the modalities of this attraction. In fact, this reveals the presence of another kind of *double stage* at work within this scene; namely it illustrates a “perverted” or “distorted” dimension in Françoise's gaze, as she derives sadomasochistic pleasure from watching Xavière burn herself. Again, it is important to remember that it is *in horror* that she watches Xavière. She does not turn away, but instead observes each and every detail of Xavière's masochistic act. Her position as voyeur is thus interesting for two main reasons. Firstly, it illustrates the fact that Françoise enjoys the “forbidden” herself: through her gaze and eventually her actions (the murder of Xavière being the most evident example), Françoise takes a deep-seated pleasure in what is socially deemed wrong. Secondly, as she takes on the role of what we could call the “sacrificial mother” (in relation to Xavière and Pierre), Françoise pities

⁵³ Paule, an actress and a beautiful dancer, is another body which Françoise likes to watch.

herself and puts herself into the position of the “subjected character” who must bear the burden of people who hurt her, both because she loves them and because she finds fulfillment in her masochistic tendencies.

Thus, Françoise likes to hide behind the image of innocence. This seemingly small detail distinguishes her from Xavière’s form of sadomasochism in one major way: she doesn’t want anyone *to know* about it, whereas Xavière doesn’t care if others know or even look down upon her. Françoise likes being able to enjoy her sadomasochistic pleasures, but only if she can do so while appearing innocent: she tries to conceal her sadomasochistic fantasies behind her gaze and within herself. The clearest example of the “innocence” Françoise tries to simulate appears at the end of the novel, just before the murder, when Xavière finds out that Françoise has been sleeping with Gerbert, Xavière’s lover:

Elle courait. Tout son corps bourdonnait. Elle sentait son cœur entre ses côtes, sous son crâne, au bout de ses doigts. Elle monta l’escalier. La maison était silencieuse et la porte d’entrée gardait son aspect quotidien. Dans le corridor flottait encore une odeur d’ambre solaire. Françoise respira profondément. Elle avait dû perdre la clef sans s’en apercevoir. S’il s’était passé quelque chose, il lui semblait qu’il y aurait eu des signes dans les airs. Elle poussa la porte de sa chambre. Le secrétaire était ouvert. Il y avait des lettres de Pierre et de Gerbert éparpillées sur le tapis.

« Xavière sait. » Les murs de la chambre se mirent à tourner. Une nuit âcre et brûlante venait de s’abattre sur le monde. Françoise se laissa tomber sur un fauteuil, écrasée par un poids mortel. Son amour pour Gerbert était là devant elle, noir comme la trahison.

« Elle sait. » Elle était entrée dans la chambre pour lire les lettres de Pierre. Elle comptait glisser de nouveau la clef dans le sac ou la cacher sous le lit. Et puis elle avait bu l’écriture de Gerbert : « Chère, chère Françoise. » Elle avait couru au bas de la dernière page : « Je vous aime. » Ligne après ligne, elle avait lu. (496-7)

Caught by Xavière in her love affair with Gerbert, a sexual affair that pleases Françoise both because she loves Gerbert and because she wants to sadistically hurt Xavière, Françoise experiences despair not because of what she has done, *but because she has been caught*. She has been discovered in an act that she herself considers in some sense shameful and wrong. She

hides her affair with Gerbert because she doesn't want anyone to see her vicious and deceitful act toward Xavière. Only Pierre and Gerbert are allowed to know because they themselves are culpable in their relationships with Xavière. Furthermore, it is the fact that *Xavière sees* Françoise's "criminality" and literally reads the evidence that becomes so disturbing for Françoise. We see this in the following paragraphs when Françoise frantically knocks on the door of Xavière's room hoping—for a few moments—that Xavière has not committed suicide, swallowed a sleeping pill, or gassed herself to death. However, when she hears Xavière's voice behind the door, the nature of Françoise's fear soon becomes apparent: "—Allez-vous-en, dit une voix sourde. Françoise essuya son front en sueur. Xavière vivait. *La trahison de Françoise vivait*" (497, Italics mine). This is a key moment in understanding Françoise's obsession with appearing innocent. Her concern here is not really to find out if Xavière is okay; it is to investigate and discern if Xavière has "*seen her betrayal.*" This is additionally seen when Françoise finally does enter Xavière's room to investigate:

Françoise passa devant elle et alla s'asseoir près de la table. Rien n'avait changé depuis le déjeuner. *Pourtant, derrière chacun de ces meubles familiers, quelque chose d'horrible guettait.*

—Je veux m'expliquer avec vous, dit Françoise.

—Je ne vous demande rien, dit Xavière.

Elle fixait sur Françoise des yeux brûlants, ses joues étaient en feu, *elle était belle.* (498, Italics mine)

The verb « guetter » (to watch) is very important in this passage because it reveals Françoise's fear of being discovered in her sadomasochistic act; and in particular, it exposes her terror at *being seen* in an act where she has deceitfully betrayed Xavière to whom she supposedly has professed her friendship and love. Even the fact that Françoise finds Xavière "belle" in this scene is significant because it illustrates her "cruel and aggressive attraction" to Xavière, an attraction that places Xavière in a position of pain. Moreover, what is interesting is that Françoise finds

Xavière beautiful *in her anger*. This highlights the *violence* of her attraction, for it is evident that she likes seeing Xavière when she is angry and upset and she finds sexual gratification in watching her seductive body. Xavière is glamorous for Françoise. In fact, if we return to the image of the flamenco dancer and how she dances, we find an interesting link between the dancer and Xavière which elucidates this kind of sadomasochistic glamour. Traditionally, Flamenco is a dance that is perceived as staging extreme emotions and violence. Flamenco dancers appear angry, just as Xavière does in the quote above, and they are seen in some sense as dangerous, just as Xavière does when she burns herself with the cigarette. Furthermore, the tradition of Flamenco comes from the Andalusian gypsies, a group of people who have been stereotyped for centuries as dangerous, deceitful, false-hearted, and thieving.

In sum, it is no coincidence that Françoise is attracted to Xavière in this sadomasochistic way. Françoise's gaze and her identification with her gaze are part of the destructiveness to which she is subjected, and yet, in which she engages within the novel. Consequently, the notion of the double stage works in two different ways here: firstly, it acts a *spectacle within a spectacle* as Xavière burns herself with a cigarette and the flamenco dancer performs on the stage; and secondly, it functions as a way in which Françoise lives out her own role and sadomasochistic fantasy. In fact, Xavière's and the dancer's performance only mirror Françoise's own performance as she indulges in her own role of "bearing the burden" and "appearing innocent." Accordingly, one of the reasons why Françoise secretly glamorizes Xavière and the flamenco dancer is because they represent a part of her own fantasy, and in a partial way, they function as characters within her own created spectacle. However, it is Xavière's body that becomes so exceptionally important in the scene, for it allows Françoise to pass from the real world into the unreal world and from accepted ways of being into forbidden ways of being. Namely,

Françoise's sadomasochistic fantasies cannot function in a void, she needs Xavière's body as a medium to enact her fantasies to their fullest capacities. Thus, while Françoise identifies with Xavière, she also makes her body a spectacle and positions it within the realm of the glamorous—a world that is temporary and unreal for Françoise. However, it is this fact, this fantasy, that drives Françoise into confusion and delusion by the end of the novel. As she identifies more and more with her different and illusionary conceptualizations of Xavière, Françoise becomes dangerous. She is no longer able to distinguish her sadomasochistic fantasy from the world around her, and it is only a matter of time before Françoise will violently rupture with Xavière. In the end, it is her misapprehension of Xavière that finally impels Françoise to kill her. Behind her gaze and her identification with this gaze, Françoise becomes confused and psychotic until eventually her fantasy consumes her and she becomes deadly to Xavière, who is not only staged in her fictional delusion, but has become the literal character/body whom she must kill in order to enact the final scene of her own “forbidden” and perverse show.

3.3 THE MALE GAZE

At this point, it is also important to analyze how Pierre's gaze functions in relation to Françoise's in this scene, for the way Pierre looks at the scene also reveals the anxieties he has concerning his own body and gives clues to the nature of his relationship with Xavière, Françoise and Gerbert. To begin with, in the self-mutilation scene with Xavière, Pierre's gaze is distinctly different from Françoise's. He does not watch or engage in the flamenco show. His gaze is either upon Xavière or it is not. In fact, in the way the scene is described, it appears that he never looks at Françoise or the performers. Xavière is the only one he watches, the rest of the group—

Françoise, Paule and the flamenco ensemble—is ignored or seems to be a distraction to him. This reveals much more about him than a mere lack of consideration for Françoise and Paule, or his active, possessive, direct, and authoritative gaze towards Xavière: namely, it unveils his insecurities concerning his own masculinity.

In order to discuss the insecurities Pierre has concerning his masculinity, it is essential to return to the scene where Xavière burns herself and to remember the reasons why Pierre became so infuriated with her in the first place: Pierre is angry because Xavière went out dancing with Gerbert. Interestingly, Pierre is in competition with Gerbert because he represents the rival *and*, most importantly, the youth, attraction, and virility that Pierre believes he lacks and yet still desires to embody.⁵⁴ Just as Françoise felt threatened by Xavière, Pierre feels threatened by her as well. Yet, he is not threatened by her because of her female body which, as we have seen, is a menace for Françoise—he feels threatened by what *actions* she might take that will put his masculinity into jeopardy with Gerbert. As I will show, Gerbert becomes for Pierre the possible usurper of his masculinity and worth. Thus, “possessing” Xavière becomes for Pierre one of the ways in which he becomes able to display his masculinity in relation to Gerbert’s. Without Xavière, he feels weaker and more diminished as a man in front of Gerbert who acts as the younger, attractive, and more physically-able male in Pierre’s eyes. An example of Pierre’s and Gerbert’s competitiveness is visible in a scene where they both play a seemingly harmless game of trying to get down the stairs faster:

Gerbert enfouit dans sa poche un paquet de Greys et un sac de chocolats; c’était la seule faiblesse de Françoise, son amour pour les sucreries, on pouvait bien lui passer ça. [...] Gerbert fit claquer derrière lui la porte d’entrée et dévala les trois étages à toutes vitesses; quarante secondes, jamais Labrousse n’aurait descendu

⁵⁴ In chapter one and two, I discussed the problems of homosocial bonding and rivalry in *Jules et Jim*. However, in *L’Invitée*, there are also similar problems of homosocial bonding between Pierre and Gerbert (although their relationship of bonding and rivalry functions quite differently from Jules’ and Jim’s).

aussi vite ce petit escalier sombre et tordu, c'était par une chance injuste qu'il gagnait quelquefois dans les concours; quarante secondes : sûrement Labrousse l'accuserait d'exagérer. Je dirai trente secondes, décida Gerbert; comme ça, ça rétablirait la vérité. (317)

A few scenes later:

- Ah ! dit Gerbert en se frappant le front.
- Vous m'avez fait peur, dit Françoise. Qu'avez-vous oublié encore ?
- J'ai oublié de vous dire que j'ai descendu l'escalier tout à l'heure en trente secondes.
- Vous mentez, dit Labrousse.
- J'étais sûr que vous ne voudriez pas le croire, dit Gerbert. Trente secondes exactement.
- Vous le referez sous mes yeux, dit Labrousse. N'empêche que je vous ai bien gratté dans les escaliers de Montmartre.
- J'ai glissé, dit Gerbert. Il s'empara de la carte: il y avait du jambon aux haricots rouges. (322)

It is not incidental that Gerbert's competitive game with Pierre (Labrousse) is called to mind here in conjunction with his admiration and fondness for Françoise. Under the guise of romanticism and through a subtle trace of aggression, Gerbert's action of bringing Françoise sweets is, in some sense, a competitive move; and although it appears harmless when he knocks on the window of the taxi and tells Pierre *in front of Françoise* that he went down the stairs in thirty seconds, his actions are still gripped in a kind of rivalry. Even while he is dishonest to Pierre about the amount of time it took him to get down the stairs (thirty seconds instead of forty), an exaggeration that at first glance appears innocent, Gerbert is, in fact, boosting his masculinity both subconsciously and consciously in front of Pierre and Françoise. He is in effect enhancing his capacity to perform as the younger male. Consequently, this poses a problem for Pierre (the older male) because Gerbert represents the youth, romantic allure, and able-body that Pierre feels he lacks and is no longer capable of exhibiting and performing. Although Pierre hides (just as Gerbert) behind a playful game, Gerbert's age, body, and physical capacities intimidate Pierre and put into question his own masculinity. Furthermore, Gerbert's subtle and innocent rivalry is

taken a step further when he sleeps with both Xavière and Françoise. He “takes” Xavière’s virginity (she has the sex appeal of a younger woman) and sleeps with Pierre’s famous, prized, and faithful woman, Françoise. The fact that Pierre identifies a part of his masculinity through Xavière and Françoise is very significant because Gerbert “steals” both of Pierre’s lovers at some point or another in the novel.⁵⁵ This is not to assert that Françoise and Xavière are just passive agents in Pierre’s and Gerbert’s game, since this is evidently not the case. Rather, my aim is to open-up some of the motives for why Pierre behaves in the way he does.

It is for this reason that the scene where Xavière burns herself is so important. Again, Pierre is angry at Xavière because she went out dancing with *Gerbert* (his friend/rival). His gaze, which is directed towards Xavière, is thus misplaced in this scene, since he takes his anger out on Xavière whereas it should in fact be directed at Gerbert.⁵⁶ Xavière becomes a kind of medium (although a resistant medium) through which Pierre and Gerbert attempt to manifest or visibly display their masculinity.⁵⁷ Furthermore, when Pierre calls Xavière’s burn an “expiatory” burn, “une brûlure expiatoire” (357), he unveils his real concern: he, in fact, wants Xavière to feel guilty for what she has done. As the word “expiatory” suggests, he wants her to put an end to her just-beginning relationship with Gerbert. One can see this jealousy and anxiety, as it is manifested by Pierre towards Gerbert, in more detail in the scene that precedes the one where Xavière burns herself. Pierre becomes angry at Xavière when he notices that she has kept the rose Gerbert gave her from the previous night when they went dancing:

⁵⁵ It is important to remember that I am evoking certain points of view here. I do not think that Françoise and Xavière have been “stolen” by Gerbert or Pierre; I am just suggesting an interpretation of why Pierre and Gerbert behave the actions that they do.

⁵⁶ The fact that Pierre is a writer and a director (a position esteemed by Gerbert) does not seem to change Pierre’s image of himself. He is still jealous of Gerbert and insecure. It does, however, seem to spur on Gerbert who finds himself, as an actor, on a lower social scale.

⁵⁷ Françoise and Xavière also play games in order to display their femininity; however, these games function in a much different way.

Pierre fixa sur Xavière un regard perçant.
–Mais pourquoi gardez-vous cette rose ? Elle est fanée, dit-il sèchement.
Xavière le toisa, elle détacha lentement la rose de son corsage et la déposa dans le verre de manzanilla qu’un garçon venait de placer devant elle.
–Pourquoi pas ? dit Xavière en surveillant du coin de l’œil la fleur malade. (350-1)

A few paragraphs later:

[...] Mais Pierre gardait rivés sur Xavière des yeux malveillants.
–Eh bien, ça n’a pas été long, dit-il.
La rose pendait lamentablement sur sa tige avec un air d’intoxiquée, elle était devenue toute jaune et ses pétales s’étaient roussis. Xavière la prit doucement entre ses doigts.
–Oui, je crois qu’elle est tout à fait morte, dit-elle. Elle la jeta sur la table, puis elle regarda Pierre avec défi ; elle saisit son verre et le vida d’un trait. Paule ouvrit de grands yeux étonnés.
–Ça a-t-il bon goût une âme de rose ? dit Pierre.
Xavière se rejeta en arrière et alluma une cigarette sans répondre. Il y eut un silence gêné. Paule sourit à Françoise.
–Vous voulez bien qu’on essaye ce paso doble ? dit-elle avec un évident désir de faire diversion.
–Quand je danse avec vous, j’ai presque l’illusion de savoir, dit Françoise en se levant.
[...]. (351-2)

The resentment and disdain behind Pierre’s gaze in this scene, although it is actively directed towards Xavière, indicates the bitterness he feels toward Gerbert who has not only charmed Xavière, but has gotten her to wear the trophy—the rose—that renders his triumph visible in their competitive game of attracting women. The wilted rose placed in the glass of alcohol, the symbol of a kind of temporary perfection that has been perverted, illustrates several kinds of violence soon to be realized in the trio. In this final section, I am going to deploy two separate meanings associated with the rose. Firstly, I will analyze the excerpt above and show how the rose represents a kind of *forced* aggression in Xavière’s and Pierre’s relationship; and secondly, I will illustrate how the rose, as a symbol of “intoxicated perfection,” is analogous to the destruction of trio relationship itself.

1) As a writer and a director in a theatre, Pierre exudes and commands a specific kind of authority. He writes and creates plays in the theatre; he tells others what to do, how to be, how to dress, when to come onto the stage, when not to do something, why one should behave in a particular way, etc. He does not guide the way, he *shows the way* and he desires people to *act* according to his will. This role, where Pierre performs as director and creator, is important in our discussion here because of the ways in which he transfers this “role” into his relationship with Xavière. Pierre’s gaze and the authority that he imposes on others is transferred in a similar way on Xavière: he wants her to perform as he desires. This is visible when he tries to make Xavière *act* both literally (he influences her to become an actress under his training) and figuratively (he tries to make her perform as he wishes in their duo relationship and in the trio). Pierre wants to control and manipulate Xavière’s body and he wants to make her body fit his own fantasies—fantasies which are governed by his anxiety about his masculinity. He wants to assert his artistic ego, as in the passage where he attempts to transform Xavière into a sort of pet project/actress/lover. This latter fantasy, however, takes on another meaning, by revealing how Pierre is fixed upon the idea of making Xavière’s body a spectacle or a stage (although it functions in a different way from Françoise’s fantasy). The fact that Pierre wants to make Xavière *act* (in all the meanings I have evoked), suggests that he views her body like a medium—a stage—in which to work, control and manipulate his ideas of what she should be and do for him. Under the appearance of *art* (i.e. theatre, writing), Xavière’s body thus comes to represent another form of the “body as spectacle” for Pierre (both in his public life and personal as he attempts to control her like a work of art).⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Françoise also tries to make Xavière’s body an object of art that she can transform according to her interests; however, her rapport functions much differently than Pierre’s.

There is, however, one interesting element that we haven't yet discussed: Xavière is *willing* to be the actress. She likes acting, displaying herself in public and bringing attention to herself (as I explained above in the section on Françoise, she likes being a spectacle). In fact, Xavière is more like an unacknowledged exhibitionist: she likes to perform her own kind of creative acts (as many exhibitionists do), and she likes to behave in a way that will attract others by acting out (i.e. burning herself with a cigarette). She does what she wants and when she wants. Most importantly, she will not tolerate those who try to control her too much (and this includes Pierre). Consequently, it comes as no surprise that Xavière's reaction to Pierre is defiant (as we see in the example evoked above with the rose). She stubbornly resists Pierre's attempts to make her obedient (like a child) and she becomes insubordinate, unruly, and insolent when he does try to "claim" her. This becomes evident when Xavière throws the rose across the table and looks at Pierre in defiance and, out of anger towards him, burns herself with a cigarette. Interestingly, when Pierre struggles to dominate Xavière and make her perform according to his will, she will not only struggle against him and "defy" him out of rebellion and spite, but she will also attempt to *control him* through her own acts of sadism and exhibitionism (i.e. burning herself with her cigarette). What is interesting about Xavière's and Pierre's relationship, however, is that they both desire each other to *act* according to each others own will and agenda. This is important because it highlights how both Pierre *and* Xavière view her body as a kind of stage or spectacle (although, of course, the reasons why Xavière views her body in this way differ from Pierre's). It is on this ground that the image of the rose saturated in alcohol becomes so significant in the excerpt above because it symbolizes the kind of *forced violence* in their relationship: Pierre and Xavière try to force each another to do what they want. The figure of the dying rose—forced to grow and sustain its life in a substance that tears its body apart—

characterizes, in fact, what happens to Xavière's and Pierre's relationship as it slowly deteriorates and eventually dies because they both try to impose their will and desires upon each other. Their love is poisoned, and like the alcohol which destroys the flower, the forced violence behind their actions becomes the destructive actions which symbolically "kill" their own relationship.

2) The rose immersed in alcohol is not only a marker for the relationship between Xavière and Pierre, it is also analogous to the kind of tainted and polluted form of violence that contaminates the *trio relationship itself*. On the one hand, the image of the "intoxicated rose" becomes a sign of how Xavière's, Françoise's, and Pierre's affection for each other steadily declines and becomes "toxic" due to the destructive emotions they manifest towards each other such as jealousy, envy, fear, and anxiety. However, on the other hand, the image of the "intoxicated rose" also becomes a foreshadowing moment in regards to Xavière death, since she is, in fact, gassed to death by Françoise. The rose thus represents a different form of being "intoxicated to death." And yet, the image of the rose is even more significant here because it is also analogous to how the notion of "perfection" comes to "intoxicate" the trio itself. Although the traditional imagery of a rose suggests a kind of perfection, here the flower is destroyed both because it has been drowned in alcohol and because of the passing of time. This is interesting because it corresponds to how Françoise, Pierre, and to some extent Xavière have tried to make the trio attain a certain kind of perfection (like the rose). However, as time passes, the faultlessness that Françoise, Pierre, and Xavière have tried to maintain in their relationship begins to fade as the characters become more and more consumed by jealousy, anger, envy, etc. Just as the flower wilts and is drowned in alcohol, the trio is metaphorically "killed" by the

violence of the emotions they manifest towards each other (not to mention the fact that Xavière is also murdered by Françoise).

At this point, we have discussed the many connotations that the rose implies. Firstly, we have seen that, although Pierre acts angrily towards Xavière, his reaction is one of jealousy and insecurity towards Gerbert. Secondly, we have observed how the “intoxicated rose” comes to symbolize a kind of forced aggression in both Pierre’s and Xavière’s relationship. And thirdly, we have witnessed how the characters in the trio, although they attempt to attain a certain perfection in their relationship, become “contaminated” by emotions such as jealousy and anger which, in the end, destroy the very perfection that they try to manifest and attain. In some way or another, in all of these interpretations, I have given several interpretations as to why Xavière’s body becomes so important for Françoise and Pierre. In particular, we have looked in much detail at the scene where Xavière burns herself with a cigarette. Yet, there is one thing that Xavière’s body does above all in the novel—Xavière’s body *transforms Françoise’s and Pierre’s situation for them*. She distracts and diverts, changes Françoise’s and Pierre’s history, ruptures the past and the present, and most importantly, she becomes the body that allows them to pass from the real into the unreal. This is to say that Xavière’s body becomes the outlet—the stage—where they may pass from the real world of their problems into the unreal world of their fantasies. This is extremely significant because it reveals how both Françoise and Pierre, in their own ways, use Xavière to deal with their identity problems and their relationship (both in terms of age and their sense of femininity and masculinity). In both cases, they use Xavière’s body to *refashion* their worlds. She functions like a “vehicle of transcendence” through which they are able to manifest and experience their fantasies, while at the same time being able to conceal the anxieties they have about their bodies as they grow older and their relationship wanes in

uncertainty. However, interestingly, it is precisely these fantasies which destroy the trio relationship itself and it is these fantasies which—although they appear like a method of counteracting the problems that Françoise and Pierre have in their own life and relationship—are, in fact, manipulative and destructive.

In the end, it is the supplement of Xavière's body—the third constituent—which allows them to stand out from the norm. Xavière makes Françoise and Pierre unusual and different. She becomes the body that allows them to attain pleasure. On the one hand, they are able to create, intellectualize, transform, and obtain sexual gratification from gazing at her; and on the other hand, she allows them, in some sense, to be the spectacle themselves (for the trio itself is a kind of spectacle in itself). In fact, without the invitation of Xavière (*L'invitée*) into the trio, there is no spectacle. Xavière's body is precisely the body that is needed.

CONCLUSION

The trio relationships in de Beauvoir's text and Truffaut's film symbolize a resistance against bourgeois values. In each of these works, the characters that are involved in the triangular relationships attempt, in some sense, to subvert normative culture. Either consciously or subconsciously, they try to reinvent love and relationships, as well as to explore new ways of bonding. They struggle to undermine social constraints surrounding sexuality (about desire, eroticism, sex, gender roles, and homosexuality); they also implicitly attempt to break away from patriarchal views concerning the family, as well as from any discourse which positions heterosexuality and the couple at the core of the domestic sphere.

In both of these works, the trio relationships can also be seen as an artistic conceit aimed at providing ways of understanding the situation in France at the time of the occupation and the liberation. The trios, in fact, become the loci of a reflection on the ways in which the chaos and confusion of the war can enter the lives of individuals: the identity crises, confusion of desire, and struggles for power described in these two works emphasize the instability of France's socio-historical situation during and after the war. The trio relationship itself becomes a symbol of what is needed and what is lost. The desire for a "supplementary third" appears to mirror the anxiety of a war-torn time where political upheaval not only disturbed the nation, but in fact symbolized loss—the loss of relationships, family, love, values, etc.

Although the exploration of the themes of desire, bonding, identity, spectacle, and power in the trio proposed in this essay doesn't explicitly focus on the social impact these works had at the moment of their publication, it is clear from this analysis that the situations of crisis and tension that I describe demand to be understood in the wider context of the social horizon of their production. The characters of Françoise and Catherine, in many ways, embody the struggles of an era. As I have shown in my study of the circulation of power within the trio, these two women are confronted with internal and external pressures—both at the level of the individual and private, and at the level of social existence and citizenship—that put into question, in a philosophical and even existential way, the *modus operandi* of the average member of a post-war western democracy. The issue of gender cannot here be separated from the political. When Françoise struggles with her homosexual/homoerotic attraction with Xavière, or when Jules and Jim code what could be construed as their homosexuality through complex literary games (such as in the scene at the gym I commented on in detail in my second chapter), there is more at play than the mere sexual anxieties of an intellectual middle-class. What is expressed through questions of sexuality, gender, and desire is a deep-seated generational uneasiness about the relationship between the individual and society. The third term of the trio, as I have said earlier, can thus be best understood as a metonymy or a metaphor for society at large. In a way, in both of these works, it is as if nothing could fall into place properly: there is no peaceful resolution to the quandary posed by the trio. The third is always what must be destroyed, such as is the case with Xavière, or what destroys, such as is the case with Catherine and her murder-suicide. Without a doubt, the trio acts as the complex and ambiguous artistic representation of a dysfunctional society.

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