FILM AND THE SECOND SEX: SITUATIONS AND CHARACTERS IN POPULAR HOLLYWOOD CINEMA

by

ELIZABETH HANCOCK

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Student: Elizabeth Hancock

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This thesis has been accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in the School of Journalism and Communication by:

Debra Merskin	Chairperson
Patricia Curtin	Member
Thomas Bivins	Member

and

Kimberly Andrews Espy	Vice President for Research & Innovation/Dean of the Graduate School

Original approval signatures are on file with the University of Oregon Graduate School.

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THESIS ABSTRACT

Elizabeth Hancock

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This thesis uses Simone de Beauvoir's analysis of woman's immanence in the new edition of *The Second Sex,* translated by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier, as a lens to analyze six mainstream Hollywood films in order to determine whether any elements of her description are visible in popular films made both during and after the implementation of the Hollywood Production Code (1930-1960). Applying Beauvoir's analyses to film as a critical lens helps explain why representations of women that have endured for centuries continue to appeal to mainstream American audiences. Beauvoir's analyses in *The Second Sex* detail the impact these representations may have on how women think of themselves and on their actual lived experiences.

CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME OF AUTHOR: Elizabeth Kristin Hancock

GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:

University of Oregon, Eugene

DEGREES AWARDED:

Master of Arts, Communication and Society, 2012, University of Oregon
Master of Arts, Interdisciplinary Studies, 2008, University of Oregon
Bachelor of Arts, Political Science, 2004, University of Oregon

AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

Gender and Sexuality
Feminist Theory

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Graduate Teaching Fellow, University of Oregon, June 2010

Graduate Teaching Fellow, University of Oregon, September 2005

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* is, as Bauer (2004) asserts, "universally acknowledged as the founding text of contemporary feminism" (115). Though not initially concerned with women's issues, as Beauvoir prepared to write a collection of memoirs in 1946, she realized that she could not speak about her life without first acknowledging the most crucial aspect of her situation: "I became aware with a sort of surprise that the first thing I had to say was this: I am a woman" (Bauer, 121). *The Second Sex*, one of the most pivotal works of reflexivity and an exhaustive account of women's situation in history, biology, psychoanalysis, mythology, literature, and lived experience is the product of Beauvoir's realization of what it means to first declare that one is a woman in order to speak of one's life.

The first English translation of *The Second Sex*, published in 1953, is notoriously flawed for a variety of reasons, one of which is the choice of the translator:

> It is the work of Howard Parshley, a retired professor of human biology at Smith College, who was commissioned by Alfred Knopf essentially to ratchet down the difficulty of *The Second Sex* for a mainstream American audience and to squeeze its two volumes into one book that, with luck, would become the next 'Studies in the Psychology of Sex,' the scandalous series of Havelock Ellis. (Bauer, 2004)

Though Parshley was intensely devoted to the project of translating *The Second Sex*, he lacked a background in both French literature and philosophy. Secondly, as Simons'

(1983) study demonstrates, seventy-five pages of the original text were cut, most of which concerned women's descriptions of their lived experience:

> None of the omissions is any way noted. Sometimes Parshley cuts out the end of one sentence and splices it on to the end of another one, a paragraph away. He appears to get bored whenever Beauvoir starts documenting actual women's reports of their experience and so is prone to cut them out. (Bauer, 120)

In 2009, a new English translation of *The Second Sex* was published that restores all of the omitted material in Parshley's translation. As Judith Thurman notes in her introduction to the new translation, though Parshley lacked a background in both philosophy and French literature, he also lacked something perhaps even more fundamental for a seminal work of modern feminism, "a second X chromosome" (Thurman, xiii).

The new edition is translated by Constance Borde, a longtime resident of France and teacher of English at Sciences Po, and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier, also a longtime resident of France and retired teacher of American literature at Sciences Po. In addition to possessing a "second x chromosome," Borde and Malovany-Chevallier also preserve Beauvoir's original punctuation and unique style of prose and correct the two major flaws of Parshley's translation. The new edition of *The Second Sex* affords the opportunity to revisit Beauvoir's work on women's situation and lived experience and to employ it as a critical lens through which to examine representations of women in American culture and film.

In this thesis, I compare Beauvoir's analysis of woman's immanence in *The Second Sex* to six mainstream Hollywood films in order to determine whether any elements of her description are visible in popular films made both during and after the Hollywood

Production Code (1930-1960). I ask whether elements of Beauvoir's descriptions in the chapter "Women's Situation and Character" in *The Second Sex* are visible in representations of women's roles and characters in popular films made both during and after the Hollywood Production Code.

The new edition of *The Second Sex* affords the opportunity to revisit Beauvoir's work on women's situation and lived experience and to employ it as a critical lens through which to examine representations of women in American culture and film. The concept of women's immanence is central to Beauvoir's analysis in *The Second Sex.* As Mann (2008) observes, living in a state of immanence means that women exist as relative beings, "materially and ontologically dependent" (138). Kaplan (1974) argues that, as a visual medium, people are especially vulnerable to film and the images it conveys, which makes it an important medium for constructing a cultural history of women (Kaplan, 5). Using critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2001), I examine chapters detailing women's lived experience in the revised version of *The Second Sex.* Beauvoir's analyses may provide a critical lens that helps explain why representations of women that have endured for centuries continue to appeal to mainstream American audiences.

Examining images of women in film and other media is important not only for constructing a cultural history but also because such images have "real" consequences for how women experience the world with regard to their bodies. Studies such as the Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls (2011), Hill and Fischer's (2008) work on the objectification of women, and O'Donohue, Gold, and McKay's (1997) work on magazine advertisements confirm that images of girls and women in visual media have a tremendous impact on how girls and women view themselves, particularly with

regard to sexual objectification. Sexual objectification can translate into negative psychological consequences for women such as depression, anxiety, disordered eating, and body shame (Hill & Fischer, 746). Explaining how objectification is internalized and in turn negatively affects women, Hill and Fischer write, "In other words, women come to value their bodies in observable, appearance-based terms (e.g., 'How do I look?') rather than in non-observable, competence-based terms (e.g., 'How do I feel?' or 'What am I physically capable of?')" (747).

Beauvoir demonstrates how women are prevented from valuing not only their bodies but the whole of their existence in empowering, competence-based terms by their construction as immanent and inessential. Beauvoir's analyses in *The Second Sex* (2009) detail the impact these representations may have on how women think of themselves and on their actual lived experiences. The detailed descriptions in *The Second Sex* of women's situations and characters in both lived experience and in images and representations of women constructed in art and literature make it an ideal lens for conducting a feminist analysis of film. Inclusion of the previously omitted descriptions of women's lived experience in the new translation of *The Second Sex* provides an even more solid link between art and "real life.

Literature Review

This research draws on Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, translated by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier, as its primary text. Secondary literature draws from areas such as feminist film theory, feminist philosophy, and critical theory. Though the "Myths" section of *The Second Sex* has been widely used for a

number of critical analyses (Bair, 1986; Fichera, 1986; Holter, 1971; Klaw, 1998), only a few apply it to film, such as Haymes' (1974) article "Movies in the 1950's: Sexism from A to Zapata." Haymes (1974) analyzes the five prototypes depicting Western man's view of women Beauvoir identifies in *The Second Sex* and applies them to films with titles corresponding to each letter of the alphabet.

Though Beauvoir's analysis of the five prototypes of women focuses on the treatment of women in the genre of the novel, Haymes demonstrates how each one can be directly applied to representations of women in film, though Beauvoir herself is not concerned with that particular medium. Over half of the films Haymes cites are Academy Award winners or "Top Ten" *New York Times* selections, and the rest are "reasonably known to even casual observers of films" (Haymes, 12). Beauvoir's first prototype is of "woman as flesh," and she cites the works of D.H. Lawrence to illustrate how women are represented as such. Haymes lists several movies where woman is not only represented as flesh, but as previously mentioned, she is also subjected to brutal consequences because of her sexuality.

Anatomy of a Murder, The Goddess, A Streetcar Named Desire, and *Diabolique* are but a few of the films Haymes analyzes that not only depict woman as flesh, but feature her as the victim of rape, murder, and intimidation as well. Haymes also notes that, although D. H. Lawrence promised "salvation through submission to sexuality," woman's sexuality in film can bring death instead (Haymes, 12). Haymes applies Beauvoir's remaining four prototypes, woman as "Magna Mater," woman as guide to the divine existence, woman as a guide to truth, beauty, and poetry, and woman-as-equal

(only so that man might measure himself, as Beauvoir claims) to a number of other films spanning the decades between the 1950s and the 1970s.

Feminist Film Theory

According to Kaplan (1974), the psychoanalytic perspective states that what we perceive visually impacts the whole of human experience (Kaplan, 5). Since its inception in the 1970s, feminist film theory has used psychoanalysis to account for the fascination with and impact of film (Smelik, 180). Mulvey's (1975) foundational essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" is one of the most widely cited and debated feminist analyses of film to date. It demonstrates the relationship between psychoanalytic concepts such as scopophilia and visual media, and establishes the terminology of the all-pervasive "male gaze" (Mulvey, 7-11).

Discussing the departure from early feminist criticism that analyzed stereotypical roles of women in film and the advent of structuralist theoretical approaches such as semiotics and psychoanalysis, Smelik (1999) writes,

> The important theoretical shift here is from an understanding of cinema as reflecting reality, to a view of cinema as constructing a particular, ideological, view of reality. Classical cinema never shows its means of production and is hence characterized by veiling over its ideological construction. Thus, classical film narrative can present the constructed images of 'woman' as natural, realistic and attractive. This is the illusionism of classical cinema. (Smelik, 353)

In addition to concepts such as Mulvey's (1975) "male gaze," the feminist psychoanalytic perspective also seeks to account for the widespread fascination with and attraction to film by use of Freud's idea of scopophilia, which is the desire to see (Smelik 1999: 355).

As Smelik (1999) notes, scholars such as Koch (1980) argue that a "female gaze" exists and allows female spectators to enjoy movies from perspectives that are not masculine:

> Gertrud Koch (1980) is one of the few feminists who early on recognized that women could also enjoy the image of female beauty on the screen. Especially the vamp, an image exported from Europe and integrated into Hollywood cinema, provides the female spectator with a positive image of autonomous femininity. Koch argues that the image of the vamp revives for the female spectator the pleasurable experience of the mother as the love object in early childhood. Moreover, the sexual ambivalence of the vamp, of for example Greta Garbo and Marlene Dietrich, allows for a female homo-erotic pleasure which is not exclusively negotiated through the eyes of men. (Smelik, 358)

Though Koch (1980) argues for a female gaze from a "positive position of autonomous feminity" (Smelik, 358), she employs psychoanalytic concepts such as the mother as a "love object" as demonstrated in the above quote.

In her examination of psychoanalysis in *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir finds value in Lacan's theory of the mirror stage in childhood development:

> It would seem that from the time he recognizes his reflection in a mirror—a time that convinced with weaning—he begins to affirm his identity: his self merges with this reflection in such a way that it is formed only alienating itself. Whether the mirror as such plays a more or less considerable role, what is sure is that the child at about six months of age begins to understand his parents' miming and to grasp himself under their gaze as an object. He is already an autonomous subject transcending himself toward the world: but it is only in an alienated form that he will encounter himself. (Beauvoir, 284)

However, she rejects much of Freud's work that comprises the foundation of psychoanalytic theory and criticizes several of his concepts such as the Electra and castration complexes:

> The father's sovereignty is a fact of social order: Freud fails to account for this; he himself admits that it is impossible to know what authority decided at what moment in history that the father would prevail over the mother: according to him, this decision represents progress, but its causes are unknown. (Beauvoir, 53)

Therefore, her method of examining representations of women in *The Second Sex* often provides both an alternative to and a critique of the psychoanalytic perspective that dominates feminist film studies.

Kaplan (1974) argues that by examining representations of women in surrealist and impressionist films and other filmic styles having little or no correspondence to reality, male myths and fantasies of women become especially clear (Kaplan, 6). Kaplan argues that although such myths and fantasies are prevalent in Hollywood genre films, they are shrouded in a "surface realism," making them harder to decipher (Kaplan, 6). Kaplan's approach to films from New Wave directors of the 1960s is especially compatible with Beauvoir's theoretical framework in *The Second Sex*. Describing the history of New Wave cinema, Monaco (1981) writes,

> The growth of the New Wave in France in the early sixties signaled the beginning of the seventh period of film history, 1960-1980. Technological innovations, a new approach to the economics of film production, and a new sense of the political and social value of film have combined to form numerous 'new wavelets' in Eastern Europe, Latin America, Africa, Asia, and eventually even the United States and Western Europe. (Monaco, 197)

According to Kaplan (1974), such films feature questions about the meaning of existence, the impossibility of life, the impossibility of essence, and perhaps most importantly, the existential dilemma as paramount for all people regardless of sex (Kaplan, 19). Kaplan notes that in such films, existential crisis is often better represented through a central female character "because women are less shielded by job structures from facing the meaninglessness of their existence" (Kaplan, 19). Contrary to Kaplan's idea that male myths and fantasies flourish in films with little correspondence to reality, Mulvey (2004) argues that in feminist surrealist and impressionist films produced by women, women are

more likely to be represented as they see themselves rather than how they are perceived through the male gaze (Mulvey, 1287).

Feminist Philosophy and Theory

The concept of women's immanence is central to Beauvoir's analysis in *The Second Sex.* As Mann (2008) observes, living in a state of immanence means that women exist as relative beings, "materially and ontologically dependent" (138). Beauvoir writes,

> In one sense, her whole existence is a waiting since she is enclosed in the limbo of immanence and contingency and her justification is always in someone else's hands: she is waiting for a tribute, men's approval, she is waiting for love, she is waiting for gratitude and her husband's or lover's praise; she expects to gain from them her reasons to exist, her worth, and her very being. (649-650)

In contrast to women's immanence, men occupy the world of transcendence, though they "cross the threshold into the domain of immanence daily" (Mann. 142). For Beauvoir, men occupy the world of transcendence as a "flight" (Mann, 142) from the world of immanence where they are reminded that, like women, they are embodied beings subject to the laws of nature rather than beings of pure consciousness or "mind."

Quoting Beauvoir, Mann (2008) argues that this is why, when men are forced to cross over into the world of immanence, they often do so poorly:

> Perhaps the primary loss suffered by men at the moment of this crossing is the loss of masculine logic. 'A syllogism is no help in making a successful mayonnaise, nor in quieting a child in tears, masculine reasoning is quite inadequate to the reality with which [woman] deals' (Mann, 142).

In addition, dualism and the division between mind and body in Western philosophy also delineate the spheres of immanence and transcendence: "But since the coming of patriarchy, life in man's eyes has taken on a dual aspect: it is consciousness, will,

transcendence, it is intellect; and it is matter, passivity, immanence, it is flesh" (Beauvoir, 163).

For Beauvoir, access to the world of transcendence is necessary for all individuals if they are to live what she considers an authentic life:

> Every subject posits itself as transcendence concretely, through projects it accomplishes its freedom only by perpetual surpassing toward other freedoms; there is no other justification for present existence than its expansion toward an indefinitely open future. Every time transcendence lapses into immanence, there is degradation of existence into 'in-itself,' of freedom into facticity; this fall is a moral fault if the subjects consents to it; if this fall is inflicted on the subject, it takes the form of frustration and oppression; in both cases it is an absolute evil. (Beauvoir, 16)

Likewise, refusal to acknowledge that one belongs to the world of immanence also results in an inauthentic life. As illustrated above, these concepts of immanence and transcendence are undeniably gendered for Beauvoir.

The "projects" through which freedom is actualized and transcendence is achieved are the physical and intellectual pursuits women were barred from throughout a major portion of history. The works and projects that almost exclusively defined women's lives when confined to the private sphere of the household were never the acts of "perpetual surpassing" Beauvoir mentions in the above quote, but were instead acts of perpetual repetition that give rise to the old adage, "A woman's work is never done."

This degradation of freedom into facticity has consequences for the physical bodies of women as well. The constant surpassing of physical goals—conquering this mountain peak, winning that race, performing this feat of strength, mastering that sport—are all ways of accessing the kind of freedom that characterizes Beauvoir's masculine world of transcendence. Barred from participating in this type of physical freedom, women

perpetually experience the body as object, and though women's access to these activities is substantially greater in the present, experiencing the body as object is still a significant problem.

Understanding the significance of Beauvoir's use of "woman," "the woman," and "women" is also crucial for an accurate reading of *The Second Sex*. Borde and Malovany-Chevallier explain the distinction in the following:

> One particularly complex and compelling issue was how to translate *la femme*. In *Le deuxieme sexe* [the original French edition] the term has at least two meanings: 'the woman' and 'woman.' At times it can also mean 'women,' depending on the context. 'Woman' in English used alone without an article captures woman as an institution, a concept, femininity as determined and defined by society, culture, history. Thus in a French sentence such as *Le probleme de la femme a toujours ete un probleme d'hommes*, we have used 'woman' without an article: 'The problem of woman has always been a problem of men.' (Borde, Malovany-Chevallier, xvii)

When Beauvoir uses "woman" without an article, she does so to signify "woman as determined by society as just described" (Borde, Malovany-Chevallier, xvii). When Beauvoir uses "women," she is referring to actual individual women and the material conditions that constitute their lived experience in the world. The same applies for Beauvoir's use of the terms "man" and "men."

Beauvoir's exhaustive analysis of female biology in the first section of *The Second Sex* has prompted theorists such as Irigaray (1994) and Braidotti (2002) to use her work as a foundation for the "sexual difference" perspective of feminism. However, as Mann (2008) argues, Beauvoir's project is actually to demonstrate how these categories of man and woman have been constructed and what it means to exist under each. In contrast to the sexual difference perspective of feminism, Butler (1990) argues that all gender is essentially a performance (Butler, 130), an especially significant claim when considering

the roles men and women play in film and debates over how they coincide or differ from the "real lives" of actors.

Contrary to Butler's (1990) theories of gender as a perpetual performance, Bordo (1997) argues that the study of representations and cultural discourse cannot stand in for a history of the body (Bordo, 91)**.** Like Beauvoir, Bordo is a phenomenologist and argues that bodies must be discussed in all their "concrete and fleshly vulnerability" (Bordo, 91). Bordo (1997) argues that discussions of the body have been largely absent from philosophy because it has largely been dominated by men, who are drawn to philosophy as a "high, heady, and 'untouchable' realm where they can imagine themselves as masters rather than creatures of the universe" (Bordo, 92).

Constructing an argument for materializing sex is not, however, the purpose for Bordo's (1997) inclusion of the biological and evolutionary history of the body in her conception of materiality. She states that she invokes neither an "essential female subject" nor a "gender core," and rejects the notion that feminism "must be grounded in the sexed specificity of the female body" (Bordo, 91), and in this respect, her arguments are in accord with Beauvoir's. Bordo's (1997) concern is instead for recognition of the material, concrete consequences of living life in a raced, gendered world (Bordo, 91). Bordo (1997) argues that keeping track of bodies and what is happening to them in lived experience is necessary for theorists to be intellectually honest (Bordo, 92).

The difficulty with debates concerning the relationship between sexual difference and gender, Butler (2004) argues, is that it will never be possible to determine where the "biological, the psychic, the discursive, the social begin and end" (Butler, 185). The purpose of sexual difference debates is to pose the question of where the biological

relates to the cultural, though according to Butler (2004) it can never be answered, or more specifically, that the answer is always that sexual difference is partially constructed and partially given (Butler, 186).

As a phenomenologist, Beauvoir insists that the characteristics women may have in common derive from their shared situation rather than a biological innate female essence or nature. Gothlin (2001) writes,

> The rather loose definition of Simone de Beauvoir as an existentialist is increasingly being superseded by a recognition that she belongs to the phenomenological tradition . . . If Beauvoir is characterized as a phenomenologist, the careful description of different aspects of women's lives in *Le deuxième sexe* [*The Second Sex*] makes sense. (Gothlin, 43)

Beauvoir's focus on humans as "situated" and her concern with the meaning of phenomena such as anxiety and authenticity rather than just their descriptions mark her as a phenomenologist and set her apart from other phenomenologist philosophers such as Husserl (Gothlin, 44-45).

Beauvoir painstakingly analyzes the myths and fantasies of feminine essence that compose the figure of woman throughout the whole of *The Second Sex*, but Volume II, titled "Lived Experience," is especially useful when examining the roles women occupy in mainstream Hollywood film. I compare Beauvoir's analysis of woman's immanence to six mainstream Hollywood films to answer the following research questions: Are elements of Beauvoir's description of women's immanence visible in popular films made during the Hollywood Production Code (1930-1960) when Beauvoir was writing the text? Are the same elements present in more recent films not subject to the Hollywood Production Code?

Method

I examine chapters detailing women's lived experience in *The Second Sex* to determine whether they correspond to popular films of the decades both during and after the Hollywood Production Code. I apply Beauvoir's description of women in three chapters from the "Lived Experience" section of *The Second Sex* to six popular Hollywood films. I analyze one film made under the Hollywood Production Code and one contemporary post-code film for each of the three chapters I select. For "The Lesbian," I analyze *Morocco* (1930) and *High Art* (1998). For "The Married Woman," I analyze *Adam's Rib* (1949) and *The War of the Roses* (1989). For "The Woman in Love," I analyze *The Philadelphia Story* (1940) and *Twilight* (2008). These films were all nominated for or won a number of prestigious awards, confirming their popularity with audiences, the Academy, and a variety of independent organizations.

Morocco received four Oscar nominations (http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0021156/-awards), and *High Art* won awards from the Los Angeles Film Critics Association, The Sundance Film Festival, the Independent Spirit Awards, GLAAD Media Awards, Fantasporto, and the Deauville Film Festival (http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0139362/-awards). *Adam's Rib* was nominated for an Oscar, a Golden Globe, a WGA, and won an award from the National Film Preservation Board (http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0041090-/awards), and *The War of the Roses* was nominated for three Golden Globes (http://www.-imdb.com/title/ tt0098621 /awards). *The Philadelphia Story* won two Oscars (http:// ww-w.imdb.com/title/tt0032904/awards), and *Twilight* won two People's Choice Awards and an impressive eleven Teen Choice Awards (http://www.imdb.com-/title/tt1099212-/awards).

In addition to their popularity with audiences, these six films all revolve around central female characters and their relationships with husbands, fiancés, boyfriends, and other women. As characters designed to appeal to mainstream audiences, an analysis of the female protagonists in these films should provide a crucial insight into what it means to declare that one is a woman and illustrate how that meaning has shifted, as well as how it has stayed the same, throughout the decades since Beauvoir first published *The Second Sex*.

Though I analyze the other five films in their entirety, my analysis of *Morocco* (1930) consists of a single iconic scene. I discuss the character of Amy Jolly in the context of how she might be "read" as a lesbian in this scene, and the remainder of *Morocco's* (1930) plot and characters consist of a heterosexual love story involving Amy Jolly and her two male suitors. *Morocco* (1930) also differs from the other films I analyze because it falls on the cusp of when the Hollywood Production Code was in effect, and because it was produced in Europe and therefore not subject to it. However, the film still had to conform with the elements of the Hollywood Production Code in order for it to be released to American audiences.

Though Beauvoir employs many different critical lenses in her analysis of women's situation in *The Second Sex*, her approach can be understood as a form of critical discourse analysis (CDA). Woman as she appears in speech, myth, literature, and life must be viewed in terms of the language that posits her as the inessential other and strips her of the power to grasp transcendence. Fairclough's (2001) description of semiosis explains how CDA can also be applied to images such as those in film:

Critical discourse analysis asks: how does language figure as an element in social

> processes? What is the relationship of language to other elements of social processes? (See Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 1992; 1995; Fairclough and Wodak, 1997; Wodak, 1996). Although most CDA focuses on language, some analysts also consider visual images (photographs, diagrams, etc.) or 'body language' (gestures, facial expressions, etc). I therefore refer to **semiosis** as well as language. Semiosis is meaning-making through language, body language, visual images, or any other way of signifying. (229)

Fairclough (2001) argues that CDA does not actually begin with texts and interactions, but rather the issues and problems that preoccupy sociologists, educators, political scientists, and, as *The Second Sex* demonstrates, philosophers. The issues and problems that accompany the declaration that one is a woman is what compels Beauvoir to examine the various ways woman is signified and the circumstances that constitute her situation and lived experience. Beauvoir's use of a variety of critical lenses in her analysis is also consistent with CDA, because as Fairclough (2001) argues, CDA is an inherently interdisciplinary approach (230).

The term discourse is most often discussed in conjunction with the work of Michel Foucault, though the ways in which theorists employ it as a methodology vary significantly (Mills, 2004). In *The History of Sexuality Volume I*, Foucault describes the central questions that comprise his discursive analysis of sex:

> The central issue, then...is not to determine whether one says yes or no sex...but to account for the fact that it is spoken about, to discover who does the speaking, the positions and viewpoints from which they speak, the institutions which prompt people to speak about it and which store and distribute the things that are said. (Foucault, 11)

The film industry is an institution that not only "speaks" but also prompts others to speak about it through advertising and censorship campaigns, as well as through more neutral discussions both public and private of the content it generates. A discursive analysis is especially useful for examining images of women in film because it takes into account

both the underlying structures of the film industry as an institution and the processes of meaning-making in which it engages. However, as previously mentioned, Beauvoir is an existentialist, and Foucault's work is largely read as a rejection of the existentialist paradigm she espouses (Dosse, 1997). Therefore, the ways in which CDA differs from Foucault's discursive analyses are important to note, especially with regard to how CDA can function as a feminist critique.

In her essay "Feminist Criticism in Motion," Neely (1985) describes feminist criticism as a "creature of lack" (70). Neely argues that feminist criticism is not a methodology, but rather an ideology. Neely writes, "Feminist critics are feminists—but the ideology itself escapes definition and the relation between the ideology and the criticism is a loose and problematic one" (70). As Neely notes, feminist critics may be Marxist or psychoanalytic (70). They may also employ semiotics, the politics of sexual difference, or French materialism. Others may work within a post-colonial framework, while still others might conduct their analyses through the lens of eco-feminism. Combining two or more approaches is also common practice in feminist criticism. However, a significant amount of feminist criticism is grounded on certain principles such as the marginalization of women throughout history, cultural devaluing of attributes associated with or considered indicative of femininity, and constraints placed upon women in the form of patriarchy.

Mills (2004) describes how discourse theory differs from the ideological approach of earlier feminist criticism such as Neely (1985) employs:

> Those feminists who see femininity as an ideology to which women are subjected tend to consider femininity as homogeneous, as affecting all women in the same way; ideology as a structure does not allow for relatively different effects to be

> experienced by different groups of women, and it does not allow that there might be different ideological structures for different classes or sexual orientations. (78)

Though Beauvoir's work in *The Second Sex* resembles an ideological approach in several aspects, it also diverges in that she analyzes the ways in which women attempt to claim power for themselves within the confines of their situation, though such attempts are often counterproductive and doomed to failure.

According to Beauvoir, women gain their worth in the realm of transcendence primarily through their relation to men in a way that resembles a religious commitment. But this dependence is dangerous and unstable, because it provokes what Mann (2008) describes as a state of ecstatic awe, the reverse side of which is resentment, as Beauvoir's description of married women illustrates. Women are not a powerless monolithic group according to Beauvoir, though many common elements may be observed in the way they live, speak, and are spoken about. Instead, Mann argues that Beauvoir should be read as suggesting that the capacity to move between specific viewpoints is precisely what is necessary in order to answer the question of what it means to declare that one is a woman and to explain why women are so intractably in the position of the other (Mann, 143).

The six films I analyze all "speak" about women's characters and the roles they occupy in mainstream Hollywood film. The popularity of each film suggests that it represents ways of thinking about women that resonate with contemporary American audiences as well as audiences during the days of the Production Code when Beauvoir was writing *The Second Sex*, and directly after the first English translation was published. These six films are all romances, though they also contain elements of various other genres as well; *The Philadelphia Story* (1940) is from the classic period of the screwball

comedy, while *The War of the Roses* (1989) is a contemporary dark romantic comedy. *Adam's Rib* (1949) and *Morocco* (1930) both contain aspects of romantic comedy, but drama is also a dominant thematic element. *High Art* (1998) and *Twilight* (2008) are both romances that contain elements of melodrama, though the former is meant to correspond to reality and is sometimes classified as an "art film," while the latter belongs to the fantasy genre and has the broader appeal of a blockbuster film. Despite the stylistic differences of these six films and the periods in which they were produced and released, Beauvoir's analysis of woman and women's situation and character is applicable to each one, demonstrating the value of her critical method.

CDA analyzes the relationships between semiosis and other elements of social practice, and how those relationships radically shift and change (Fairclough, 234). CDA also examines how semiosis figures in representations: "Representation is a process of social construction of practices, including reflexive self-construction—representations enter and shape social processes" (Fairclough, 235). Because film is a medium that consists of both discourse and representation, CDA is a particularly useful approach for analyzing it. Additionally, CDA examines the ways in which social actors recontextualize representations depending on their social positioning (Fairclough, 234-235). Female audiences recontextualize films by relating their own experiences and identities to central female characters and engaging in of their own acts of interpreting and meaning-making.

Discursive structures and pressures not only mold the ways in which female characters in films are represented, they also mold the ways their bodies appear. Beauvoir is a phenomenologist as well as an existentialist, and as such she is concerned with bodies as well as ideas. Mills (2004) cites Bartky's (1988) analysis of anorexia to demonstrate

how a feminist discursive analysis functions when applied to women's bodies: "The ideal body of femininity—and hence the feminine body subject—is constructed; in doing this [magazines] produce a 'practiced and subjected' body, that is, a body on which an inferior status has been inscribed" (Mills, 85). Films construct and inscribe the bodies of female subjects in the same way magazines and other media do.

In my analyses, I approach each film as a text in its own right. Rather than analyzing formal filmic conventions or biographical details of the actors and their careers, I treat each film as an artifact containing the data that are the subjects of my analysis (Foss, 2009). However, in some instances it may be necessary to refer to information found outside of the films themselves in order to develop a better understanding of the greater cultural significance of the data contained in them. The first step of CDA involves identifying the specific social problem to be addressed, which in my analysis is the way women are represented in film. These representations influence both the way women are perceived by audiences and the way they perceive themselves and prevent them from experiencing the world as transcendent beings.

The second step of CDA involves a description of the context for the problem of representations of women in film and how the texts I analyze encapsulate it. As previously mentioned, film is considered especially influential because it is a visual medium, and the widespread appeal of the six films I analyze suggests that the images of women they contain are consumed by a wide variety of audiences. These six films all describe the lives and characters of central female protagonists using conventions that are as recognizable to audiences of the 1930s-1960s as they are to audiences of 2008. The third step of CDA involves an analysis of why society continues to perpetuate

representations of women that impose limits on their ability to posit themselves as transcendent subjects. The remaining two step of CDA involve identifying any gaps or contradictions in the discourse on how women are represented in film and whether the yields any opportunities for emancipatory change. I address these final two steps in the Conclusion.

The Hollywood Production Code

The Hollywood Production Code, which governed the content of mainstream films in accordance with "moral standards," was active during the time Beauvoir was writing *The Second Sex,* and for approximately a decade after its first publication. Though the Production Code was written in 1930, the film industry largely ignored it (http://www.und.edu/instruct/cjacobs/ProductionCode.htm). For this reason, movies produced between 1930 and 1934 are often referred to as "pre-code." By 1934, increased public outcry over the content of films bolstered the authority of the Production Code Administration, and filmmakers were forced to comply with the Production Code in order to receive the Administration's seal of approval for public exhibition (http://www.und.-edu/instruct/cjacobs/ProductionCode.htm). The importance placed on film and its ability to influence audiences is implicit in the reactionary language of the Production Code itself:

> III. The motion picture has special *Moral obligations*: Most arts appeal to the mature. This art appeals at once to every class, mature, immature, developed, undeveloped, law-abiding, criminal.
> A. Music has its grades for different classes; so has literature and drama. This art of the motion picture, combining as it does the two fundamental appeals of looking at a picture and listening to a story, at once reaches every class of society.

> B. Because of the mobility of a film and the ease of picture distribution, and because of the possibility of duplicating positives in large quantities, this art *reaches places* unpenetrated by other forms of art.
> Because of these two facts, it is difficult to produce films intended for only *certain classes of people*. The exhibitor's theatres are for the masses, for the cultivated and the rude, mature and immature, self-restrained and inflammatory, young and old, law-respecting and criminal. Films, unlike books and music, can with difficulty be confined to certain selected groups.
> (http://www.und.edu/instruct/cjacobs/ProductionCode.htm)

According to the Production Code, the accessibility of film meant that filmmakers had a moral obligation to present content designed "to improve the race, or, at least, to recreate and rebuild human beings exhausted with the realities of life"(http://www.und.edu-/instruct/cjacobs/ProductionCode.htm). The founding of the Motion Picture Association of America in1968 allowed filmmakers the freedom to include any content they desired by establishing the letter rating system. Unlike the Production Code, letter ratings were based on the content of films itself rather than its adherence to moral values (http:-//www.und.edu/instruct/cjacobs/ProductionCode.htm).

Describing the role of the Catholic Church in the implementation of the Hollywood Production Code, Black (1989) writes,

> In less than a year the church had recruited millions of Americans of all religious denominations to pledge not to attend 'immoral' movies. With a national depression already threatening Hollywood's financial stability, movie czar Will Hays, head of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of American (MPPDA), accepted the terms of surrender dictated by the church and its legions. (Black, 167)

The agreement between Hays and Most Reverend John T. McNichols led to the creation of an agency that would enforce the censorship code previously ignored by the film industry. The Church's demands echoed the concern with "immoral" behavior expressed in the language of the Production Code itself: "The church demanded that Hollywood permanently withdraw from circulation films it viewed as 'immoral' and that local theater

owners be empowered to cancel any film currently in circulation if they judged it to be 'immoral.'" (Black, 167)

Examining the ways women and their sexuality are represented in films made under the Production Code reveals not only what was left out, but also reflects the norms and concerns of the culture in general. Krzywinska (2006) notes that focusing solely on what was omitted under regulations such as the Production Code provides only a partial view of the cultural processes involved:

> Following Jacobs and Kuhn's approach, I advocate that to simply focus on what is withheld from public view by regulation presents us with an incomplete picture. Instead, it is more useful to demonstrate how censorships and regulation work to produce narrative forms, conventions and vocabularies that have been used to represent and mediate sex, sexuality and desire. Institutional restrictions come out of a particular cultural context, and, as such, are often in some way reflective of that terrain, with all its various pressure points and faultlines. (85)

As previously noted, Haymes (1974) observes that women in films made under the Production Code often suffer brutal treatment as a result of their sexuality.

Krzywinska argues that "transgressive" characters such as openly sexual women must be punished in films made under the Production Code: "One interesting aspect of the film [*Red Dust,* (1932)] is the women's proactive sexuality, something that is ring-fenced by punishment and moral reprehension in post-1934 Hollywood film" (91). A sexually transgressive woman could also be countered by the presence of another female character whose "sufficient good" could compensate for her "evils" (Krzywinska, 95).

In addition to representations of women's sexuality in each film, I also examine narrative and stylistic elements in terms of their adherence to or departure from the Production Code. For example, the resolution of all conflicts into a perfect happy ending

is a convention of films made under the Production Code and is still visible in recent films:

> Classical Hollywood cinema therefore tended to smooth problems into saccharine 'all is well with the world' endings, often in the form of a marriage or remarriage typified by comedies such as The *Philadelphia Story* and *His Girl Friday* (1940). (Krzywinska, 96)

Comparing and contrasting films made under the Production Code with more recent films illuminates the sometimes disturbing affect of movies that break from the conventional happy ending where each wrong is neatly righted. *The War of the Roses* is an example of such a film, and though it is certainly a comedy, its tragic (though comedic) ending earns it the label of "dark." In contrast, though *Adam's Rib* contains moments of tense drama as well as comedy, its happy ending and neatly resolved conflicts exemplify the conventions of films made under the Production Code.

CHAPTER II

WOMEN IN LOVE: BELLA SWAN AND TRACY LORD

Bella Swan

When a woman loves, she must forget her own personality. This is a law of nature. A woman does not exist without a master. Without a master, she is a scattered bouquet.
—Cécile Sauvage (Cited in Beauvoir, 683)

The success of Stephenie Myer's *Twilight* series has provoked much discussion of its appeal to both girls and women. *Breaking Dawn*, the fourth and final book in the series, sold 1.3 million copies within 24 hours of its release. According to the *New York Times*, the only series of both books and movies able to compete with the *Twilight* series in terms of popularity is J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* franchise (http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/20/movies/20pattinson.html). However, in addition to the box office and book sale figures, one notable difference sets *Twilight* apart from *Harry Potter*: *Twilight's* fan base is mostly female, whereas no such gender distinction marks *Harry Potter* fans (http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/20/movies-/20pattinson.html).

Though the *Harry Potter* series is narrated in the third person, it is mostly told from the point of view of Harry Potter, the male main protagonist. The *Twilight* series, on the other hand, is narrated in the first person from the point of view of Bella Swan, the female main protagonist. In the *Twilight* movies, actor Robert Pattinson plays Edward Cullen, Bella's vampire love interest. In the *Harry Potter* movies, actor Daniel Radcliffe

plays Harry Potter. Both Pattinson and Radcliffe have been labeled "heartthrobs" and are much adored by their female fans. What, then, accounts for *Twilight's* almost exclusive appeal to girls and women? Is it *Twilight's* first person female narrative? Is it that *Twilight* is a love story, whereas the various romances in the *Harry Potter* series are mostly secondary plot developments?

In the blogosphere, "Poorly written" and "anti-feminist" are two oft-cited descriptions of the *Twilight* books. *Breaking Dawn*, the final book of the series released in 2008, drew a number of objections from readers who were disappointed with the outcome of the story, prompting one reader to begin a "Don't burn it—return it" campaign on Amazon.com[1]. The *Twilight* series' content has prompted criticism from the academic sphere as well. Merskin (2010) argues that according to the definition established by Guggenbühl-Craig, the vampire Edward Cullen is a compensated psychopath, "an individual who approaches the psychological extreme of psychopathy, but is able to pass for functional in society" (Merskin, 3). Additionally, Merskin compares Edward to earlier cinematic representations of vampires, noting that unlike his predecessors, many of which were monstrous beings who stank of decay and the grave, Edward is a handsome teenager from an affluent family (Merskin, 5-7).

Merskin (2010) also argues that while depictions of vampires as monstrosities can be observed as recently as Francis Ford Coppola's 1992 version of *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, Anne Rice's novel *Interview with the Vampire* (1977) marked a change in the way vampires are portrayed in popular culture (Merskin,7). Edward, with his aesthetic appeal,

[1] http://www.amazon.com/Unhappy-Breaking-Dawn-burn-it-RETURN/forum/Fx1GAA6GYWX8459/TxJ0PLIBGHDLU5/1/ref=cm_cd_ef_tft_tp?_encoding=UTF8&asin=031606792X

his skin that sparkles instead of singes in the sunlight, his "superior" ethical choice to consume the blood of animals rather than humans, and the immortality that affords him the possibility of perfecting wisdom and intellect, is the exemplar of the "new vampire." And according to Beauvoir's description of masculine transcendence, Edward Cullen personifies it.

The depictions of gender and sexuality at work in the *Twilight* series represent the fundamental myths of men and women that have characterized the Western world for millennia. These representations account for the appeal the *Twilight* series holds for female fans and its overall success in bookstores and box offices despite criticisms of both its literary quality and content matter. The *Twilight* series tells the ancient story of woman's immanent and man's transcendent qualities, but its appeal is in the privilege granted to Bella Swan: the privilege to escape the world of female immanence and to permanently occupy the world of male transcendence, a privilege not possible for a "flesh and blood" woman.

Beauvoir describes the division of life into immanence and transcendence and its gendering:

> Man sinks his roots in Nature; he was engendered, like animals and plants; he is well aware that he exists only inasmuch as he lives. But since the coming of patriarchy, life in man's eyes has taken on a dual aspect: it is consciousness, will, transcendence, it is intellect; and it is matter, passivity, immanence, it is flesh. (Beauvoir, 163)

In this dual aspect of life, man assigns himself the qualities of transcendence while assigning woman the aspects of immanence which include embodiment and flesh, and as such, the way women and men are characterized under patriarchy is constituted. Beauvoir argues that through menstruation, the cycle of birth and death is recreated again and again

in the body of woman (Beauvoir, 166). Though woman possesses the ability to give life through childbirth, Beauvoir notes that in most folk representations, “Death is woman, and women mourn the dead because death is their work” (Beauvoir, 166).

As a member of the new generation of vampires, Edward Cullen leaves behind these feminine attributes of death and immanence that characterized his predecessors. He is a fantasy, but rather than a nightmare, he is a dream: the masculine dream of pure transcendence. But as Beauvoir notes in the quote above, man is aware that existence is contingent upon life, and life entails the immanent aspects of flesh, blood, and death. If he is to exist as anything other than a monster, Edward must recognize life in all its immanence. Edward needs a mediator between the world of immortal transcendence and the world of mortal human immanence, and her name is Bella Swan.

For Beauvoir, the division of life into these dual aspects of transcendence and immanence means that when man seeks to “overcome his solitude with ecstasy” (Beauvoir, 171), he must call upon woman as his mediator between the forces of the earth and the cosmos:

> She still assures the fertility of the fields for the Bedouins and the Iroquois; in ancient Greece, she heard subterranean voices; she understood the language of the wind and the trees: she was Pythia, Sibyl, and prophetess. The dead and the gods spoke through her mouth. Still today, she has these powers of divination: she is medium, palmist, card reader, clairvoyant, inspired; she hears voices and has visions. (Beauvoir, 170-171)

John Durham Peters’ (1999) discussion of the once exclusively female occupation of telephone switchboard operator demonstrates that, as Beauvoir states above, these representations of woman continue to permeate Western culture, adapting and changing as their modes of communication adapt and change:

> Like spiritualist mediums, operators inhabit a profoundly liminal space. The female body hidden at the heart of a national communications network, appearing only in impersonal voice, is an archetypal figure. In popular culture the operator was often treated as a heroine who, knowing everyone's habits, could bring people together in emergencies: the operator as matchmaker, lifeguard, or angel of mercy. She was always betwixt and between. (Peters, 196)

Bella Swan's situation bears the hallmarks of woman as "betwixt and between." She is able to mediate the mysteries of the earth and human immanence for Edward, who is not constrained by the biological functions of human life.

Bella chooses to separate herself from the warm Arizona sun and her "loving, erratic, harebrained mother and her new husband" to live with in Forks, Washington with her father, who she refers to by his first name in the voiceover. "The best thing about Charlie is that he doesn't hover," she remarks (*Twilight*, 2008). Though in geographical terms, Bella moves "up" to the north, the climate of her new location with its perpetually veiled sun and thick forests creates a liminal space somewhere between chthonic darkness and the clear light of day[2]. In the mists and dim light of the forest, Bella tells Edward she knows he is a vampire, prompting him to acknowledge both his true "nature" as a killer and his love for her: "I wanted to kill you. I've never wanted a human's blood so much in my life," he tells her, and only moments later he adds, "You don't know how long I've waited for you. And so the lion fell in love with the lamb" (*Twilight*, 2008). Bella is both the prey and property of Edward which, according to Beauvoir, is the fate of woman when she steps into her predestined role of "wife" (Beauvoir, 171).

The qualities Bella possesses make her especially suited for Edward's attentions, because according to Beauvoir, not just any woman can play the role of mediator:

[2] See Beauvoir's discussion of the subsistence of the chthonian cults of women and the sun cults of men throughout Greek and Roman rationalist civilizations (Beauvoir, 171).

> She must embody the wondrous blossoming of life while concealing its mysterious disturbances at the same time...The ideal of feminine beauty is variable; but some requirements remain constant; one of them is that since woman is destined to be possessed, her body has to provide the inert and passive qualities of an object. (Beauvoir, 176)

Meyer's explanations of the way Bella is described in the *Twilight* books seem to have much in common with Beauvoir's statement that ideals of feminine beauty are variable. In response to the frequently asked question "What does Bella look like," Meyer does offer a description of how she herself imagines her, but she prefaces it with the following:

> I left out a detailed description of Bella in the book so that the reader could more easily step into her shoes. However, so many people have asked this question, I have decided to tell you what she looks like to me. But I want to stress, Bella's looks are open to interpretation. (http://www.stephenie-meyercom-/twilight_faq.-html#pretty).

Bella's beauty may be "variable" or "open to interpretation," but the details Meyer does provide make it clear that she possesses more than enough "inert and passive qualities" to render her an object, so much so that Merskin (2010) describes her as follows: "The girl's only apparent talents are cooking and ironing. Otherwise she is uncoordinated, frequently falls down, often gets lost, is socially awkward, and needs regular rescuing" (158).

In a frequently quoted scene mere hours after discovering Edward is a vampire, Bella makes the following observation:

> About three things I was absolutely positive: First, Edward was a vampire; Second, there was part of him — and I didn't know how potent that part might be — that thirsted for my blood; And third, I was unconditionally and irrevocably in love with him. (*Twilight*, 2008)

Though Edward is a predator who thirsts for her blood, it is not from him that Bella needs rescuing. The night before Bella tells Edward she knows he is a vampire, he rescues her from a group of men who corner her on a dark street and attempt to assault her. As the

couple speed away in Edward's BMW, he begs Bella to distract him so he does not turn the car around to pursue her would-be attackers and "rip their heads off." "You don't know the vile, repulsive things they were thinking," he tells her (Twilight, 2008).

Later, as the two sit in a restaurant, Edward confesses that he can indeed read minds—every mind but hers: "I can read every mind in this room apart from yours . . .That's very frustrating," he tells her (*Twilight,* 2008). As previously noted in the section on feminine immanence and masculine transcendence, the immanent world is unintelligible to the masculine mind of pure logic and intellect. As the perfect embodiment of feminine immanence, Bella is worthy of receiving the reward that Edward eventually bestows upon her: permanent access to his world of immortality and transcendence.

Bella's all-consuming love for Edward despite the mortal threat he poses to her exemplifies Beauvoir's description of the woman in love:

> She would like to devote to him each beat of her heart, each drop of blood, the marrow of her bones; this is what a dream of martyrdom expresses; to exaggerate the gift of self to the point of torture, of death, to be the ground the beloved treads on, to be nothing but that which responds to his call. (Beauvoir, 692)

Because Edward is a vampire, Bella can literally devote to him each drop of her blood, each beat of her heart, and the marrow from her bones. The characteristics that would otherwise mark Edward as a monster are instead the means through which the impossible dream of the woman in love is actualized. These same characteristics allow him to permanently reside in the realm of transcendence which ordinary men must abandon at least occasionally. Edward does not need to visit the realm of immanence even to sleep,

and is therefore not subject to the hostility with which Beauvoir claims the woman in love regards her slumbering lover:

> But the god, the master, must not abandon himself to the repose of immanence; it is with a hostile look that the woman contemplates this destroyed transcendence; she detests his animal inertia, this body that no longer exists *for her* but *in itself*, abandoned to a contingence whose ransom is her own contingence. (Beauvoir, 697)

The same is not true for the man who regards the sleeping woman who loves him. Edward appears in Bella's room one night and informs her that he comes in secret to occasionally watch her sleep. "I like watching you sleep," he tells her. "It's kind of fascinating to me" (*Twilight*, 2008). Sleep gives woman back the "disarming candor of her childhood" and grants certitude to the man who regards her that she belongs to no one, according to Beauvoir (Beauvoir, 696-697).

As the epigraph by Cécile Sauvage suggests, Bella forgets her own personality in her devotion to Edward. At first she detests the climate of Forks and longs for the heat of Arizona, remarking that she hates cold, wet things. But Bella forgets her hatred of cold things in her all-consuming passion for Edward: "Your skin is pale white and ice cold," she remarks, yet he does not frighten or repulse her. "I'm not afraid of you. I'm only afraid of losing you," she tells him (*Twilight*, 2008). As a vampire, Edward can also guarantee Bella safety from the disappointments that befall Beauvoir's woman in love:

> Idolatrous love confers an absolute value on the loved one...It is a heartrending disappointment for the woman to discover her idol's weaknesses and mediocrity...this disillusion is often crueler than the child's at seeing paternal prestige crumble, because the woman herself chose the one to whom she made a gift of her whole being. (Beauvoir, 694)

Edward is free from the mediocrity and weakness that marks a mortal man. In fact, his only weakness is Bella herself: "We've learned to control our thirst. But you, your

scent—it's like a drug to me. You're like my own personal brand of heroin," he tells her (*Twilight*, 2008). Bella's reward for embodying female immanence is a lover who will never disappoint her, a perfect specimen of masculine transcendence.

As a vampire, not only is Edward himself free from mortality, but so is his and Bella's love for each other:

> If two lovers disappear into the absolute of passion together, all freedom deteriorates into immanence; only death can provide a solution; this is one of the meanings of the Tristan and Isolde myth. Two lovers who are exclusively destined for each other are already dead: they die of boredom. (Beauvoir, 698)

Though Bella and Edward are exclusively destined for each other, their fate will never be death or boredom. Rather than deteriorating into immanence, they can both occupy the world of transcendence and immortality if Edward makes Bella into a vampire as well, and Bella is determined to convince him to do so.

The film's climax occurs when Bella is once again in need of rescuing, this time from James, a rival vampire who wishes to claim her as his victim. He lures her into a trap by tricking her into believing her mother is in danger, and Edward must battle him to the death. James bites Bella, forcing Edward to choose between ridding her of the venom that would change her into a vampire, or allowing the change to occur and Bella to become as he is. He chooses the former, much to Bella's disappointment. When she asks him why, he replies, "So that's what you dream about? Becoming a monster?" Bella replies that she dreams about being with him forever, prompting him to ask "Is it not enough just to have a long and happy life with me?" (*Twilight*, 2008) But for Bella it is not enough. "No one will surrender tonight, but I won't give in. I know what I want," Bella says in the closing voiceover (*Twilight*, 2008). For many women, "happily ever after" is achieved by

marrying the perfect man and bearing his children, but “perfectly ever after” can only occur when she occupies his world of transcendence as his equal. This is the privilege Edward eventually grants to Bella Swan, and it is only possible in the world of fiction.

Tracy Lord

The opening scene of *The Philadelphia Story* (1940) features Tracy Lord (Katharine Hepburn) throwing her husband C.K. Dexter Haven (Cary Grant) out of their beautiful mansion. She appears with his bag of golf clubs and breaks one over her knee, prompting Dexter to raise his fist as if to strike her, but he settles for pushing her down to the ground instead. Though no dialogue occurs in this scene, it is clear to the audience that Tracy and Dexter are spirited, animated, and wealthy, and their anger borders on the playful. Tracy, a wealthy society beauty, is almost the polar opposite of Bella Swan. She has grace, style, poise, has been married and divorced, and is now engaged to marry again. Beauvoir notes that passionate love “often blooms outside of marriage” (Beauvoir, 701), and for Tracy Lord and Dexter Haven, this is certainly the case.

According to Beauvoir, a woman in Tracy’s position is more readily able to devote her life to love:

> Almost all women have dreamed of the ‘great love’: they have had imitations, they have come close to it; is has come to them in incomplete, bruised, trifling, imperfect, and false forms; but very few have really dedicated their existence to it. The great women lovers are often those who did not waste their emotions on juvenile crushes; they first accepted the traditional feminine destiny: husband, home, children; or they lived in difficult solitude; or they counted on some venture that more or less failed (Beauvoir, 685).

Tracy and Dexter “married on impulse, divorced in a rage,” according to Sidney Kidd (Henry Daniell), the publisher of *Spy* magazine. “Neither of us has been much of a

success at being a wife," says Tracy's mother, who is also divorced from Tracy's philandering father. "We just picked the wrong first husbands," Tracy assures her (*The Philadelphia Story*, 1940).

The Philadelphia Story is a comedy of remarriage, a genre that thrived under the Production Code which prohibited films depicting adulterous relationships (Cavell, 1981). Because they are divorced, characters in comedies of remarriage can engage in behavior that otherwise would subject them to moral judgment. Gilmour (1998) argues that comedies of remarriage feature a couple who have become disenchanted with each other and the realities of marriage, and ultimately become re-enchanted with each other when these problems are resolved (29). Though women's roles in comedies of remarriage are often contradictory, they all share one thing in common: "Women in the comedies of remarriage are not uniformly aggressive, however. Since they are never shown to have close friends, overriding interests, or careers, their romances are literally their lives" (Gilmour, 36).

Tracy Lord is no exception to this rule. Her position in society and her considerable wealth assure that she lives a life of leisure. Her pursuits consist of traveling to exotic destinations, decadent parties, swimming in the pool of the family estate, and courting her new fiancé, George Kittredge (John Howard). Charmed though her life may be, however, it is evident from the beginning of the film that Tracy has problems with not only her ex husband, but also her estranged father who she does not want in attendance at her wedding.

George Kittredge first appears in the film when he meets Tracy at the stables for an afternoon ride. Both are dressed in riding clothes, but Tracy declares that he looks awful,

"like something out of a shop window," then playfully tackles him to the ground and rubs dirt on his breeches. George protests, remarking that his clothes are new. "I don't get it! When I was a coal miner, I wanted enough money to buy clean clothes. Now that I'm a general manager—" he quips (*The Philadelphia Story*, 1940). Like his clothes, George's money is new. He is a self-made man from humble beginnings, whereas Tracy's ex husband Dexter comes from old money just as she herself does. "Perhaps it offends my vanity to have anyone who is even remotely my wife re-marry so obviously beneath her," Dexter tells Tracy (*The Philadelphia Story*, 1940).

The issue of class is highly significant for Beauvoir's woman in love:

> Of course, the man must belong to the same class and the same race as her own: the privilege of sex works only within this framework; for him to be a demigod, he must obviously be a human being first, for the daughter of a colonial officer, the native is not a man; if the young girl givers herself to an 'inferior,' she is trying to degrade herself because she does not think she is worthy of love. (Beauvoir, 684)

George's money and success partially legitimize his relationship with Tracy, but it is clear that he lacks her carefree whimsical attitude. It is also clear that George is not at home on horseback, and appears even more awkward compared with Tracy and her sister's expert horsemanship. George and Tracy's incompatibility is not limited to the superficial, however. Tracy tells him that what she really wants is to be useful in life, but George's wish is to build her an ivory tower "with my own two hands" (*The Philadelphia Story*, 1940). "I don't want to be worshipped," she tells him. "I want to be loved. I mean really loved" (*The Philadelphia Story*, 1940). George is simply not a "good fit" for Tracy, a phrase repeated by various characters throughout the entire film.

In contrast, Dexter's incompatibility with Tracy stems from his alcoholism rather than his inability to understand her on intellectual and emotional level. Though Dexter's

drinking is the reason Tracy upholds for their failed marriage, it becomes apparent that Dexter believes a portion of the blame is hers. In a confrontation with her while she is preparing for a swim with Macaulay Connor (Jimmy Stewart), Dexter states, “When I gradually discovered that my relationship to her was supposed to be not that of a loving husband and good companion...but that of a kind of high priest to a virgin goddess, my drinks grew deeper and more frequent,” Dexter claims (*The Philadelphia Story,* 1940).

Dexter also makes it apparent that Tracy was aware of his drinking before they married. “You took on that problem with me when you took me,” he tells her. Tracy’s intolerance for what she perceives as weakness in others, particularly the men in her life, is one of the central themes of the film:”Because you’ll never be a first class human being or a first class woman until you’ve learned to have some regard for human frailty,” is Dexter’s parting shot to her in their confrontation by the pool. The theme of Tracy’s intolerance is repeated in the very next scene, this time during a confrontation with her father about his philandering: “You have everything it takes to make a lovely woman except the one essential: an understanding heart. And without that, you might just as well be made of bronze,” her father tells her (*The Philadelphia Story,* 1940).

Just as Dexter suggests that Tracy is partially responsible for his drinking, Tracy’s father suggests that she is somehow partially at fault for his infidelity due to her lack of an “understanding heart.” Beauvoir’s woman in love is also torn asunder by the discovery of imperfection in the men to whom she devotes herself:

> It is a heartrending disappointment for the woman to discover her idol’s weaknesses and mediocrity...this disillusion is even crueler than the child’s at seeing paternal prestige crumble, because the woman herself chose the one to whom she made a gift of her whole being. (Beauvoir, 694)

No flesh-and-blood man can live up to the godlike ideals of the woman in love: “Hence the disillusioned sayings: ‘You shouldn’t believe in Prince Charming. Men are just poor things.’ They would not seem like dwarfs if they were not required to be giants” (Beauvoir 695). Tracy is not only disillusioned with the realities of marriage, but also the human frailty of men in general. Her father’s philandering is the catalyst for the entire plot and the reason for Dexter’s reappearance in her life, as well as the presence of journalists Macaulay Connor and Liz Imbrie (Ruth Hussey), who are covering the story of her wedding. Yet, Tracy’s contempt for the weakness of the men in her life somehow presents a more pressing problem than Dexter’s alcoholism or her father’s infidelity.

Tracy is constantly referred to as a “goddess” throughout the entire film, sometimes as a reproach, and sometimes as a compliment. When Dexter first arrives unexpectedly to the Lords’ estate, she greets him hostilely. “I used to be afraid of that look. The withering glance of the goddess,” he tells her (*The Philadelphia Story*, 1940). When her father also arrives unexpectedly, she greets him with the same contempt. “Still justice with her shining sword, eh daughter? Who’s on the spot?” he asks. “We are, thanks to you!” she replies (*The Philadelphia Story*, 1940).

To George, Tracy is a goddess because of her grace and beauty. To the men in her life who know her better, she is a goddess because of her harsh and detached judgment of them. The woman in love metes out the same cruel judgment:

> When he is no longer worshipped, he has to be trampled on. In the same of this halo with which the woman in love adorns her beloved, she forbids him all weakness; she is disappointed and irritated if he does not conform to this image she put in his place; if he makes a mistake, if he contradicts himself, she decrees he is ‘not himself,’ and she reproaches him for this. (Beauvoir, 695)

For Tracy, resolving her disillusionment with marriage means not only accepting that the men in her lives are not gods, but that she herself also possesses the same human frailty she despises in them. Tracy must recognize the she herself is also not a goddess. The same is not true for the vast majority of Beauvoir's women in love, whose primary problem is the worship of men as gods, but Tracy's situation is certainly not like that of most other women.

First and foremost, Tracy's wealth grants her permanent financial independence from any lover she chooses, as well as the freedom to engage in any pursuit and pastime she wishes. Cavell (1981) argues that the vast wealth of characters in comedies of remarriage provided an outlet of escape for audiences living through the Depression era. Citing Cavell, Gilmour (1998) writes, "Cavell points out the narrative convenience of establishing freedom from financial care. With no worries about money, and no need to waste time working, the pair has nothing to do but spend time with each other" (30).

Though Tracy's wealth and life of leisure allow her the ability to devote all her time to her lover, they also allow her to remain her "own person," and George echoes this sentiment when she asks him if it bothers him that another man was once her "lord and master": "I don't believe he ever was, Tracy, not really. I don't believe that anyone ever was or ever will be...You're so much your own," he replies (*The Philadelphia Story*, 1940). The freedom Tracy's considerable wealth and status grant her sets her apart from Beauvoir's woman in love by providing her an escape from a life of blind devotion:

> Many women who bloomed at the beginning of a love affair that reinforced their narcissism become frightening in their maniacal servility when they feel less loved; obsessed and diminished, they irritate their lover; giving herself blindly to him, the woman loses that dimension of freedom that made her fascinating at first. (Beauvoir, 704)

Though Tracy may be guilty of narcissism ("You're far and away your favorite person in the world," Dexter tells her), it would be difficult to imagine her willingly sacrificing the freedom she has always enjoyed as a result of her privileged status. Tracy has the means to remain fascinating to the men who pursue her even after she is "caught."

The privilege Tracy enjoys means that she is already closer to the kind of equal love Beauvoir argues is only possible when women and men's situation become the same:

> But Gusdorf is wrong to write 'and *in the same way* man represents for the woman an indispensible intermediary of herself to herself,' because today her situation is not *the same*...It would only be the same for woman if she also existed essentially for-herself; this would imply that she possessed an economic independence, that she projected herself toward her own ends and surpassed herself without intermediary toward the group. (Beauvoir, 707)

Tracy's privilege allows her to exist as a woman "for-herself." She is economically independent and can project herself toward any end she chooses. According to Beauvoir, failed love can only be productive if the woman is capable of "taking herself in hand again," and Tracy is clearly capable of doing so as her refusal to remain married to Dexter and her engagement to George a year later illustrate. All that stands in the way of Tracy experiencing an equal love is her belief that she herself is above the weakness and human frailty she despises of the men in her life, which she is finally forced to acknowledge is untrue after her drunken escapade with Macaulay Connor.

According to Dexter, Tracy conveniently blocks out any recollection of her own intemperance: "Oh, the night you got drunk on champagne and climbed out on the roof and stood there, naked, with your arms outstretched to the moon, wailing like a banshee," he accuses amid her protests that she remembers doing no such thing (*The Philadelphia Story*, 1940). Once again, Tracy becomes uncharacteristically drunk at her Uncle Willie's

party, this time ending up in the arms of Macaulay Connor to George's shock and disapproval and Dexter's amusement. Dexter sympathetically attempts to conceal Tracy's discarded engagement ring from George's sight and advises him to go to bed, but George refuses and is confronted with the sight of Macaulay carrying the drunken Tracy from the pool to the house.

The next morning, it is George's intolerance of Tracy's behavior that forces her to confront her own as she reads a note from him explaining that her conduct was shocking to his "ideals of womanhood" and a "breach of common decency," and that his attitude towards her has "changed materially" (*The Philadelphia Story*, 1940). It is then that Tracy realizes she has wronged Dexter in her refusal to accept his human frailty, thus enabling the two of them to engage in a truly equal union, and they do exactly that in the film's conclusion. Thus, Tracy Lord escapes the fate of Beauvoir's woman in love and remarries Dexter, this time with neither of them elevated to a godlike status and therefore destined to failure.

CHAPTER III

MARRIED WOMEN: BARBARA ROSE AND AMANDA BONNER

Barbara Rose

"*Wedding is destiny, and hanging likewise.*"—Proverb (John Heywood)

According to the National Center for Health Statistics, compared with non-married individuals, married individuals enjoy a number of consistently documented benefits such as better mental and physical health, longer lives, and better health insurance coverage (http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/series/sr_23/sr23_028.pdf). The same source confirms that these benefits also extend to the children of married couples. However, the institution of marriage in the US has undergone several notable changes during the 20th century such that Cherlin (2004) argues a "deinstitutionalization" is taking place, which he defines as "the weakening of social norms that define people's behavior in a social institution such as marriage" (Cherlin, 848).

According to Cherlin (2004), two major shifts in the meaning of marriage created the social context for deinstitutionalization:

> The first transition, noted by Ernest Burgess, was from the institutional marriage to the companionate marriage. The second transition was to the individualized marriage in which the emphasis on personal choice and self-development expanded. Although the practical importance of marriage has declined, its symbolic significance has remained high and may even have increased. It has become a marker of prestige and personal achievement. (Cherlin, 848)

The breakdown of norms governing marriage could lead to increased tensions between individuals who choose to enter it, but could also lead to a more egalitarian form of marriage between men and women (Cherlin, 848). Cherlin (2004) also cites the emergence of same-sex marriage and an increase in cohabitation as markers of the changing face of marriage, and a 2010 Pew publication reports that although marriage is declining for all groups, it is still the norm for college-educated adults in stable income brackets (http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1802/decline-marriage-rise-new-families).

The face of marriage has clearly changed since Beauvoir wrote *The Second Sex*, and in the years since *The War of the Roses* was released in 1989 as well. Regardless, Beauvoir's analysis still rings true for many women:

> The destiny that society traditionally offers women is marriage. Even today, most women are, were, or plan to be married, or they suffer from not being so. Marriage is the reference by which the single woman is defined, whether she is frustrated by, disgusted at, or even indifferent to the institution. (Beauvoir, 439)

Marriage is still the subject of films from a number of genres from romantic comedies to tragic melodramas, and of reality television programs such as WE's *Bridezilla* and TLC's *Four Weddings* and *Say Yes to the Dress*. Popular women's magazines such as *Cosmopolitan* and *Glamour* still regularly feature strategies for "catching" and "keeping" a man. However, according to the 2006 "Monitoring the Future" survey, 41% of teenage boys agreed with the statement "Most people will have fuller and happier lives if they choose legal marriage rather than staying single, or just living with someone else," compared to 32% of teenage girls (http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/08/pathways2adulthood/ch3.-shtml#How). Though marriage and women's expectation of it may continue to shift and change, Beauvoir writes, "Modern marriage can be understood only in the light of the

past it perpetuates," (Beauvoir, 439) and for women, the past and sometimes present of marriage include situations like that of Barbara Rose.

As noted in the Introduction, Kaplan (1974) argues that existential crises are better represented in film by women since women are less shielded by external projects (19). For Beauvoir, the same is true for almost all women because they are relegated to the sphere of immanence. As a dark comedy, *The War of the Roses* (1989) cuts to the heart of the married woman's existential crisis and is full of dialogue that conveys many of the same situations Beauvoir describes. The film is narrated by Gavin D'Amato (Danny DeVito), who tells the story of the Roses to a man who has come to him in hopes of retaining his counsel for his impending divorce.

The story of the Roses, which Gavin tells his prospective client he kept out of the newspapers, begins when the future couple meets at an auction in Nantucket on the last day of the tourist season. Barbara (Kathleen Turner) spiritedly outbids Oliver (Michael Douglas) on an ivory figurine. Oliver approaches her after the auction and asks if she knows what the figurine is worth. She replies that she does not and simply "liked" the figurine, which according to Oliver is worth five times more than her winning bid. The two continue to chat, and Oliver tells her that he is a law student at Harvard, and Barbara explains that she is attending Madison on a gymnastics scholarship.

Oliver's sexual interest in Barbara is obvious from the time the two first begin conversing. It is raining, and Barbara's shirt has become transparent. When Barbara tells him she is a gymnast and demonstrates by standing on her hands and performing a split, Oliver remarks, "God, I love Nantucket." Already, the two reflect Beauvoir's description of the "moral and social superiority" of many husbands to their wives:

> He has the advantage of culture or at least professional training over his wife; since adolescence, he has been interested in world affairs: they are his affairs; he knows a little law, he follows politics, he belongs to a party, a union, clubs; worker and citizen, his thinking is connected to action; he knows that one cannot cheat reality: that is, the average man has the technique of reasoning, the taste for facts and experience, a certain critical sense; here is what many girls lack; even if they have read, listened to lectures, touched upon the fine arts, their knowledge amassed here and there does not constitute culture; it is not because of an intellectual defect that they have not learned to reason: it is because they have not had to practice it. (Beauvoir, 497)

Barbara bids on the figurine simply because she likes it, and not because she knows its actual value. Oliver is "cultured" enough to know what it is worth, and the impression is that he bid on the figurine because of calculation rather than whim.

Both Oliver and Barbara are attending college on scholarships; "I'm not rich, just brilliant," Oliver tells her. Barbara has earned her gymnastics scholarship because of her body and physical conditioning rather than her "brilliance," and her handstand and attractive figure speak for themselves. Though Barbara may indeed "amass knowledge here and there" since she attends college, her purpose there is firmly rooted in the realm of the body and immanence, and she tells Oliver that she is already becoming "too big" to be a successful gymnast. In contrast, Oliver's college experience is in the realm of the mind and transcendence, and his future as a lawyer who will certainly know more than just "a little law" is wide open and full of promise.

Oliver succeeds in convincing Barbara to stay with him in Nantucket for the night, and the two spend the evening having sex that for Barbara is multi-orgasmic, something for which Oliver tells her she should never apologize. "If we end up together, then this is the most romantic day of my life. And if we don't, I'm a complete slut," Barbara tells him (*The War of the Roses*, 1989). "This is the story we're going to tell our

grandchildren," he replies, an answer that grants Barbara the security of knowing his intentions are more than just a one-night stand. Beauvoir notes that "...Americans today, who are both respectful of the institution of marriage and individualistic, endeavor to integrate sexuality into marriage" (Beauvoir, 456-457). So it is with the Oliver and Barbara, and the film cuts away from the scene of their first sexual encounter into a scene at Christmastime in which the couple is now married.

Oliver sits working at a desk while the couple's two young children make mischief and distract him, and it is inferred from their ages and the cramped apartment that Oliver is still at the beginning of his law career. Oliver is inept at dealing with the children, and when Barbara comes home and greets them all, the reception the children give her makes it clear that they are far more attached to her than they are to their father. Barbara gives each of the children a piece of candy, and Oliver asks her if it is a good idea to give the children sweets all the time. Barbara replies that she's "read somewhere" that freely giving children candy will dampen their desire for it and prevent them from becoming obese.

Oliver obviously doubts Barbara's rationale for constantly giving the children candy, and the scene illustrates the divide between what he perceives as logic and reason and what Barbara herself believes them to be. Beauvoir writes,

> Even if their age difference is slight, the fact remains that the young woman and young man have generally been brought up very differently; she is the product of a feminine universe where she was inculcated with feminine sagacity and respect for feminine values, whereas he is imbued with the male ethic. It is often very difficult for them to understand each other, and conflicts soon arise. (Beauvoir, 493)

The conflict arises in the very next scene when Barbara shows Oliver the star she has made to put atop the Christmas tree. Though Barbara has obviously worked hard on the

star, when she asks Oliver what he thinks of it, he replies, “It looks like it’s made out of tinfoil.” Barbara quickly conceals her hurt, and in another effort to please him, she brings Oliver outside to show him her Christmas gift to him: a Morgan, a classic car for him to lovingly restore. This time Oliver is ecstatic with Barbara’s effort, though he asks if they can truly afford it. Fulfilling her role as a dutifully supportive wife, Barbara replies, “You’re going to be such a huge success, this may be out last opportunity to worry about spending money!” (*The War of the Roses*, 1989) When Barbara asks if Oliver is happy, he replies, “I’m more than happy. I’m way past happy. I’m married!” (*The War of the Roses*, 1989)

Oliver seems to take his happiness for granted as though it is his right as a husband, but the sacrifices Barbara has made to achieve it cannot be overlooked. Though her future as a gymnast was already uncertain when she met Oliver, she gave it up completely when she married him and bore his children. From that moment on, Barbara lives for supporting Oliver in his endeavors, raising the children, and running the house. In turn, Oliver lives up to her expectations of his success, and after only six months with his new firm, he meets with the senior partners in hopes of becoming a partner himself.

The meeting takes place at his and Barbara’s house, now a considerably larger dwelling than their first apartment, over a fantastic dinner she has spared no effort in preparing. Though she is complimented on the meal by one of the senior partner’s wives, the children enter the room asking for extra helpings of dessert to take upstairs with them, and it is clear that both of them are indeed obese. Barbara’s success at preparing the dinner is overshadowed by the failed logic of her strategy to prevent the children from becoming obese by constantly feeding them sweets, and it is clear as Oliver hurries the

children out of the room that he is embarrassed by them. Oliver humiliates Barbara further when he requests that she tell the guests the story of how she and Oliver had acquired their crystal, then impatiently cuts her off in the middle of an anecdote about the chipped glasses with yellow flowers of her childhood and finishes the story himself.

Later that night as the couple lie in bed, Barbara seethes at Oliver for not only embarrassing her, but also his "phony laugh" and other bootlicking behavior in the presence of the guests. Oliver defends himself, explaining that his desire to be made a partner in the firm is because of her and the children. Remorsefully, he tells Barbara, "God, I hope they didn't notice what a jerk I am," to which she replies, "They never seem to" (*The War of the Roses*, 1989). Though they "make up" and share a kiss and a laugh directly after Barbara's reply, it is clear that she did not mean it in jest, and a major shift has occurred. Beauvoir writes,

> Even if she started out recognizing masculine prestige, her dazzlement is soon dissipated; one day the child recognizes that his father is but a contingent individual; the wife soon discovers she is not before the grand Suzerain, the Chief, the Master, but a man; she sees no reason to be subjugated to him; in her eyes, he merely represents unjust and unrewarding duty. (Beauvoir, 500)

Something has awakened in Barbara. She now sees Oliver as a fallible, thankless, and sometimes simpering man rather than a god, and she begins her search for ways to express autonomy. Barbara has repeatedly expressed her interest in purchasing a particular house if the owner should decide to sell it, and in the act of leaving yet another note of interest at the house, Barbara learns that the owner has passed away, and that a wake is taking place at that very moment. Barbara has "won" the house of her dreams, but the victory comes with a price.

A few scenes later, Barbara wanders amidst the beautiful interior of the house needlessly rearranging knickknacks by shifting them mere inches from their original positions, and in the voiceover, Gavin D'Amato explains,

> Barbara labored seven days a week to create the perfect home that Oliver always dreamed of. Not easy for a girl who drew up drinking her milk from glasses with chipped yellow flowers. There were a million choices, and she sweated every one of them. She refinished all the tables herself. It took six months to get the floors exactly right. A hundred Sundays to find the perfect Staffordshire figures and plates that she put over the fireplace. When you work that hard on something, eventually you have to finish and face the awful question: What's left to do? (*The War of the Roses*, 1989)

Barbara's life has become exactly what Beauvoir describes in the following:

> She will also find in this décor an expression of her personality; it is she who has chosen, made, and 'hunted down' furniture and knickknacks, who has aesthetically arranged them in a way where symmetry is important; they reflect her individuality while bearing social witness to her standard of living...Because she *does* nothing, she avidly seeks herself in what she *has*. (Beauvoir, 471, emphasis in the original).

Beauvoir writes of an elderly woman she knew "among others" who at twenty was "gay and coquettish," but in later years began awakening every morning at five to obsessively rearrange the wardrobes in the house: "Closed up in her isolated estate, with a husband who neglected her and a single child, she took to arranging as others take to drink," Beauvoir writes (Beauvoir, 477).

"What's left to do" is indeed the awful question that faces the married woman when domestic duties and childrearing no longer occupy all of her time. Mann[3] points out that in all manner of stories and fairytales, what happens beyond the "happily ever after" is almost never revealed, and marriage itself is often presented as its own happy ending. But life goes on after marriage for real-life husbands and wives, and for a woman who has devoted the majority of her existence to her husband and children, answering the question

[3] Winter 2011 class lecture

of “What next” can be agonizing, if not impossible. Barbara, however, is fortunate enough to find an answer.

After years of painstakingly preparing meals for her family and Oliver’s business associates, Barbara’s culinary skills are honed to near-perfection. She enters Oliver’s study and hesitantly explains that one of their friends had remarked that her pâté was good enough to sell, then bought a pound of it from her. “You sold liver to our friends?” Oliver asks derisively. “She paid me in cash, Oliver,” Barbara replies. “Somehow that felt different than the money I get cashing a check. Made me feel like trading in the Volvo on one of those four-wheel-drive things with the big knobby tires and the 200-horsepower engine. So I did. I’m going to pick it up tomorrow,” she adds.

Dumbfounded, Oliver asks how much the truck cost. Barbara replies that it was $25,000. “So you only have to sell 700 more pounds of pâté,” Oliver remarks sarcastically. “Maybe I will. Maybe I’m starting a business,” Barbara replies, and it is clear that she is shocked by the idea herself. Beauvoir writes,

> To increase his authority, he likes to exaggerate feminine incapacity; she accepts this subordinate role with more or less docility. We have seen the surprised pleasure of women who, sincerely regretting their husbands’ absence, discover in themselves at such times unsuspected possibilities; they run businesses, bring up children, decide and administer without help. They suffer when their husbands return and doom her again to incompetence. (Beauvoir, 499)

After years of Oliver’s absence as a result of his workaholic tendencies, Barbara finds an unsuspected possibility for exercising autonomy by making use of her skill in the kitchen to start a business. Oliver’s attitude toward the whole endeavor is condescending and indulgent, as if Barbara is merely playing at “important” work. However, as Barbara’s

business grows and becomes more successful, it is Oliver who recognizes that hiring outside help to care for the house is necessary.

At first, Barbara is completely opposed to the idea of hiring help to care for the house. Predictably, Oliver cannot understand her reluctance. It is a simple and logical fact for him that she cannot run a successful business and perform the domestic labor necessary to care for their huge home. Beauvoir writes, "It is through housework that the wife comes to make her 'nest' her own; this is why, even if she has 'help,' she insists on doing things herself" (Beauvoir, 472). Though Barbara now has her business, she is loath to turn the care of the 'nest' she has devoted years to building over to someone else.

While interviewing the woman who will become their new housekeeper, Barbara delivers a monologue that cuts straight to the heart of the married woman's existential crisis:

> Let's face it, I don't need to work. I mean, not for the money. And that does *not* necessarily make me one of these women who is married to a successful man and has dedicated her life to him and her children and then finds herself desperately trying to validate herself as a human being because her children are about to leave her by studying photography or opening an art gallery or going into interior design in her husband's office. No, I have a wonderful house crammed with beautiful things. I did this house myself. I did a great job. Not that I'm necessarily a slave to materialism though, but I am proud of what I've accomplished, although I suppose some people would find my life disgusting...No, disgusting is too strong a word. I would say that not many people would respect the choices I've made, although women would. Women like me. (*The War of the Roses*, 1989)

From this point on, free from domestic obligations and exercising her own authority over her business, Barbara becomes more and more aware of her contempt for Oliver. She asks him to look over a contract she has drawn up for a client, and he uses it to swat a fly, all the while making it clear how amusing and insignificant he considers her business endeavors to be. When the two share a meal, Barbara can hardly bear to watch Oliver

consume the food she has prepared. She hears him on the phone with an important colleague, and his phony laugh that annoyed her years before has now become more than she can stand.

Though all the signs are present that Oliver and Barbara's marriage is irreparable, it takes Oliver suffering what at first seems to be a heart attack but is actually a massive of attack of indigestion for Barbara to realize that she wants a divorce. Barbara fails to go to the hospital when she learns Oliver is there, and he is appalled by her lack of concern for him. Later that night, after he has come home, confronted her, and gone to bed, she wakes him to tell him that awful reason why: because when she heard the news that he might be dying, she was overcome with a happiness she found so frightening that she had to pull the car over to the side of the road. "I want a divorce," she concludes. "You can't have one!" Oliver replies furiously, and demands that she gives him a reason that "makes sense."

Barbara obliges him with the awful truth: "Because when I watch you eat, when I see you asleep, when I look at you lately, I just want to smash your face in," she answers. Once again, Oliver fails to take her seriously, and derisively eggs her on to "take a shot" at him. When Barbara does exactly that and succeeds in drawing blood, he replies, "Next time, I hit back. And you better get yourself a damn good lawyer." Thus, war has been declared, and it will culminate in the destruction of both the Roses. The remainder of the film becomes a battle between Oliver and Barbara for possessions.

Barbara offers to waive alimony in exchange for the house and its contents, but Oliver refuses. Though he has moved out of the house, Oliver finds a loophole in the law that allows him to move back in, much to Barbara's horror, and the situation quickly

becomes even more toxic. Christmas arrives yet again, and in an act of defiance and reclamation of her own identity, Barbara tops the tree with the tinfoil star she made so many years before. After she does so, a strand of lights on the tree goes out, and Oliver ignores Barbara's warning that it is due to a short in the wiring. Hours later, the tree catches fire, destroying the gifts and damaging the living room. Without Barbara's loving indulgence, Oliver's incompetence is not only visible, but also unforgiveable.

Beauvoir recounts the disturbing story of a wife desperate to free herself from her husband:

> A forty-year-old woman who had endured an odious husband for twenty years was recently acquitted for having coldly strangled her husband with the help of her elder son. There had been no other way for her to free herself from an intolerable situation. (Beauvoir, 515).

Barbara and Oliver's situation becomes increasingly worse, with each of them carrying out more and more comically outlandish plots to drive the other out of the house or, in Oliver's case, to hold onto Barbara as one of his rightful possessions. In one of the final scenes of the film, after the two have literally barricaded themselves inside the house with the intent of battling to the death, Oliver lures Barbara out of hiding by placing the figurine she won at the auction where they first met on the banister of the staircase. "I'll give you everything in this house if you say it's mine," he tells her, indicating the figurine. "Okay," she replies, "it's mine," and Oliver flies into an uncontrollable rage.

Barbara's refusal to give Oliver ownership of the figurine, which truly does belong to her, is clearly symbolic of her refusal to consent to his ownership of her as a person and a wife. Oliver rushes her on the staircase, and after another scuffle, the two end up in the huge chandelier overhanging the foyer, a hundred feet above the marble floor. Though

help arrives in the form of Gavin D'Amato and the Roses' housekeeper, Barbara has loosened the bolts of the chandelier in an earlier plot to drop it on Oliver. The tension wires finally give way under the weight of them both, and Oliver and Barbara plummet to their death. As the two lie amidst the wreckage of the chandelier, Oliver uses the last of his dying strength to place his hand on Barbara's shoulder. In turn, Barbara uses the last of her strength to push it off. Both are casualties in the war of the Roses, but having refused to live as a woman bound to Oliver by marriage, Barbara refuses to die as one as well.

Amanda Bonner

Adam's Rib (1949) belongs to the subgenre of romantic comedies known as the "screwball comedy" (Shumway, 1991). Contrary to Cavell's (1981) analysis, Shumway 1991) argues that screwball comedies mystify marriage:

> Where Cavell goes wrong—and it is hardly a peripheral place—is his position that the screwball comedies he discusses succeed in enlightening us about marriage itself. My argument is that they do just the opposite: they mystify marriage by portraying it as the goal—but not the end—of romance. The major cultural work of these films is not the stimulation of thought about marriage, but the affirmation of marriage in the face of the threat of a growing divorce rate and liberalized divorce laws. What an analysis of screwball comedies will show is that romance functions as a specific ideology that is used by these films to mystify marriage. (Shumway, 7)

Though Cavell (1981) treats *Adam's Rib* as a comedy of remarriage, Shumway (1991) points out that Amanda and Adam Bonner never actually divorce in the film (Shumway, 17). Shumway also argues that, unlike most other films in the comedy of remarriage genre, *Adam's Rib* is specifically concerned with feminist issues (Shumway, 17).

Amanda Bonner (Katharine Hepburn) takes the case of a woman who has shot her husband and constructs her defense on the premise that women as a class are not treated equally before the eyes of the law with regard to the issue of infidelity. Shumway writes, "Her defense of this woman is explicitly a defense of women as a class and a protest against the double-standard of sexual morality that generally excuses male philandering (something that the father in *The Philadelphia Story* did explicitly)" (Shumway, 17). Both the plot of *Adam's Rib* and the character of Amanda Bonner are atypical for comedies of remarriage, supporting Shumway's argument that the film more properly belongs to the screwball comedy genre instead.

Though she is a married woman, Amanda Bonner shares little else in common with Barbara Rose. Like her husband Adam (Spencer Tracy), Amanda is a lawyer. She attended Yale and has a successful career that she did not abandon when she married. Amanda and Adam occupy a suite in the city to be closer to their work, but they also have a lovely estate in the country which they refer to as "the cottage." Unlike Barbara Rose, Amanda Bonner employs several maids to perform domestic duties that, as a working woman, she does not have time to perform herself. The couple has no children, and it is clear that Amanda's two biggest priorities are her work and her husband. Unlike many of the married women Beauvoir describes in the previous section, Amanda is free from the drudgeries of housework and is defined by what she does rather than what she has. Amanda does not express her personality through the décor of her house, but through the action she engages in professionally and through the causes she believes in instead.

Amanda and Adam's relationship appears to be an example of equality within the framework of marriage, and their genuine affection for each other is obvious from the beginning of the film. Beauvoir writes,

> This balanced couple is not a utopia; such couples exist sometimes even within marriage, more often outside of it; some are united by a great sexual love that leaves them free in their friendships and occupations; others are linked by a friendship that does not hamper their sexual freedom; more rarely there are still others who are both lovers and friends but without seeking in each other their exclusive reason for living. Many nuances are possible in the relations of a man and a woman: in companionship, pleasure, confidence, tenderness, complicity, and love, they can be for each other the most fruitful source of joy, richness, and strength offered to a human being. (Beauvoir, 520)

Though Amanda and Adam's relationship appears to be nearly equal, it is Amanda's commitment to the causes she believes in that ultimately causes the greatest difficulty between the two.

Free from the problems that plague many of Beauvoir's married women, the strife between husband and wife in the Bonner's case occurs in the realm of ideas which, for Beauvoir, is characteristic of transcendence. "Woman is destined to maintain the species and care for the home, which is to say, to immanence," Beauvoir writes (443). Amanda Bonner is not anchored to the realm of immanence by either of these duties however, and though she loves her husband, her existence is firmly based on her own pursuits. He is not her "exclusive reason for living," and she has not made the sacrifices that other married women such as Barbara Rose make when they enter into marriage.

The opening sequence of the film begins with Doris Attinger (Judy Holliday) following her husband, Warren Attinger (Tom Ewell), through the crowded streets of New York, taking great care not to be seen by him. Doris is then shown purchasing a handgun and an instruction manual which she nervously thumbs through, demonstrating

her unfamiliarity with firearms. In the next scene, Doris arrives at an apartment building Warren has entered moments before, and with the gun in hand, she charges into one of the apartments to find him sitting on a sofa embracing another woman. Though terrified, Doris turns her head away, closes her eyes, and blindly fires the gun in the direction of Warren and his mistress. Warren's mistress manages to escape from the room, but Doris succeeds in wounding Warren, and sobbing hysterically, she immediately rushes over to where he lies on the floor.

As Shumway (1991) notes, this love triangle is not at all appealing to the audience and suggests that elements of class are at work in the film's construction of romance (17). Later scenes confirm that the Attingers are indeed from a lower social, educational, and economic class than the Bonners. However, since *Adam's Rib* premiered in 1949, the influence of the Production Code may also be responsible for the unappealing representation of the adulterous affair between Warren Attinger and his mistress.

The next scene takes place at the Bonner residence the morning after the shooting. Amanda sees the story of the shooting in the newspaper and mentions it to Adam, who regards the whole incident as an ugly mess. "Serves him right, the little two-timer," says one of the Bonner's maids as she clears away the newspapers. When Adam, an assistant district attorney, arrives at city hall, his colleagues are also discussing the Attinger shooting. Adam refers to Doris Attinger as a "hysterical Hannah who tried to kill her husband," and almost immediately afterwards learns that he will be trying the case against her.

Meanwhile, Amanda asks one of the assistants at her law office what she thinks of a man who cheats on his wife. "Not a very nice thing," her assistant replies. But when

Amanda asks her what she thinks of a woman who cheats on her husband, her assistant replies, “Something terrible.” Amanda asks her, “Why ‘not nice’ if he does it and ‘something terrible’ if she does?” a question her assistant is unable to answer. Then, after a phone call from Adam informing Amanda that he has been assigned the case, she dispatches her assistant to arrange an interview with Doris Attinger.

During the interview, when Amanda asks her how long she has been married, Doris promptly replies, “Nine years, four months, and twelve days.” Doris reveals that her husband has been physically assaulting her, and is able to give Amanda the precise date of when the first instance of abuse occurred. Doris also reveals that the couple has three children, and that her husband had failed to come home for four nights in a row before the morning she followed him to his mistress’s apartment. When Amanda asks her whether she questioned her husband’s behavior, Doris replies, “Certainly! He told me to shut up and mind my own business.”

Beauvoir writes,

> If she is too indulgent, the wife finds her husband escaping her...Yet if she forbids him all adventure, if she overwhelms him by her close scrutiny, her scenes, her demands, she can seriously turn him against her. It is a question of knowing how to ‘make concessions’ advisedly; if the husband puts ‘a few dents in the contract,’ she will close her eyes; but at other moments, she must open them wide (Beauvoir, 506).

Doris is a wife no longer in a position to make concessions. After her husband’s prolonged absence, her eyes are “open wide,” and she takes desperate measures. Though Doris freely admits to shooting her husband, the information she gives Amanda during the interview evokes sympathy rather than condemnation. Her precise knowledge of how long she has been married, her willingness to accept the initial dents her husband has put

in the contract, and the mistreatment she has endured make her appear to be a devoted wife at her wit's end rather than a dangerous and unstable threat.

Though Amanda's interview with Doris evokes sympathy, Adam's interview with Warren Attinger evokes nothing but contempt. Warren is still in the hospital receiving treatment for his gunshot wound, and he is understandably furious. He rants that Doris is a "nut" and that he wants her "put away." Though his fury is understandable, the audience has witnessed the events leading up to the shooting and knows of his infidelity. He has been shot, but his anger with Doris and refusal to acknowledge her actions in the context of his own bad behavior make it difficult to feel sympathy for him. Instead, he appears to be every bit the boorish and unlikeable man Doris describes in her interview. The result is that Doris appears to be the true victim in the situation even though she is responsible for Warren's injury.

The individuals present during the two interviews also add to the construction of the situation as a battle between the sexes. Whereas the only individuals present for Doris's interview are the other women seated at the table with her, several men are present in the hospital room during Warren's interview. Doris's interview is quiet, intimate, and gives the impression of commiseration between her and the other women. Conversely, the atmosphere of Warren's interview is chaotic; the room is crowded and noisy, and none of the men are seated. Instead, they are milling around and talking over one another, and they all seem to be engaged in their own purpose and agenda.

Later that evening, the Bonners are at home preparing for a dinner party. Adam gives Amanda a hat he has purchased as a gift for her; "Just the best hat in the world for the best head," he tells her. The scene affirms that Adam is a "good husband" who dotes on

his wife and establishes him as the polar opposite of Warren Attinger. The happiness of the exchange is marred, however, by Amanda breaking the news that she is representing Doris Attinger. Though the arrival of the guests prevent a full-blown confrontation between Adam and Amanda, Adam is clearly upset throughout the evening, and the obnoxious behavior of the Bonners' neighbor, Kip Lurie (David Wayne), and his open flirtation with Amanda adds to the tension.

After the guests have gone home, the delayed confrontation between Amanda and Adam finally occurs, and the two argue heatedly. Adam accuses Amanda of wanting to turn a court of law into a "Punch and Judy show." The greatest source of his outrage is not that Amanda has taken the case, but that she believes Doris should be acquitted. "I am going to cut you into twelve little pieces and feed you to the jury, so get prepared for it," he tells her. Surprisingly, instead of retorting, Amanda merely kisses him goodnight, and the two go to bed instead of arguing further.

Beauvoir notes that, for some married women, rejecting the principles of their husbands is a form of resistance:

> In spite of opinions she has learned and principles she reels off like a parrot, the wife retains her own vision of the world. This resistance can render her incapable of understanding a husband smarter than herself; or, on the contrary, she will rise above masculine seriousness like the heroines of Stendhal or Ibsen. Sometimes, out of hostility toward the man—either because he has sexually disappointed her or, on the contrary, because he dominates her and she wants revenge—she will clutch onto values that are not his (Beauvoir, 500).

Every scene between Amanda and Adam gives the impression that they are happily married and still very much in love. Though the film contains no scenes of sexual intimacy between Adam and Amanda and they are shown as occupying separate beds, these are standard features of films made under the Production Code (Cavell, 1981;

Krzywinska, 2006), and the intimacy between them is successfully depicted in other ways.

Amanda is not opposing Adam out of hostility due to sexual dissatisfaction, nor does she give the impression that she seeks revenge for his domination. Instead, she makes it clear that she views the Attinger case as a way to fight for a greater cause ("You're cute when you get causey," Adam tells her earlier in the film). Adam, however, views the case only in terms of the laws that have been broken rather than its association with the larger issue of women's equality. For him, the case is open-and-shut: Doris Attinger broke the law, endangered the lives of two individuals, and has confessed to shooting her husband. Amanda's resistance toward acknowledging these facts is what causes the strife between them, as does Adam's refusal to consider her vision of the case as an opportunity to strike a blow for equality.

The next morning at court, it becomes clear that Adam's fear of the case becoming a Punch and Judy show is well-founded. To his shock and outrage, Doris Attinger appears in court wearing the hat he gave Amanda the night before. During *voir dire*, Amanda announces that the entire basis of her case will be women's equality:

> I submit that me entire line of defense is based on the proposition that persons of the female sex should be dealt with before the law as the equal of persons of the male sex. I submit that I cannot hope to argue this line before minds hostile to and prejudiced against the female sex. (*Adam's Rib,* 1949)

In ironic contrast to Amanda's speech, she and Adam duck under the tables to flirt with each other. She lifts the hem of her skirt to flash the lace of her slip at Adam and succeeds in flustering him to the point that he stumbles over his words when he questions

the next juror. Amanda's clear use of her sexuality as a strategy to gain the upper hand in court seems ethically at odds her speech on the equal treatment of women before the law.

Later that evening, when Adam returns home, Amanda greets him at the door with a drink and sympathetic adoration, flawlessly fulfilling the role of the "good wife." Adam asks her again to drop the case. "It'll get sillier and messier day by day," he tells her. "I can't. It's my cause," Amanda replies. In an emotional plea for his understanding, Amanda tells him, "Listen darling, I know that deep down you agree with me, with everything I want and hope and believe in. We couldn't be so close if you didn't—if I didn't feel that you did" (*Adam's Rib*, 1949). Again, the difference between their views of the case is highlighted: For Amanda, the case represents a larger and much graver injustice: the social and juridical inequality of women. For Adam, however, it is a simple matter of guilt or innocence before the eyes of the law, and the facts (such as Doris Attinger's signed confession) speak for themselves.

Though Shumway (1991) argues that *Adam's Rib* "displaces the social conflict onto the drama of a single marriage," and that the marriage itself is depicted as one of "absolute bliss," (Shumway, 18) the way Adam and Amanda's relationship is portrayed affirms more than marriage as a value to be upheld. In the scene following Amanda's emotional appeal to Adam, the couple prepares dinner together. The task is clearly a joint effort with the work divided evenly between them; it is neither an expression of a woman fulfilling her "wifely duty" nor the bumbling antics of a husband who is completely unfamiliar with the kitchen and only succeeds in making a nuisance of himself. Instead, the scene depicts an equality that, like Adam's view of the case, is practical and

pragmatic, and seems to suggest that Amanda's preoccupation with the larger social issue of equality is somewhat silly since it is exemplified in her own lived experience.

Beauvoir acknowledges that, especially in America, the institution of marriage was already changing as she was writing *The Second Sex:*

> Considering the abstract rights they enjoy, they are almost equals; they choose each other more freely than before, they can separate much more easily, especially in America, where divorce is commonplace; there is less difference in age and culture between spouses than previously; the husband more easily acknowledges the autonomy of his wife's claims; they might even share housework equally...Many young couples give the impression of perfect equality. (Beauvoir, 521)

More than a representation of perfect marital bliss, the Bonner's marriage is a depiction of a functional kind of equality, and it is at least a partially honest one since it also highlights the difficulties of married life. Adam and Amanda share the same educational background and profession. The home movie they show their guests earlier in the film features them engaging in tennis and other sports together. They do, as Beauvoir suggests, give the notion of perfect equality. However, as Shumway (1991) argues, the film ultimately does affirm the patriarchal status quo (Shumway, 18), but it also provides a critique of the ideal of sexual equality itself.

As Amanda enjoys more and more success in court, relations between her and Adam become increasingly strained. As the two unwind after yet another day of legal drama, Amanda playfully spanks Adam after giving him a massage. However, when Adam finishes Amanda's massage by spanking her as well, she is horrified and accuses him of "really meaning it." Beauvoir writes, "Logic in masculine hands is often violence," (Beauvoir, 498) and Amanda makes the same accusation against Adam: "I'm not so sure I care to expose myself to typical instinctive masculine brutality," she rages. After Adam

finally admits that he is "sore" at Amanda and ashamed of her for "shaking the law by the tail," Amanda begins to cry. Adam replies with what amounts to a parallel criticism of a "typical" feminine response to conflict:

> Here we go again, the old juice. Guaranteed heart-melter. A few female tears, stronger than any acid. But this time it won't work. You can cry from now until the time when the jury comes in, and it won't make you right. And it won't win you that silly case. (*Adam's Rib*, 1949)

Adam's speech only enrages Amanda further, and she kicks him in the shin, yelling "Let's all be manly!" Coupled with her earlier use of sexuality to gain an edge in court, this scene seems to suggest that, despite her professed commitment to the ideal of equality, Amanda is willing to rely upon traditional notions of gender when it suits her.

The next day in court, Amanda submits into evidence several female witnesses who boast of considerable professional, intellectual, and physical achievements in order to demonstrate that women are equal to men in every respect. The demonstration culminates in Amanda instructing one of the witnesses to bodily lift Adam off the ground to prove her strength, humiliating him and securing a front-page photo of the incident in the newspaper. Later that evening, Adam accuses Amanda of having contempt not only for the law, but also for the institution of marriage itself. In a speech that makes his views on marriage explicitly clear, Adam tells Amanda,

> I've done it all the way I said I would. In sickness and health, richer or poorer, better or worse, but this is too worse. This is basic. I'm old-fashioned. I like two sexes. And another thing, all of a sudden I don't like being married to what is known as a 'new woman.' I want a wife, not a competitor. If you want to be a big he-woman, go on and do it, but not with me. (*Adam's Rib*, 1949)

Despite her earlier condemnation of “typical instinctive masculine brutality,” Amanda responds to Adam’s speech by physically shoving him, and he angrily leaves their home, marking the beginning of the couple’s estrangement.

Though the Bonners’ relationship may appear to be one of perfect equality on the surface, Adam’s speech demonstrates that it is indeed an illusion since for him it is rooted in traditional notions of a wife’s role. Amanda has committed a transgression by assuming the role of a serious competitor, and Adam considers the “new woman” to be unfeminine, as his choice of the term “he-woman” indicates. The scene reveals that Amanda and Adam are both working from a double standard of equality, and each believe that exceptions apply within the context of marriage, although they disagree on which exceptions, and when.

In the final day of court proceedings, Amanda triumphs over Adam when the jury returns a “not guilty” verdict for Doris Attinger. However, though Amanda has won the case, the tension between her and Adam indicates that it might have cost her their marriage. Later that evening, while Amanda is visiting Kip, the flirtatious neighbor, she is clearly too preoccupied with thoughts of Adam to even acknowledge Kip’s amorous advances. While at Kip’s apartment, Amanda delivers a monologue in which she describes her specific beliefs concerning sexual equality and its relationship to marriage:

> I may be wrong about much, about plenty, but about this...about marriage, what it’s supposed to be, what makes it work or perfect. Balance, equality, mutual everything. There’s no room in marriage for what used to be known as the ‘little’ woman. She’s got to be as big as the man is. Sharing, that’s what it takes to make a marriage, keep a marriage from getting sick from all the duties and responsibilities...and trouble. Listen, no part of marriage is the exclusive province of any one sex. Now why can’t he see that? (*Adam’s Rib*, 1949)

Amanda's speech again highlights the film's honest portrayal of the conflicts that characterize married life.

Beauvoir writes, "No one dreams of denying the tragedies and nastiness of married life; but advocates of marriage defend the idea that spouses' conflicts arise out of the bad faith of individuals and not out of the institution's" (Beauvoir, 506). Amanda fully acknowledges the problems that accompany married life, and the solution she proposes is the same as Beauvoir's: only by basing marriage on equality can both individual marriages and the institution itself hope to survive. Following Amanda's speech, however, the viewer is again reminded that, despite her passionate arguments concerning the need for sexual equality, Amanda herself is guilty of holding double standards.

Brandishing a gun, Adam bursts through the door as Kip is once again attempting to embrace Amanda. Kip panics and cowers behind her, but Amanda boldly tells Adam he has "no right" to threaten them in such a way. This spells victory for Adam, who replies, "No matter what you *think* you think, you think the same as me. No one has the right to break the law." Amanda may have won a symbolic victory in court, but Adam has won a practical victory in demonstrating that she shares his beliefs regardless of her statements to the contrary. Adam "knows best" after all, and though Shumway (1991) argues that the patriarchal status quo is reaffirmed when Adam is awarded a judgeship in the closing scenes of the film (18), the true victory occurs when his threat of violence—the very same threat made by Doris Attinger against her husband and his mistress—forces Amanda to agree with him. Unlike Doris Attinger, however, Adam's actions do not evoke sympathy, but he is saved from condemnation by the audience and eventually Amanda herself when he reveals that the gun he wields is actually made of black licorice.

Though the candy gun provides both comic relief and an affirmation that Adam's character is essentially "good," Amanda is understandably furious about his deceptive and frightening stunt, and the audience is left to wonder whether the relationship can ever be repaired. Adam, however, has one more trick up his sleeve. In the next scene, Amanda and Adam are at their accountant's office discussing tax deductions for the year. Amanda is distant, and the atmosphere is strained. However, when Adam turns to the window and begins to cry, Amanda immediately abandons her grudge and rushes to comfort him.

The couple heads to their farm in the country for rest and repair, and in the final scenes of the film, Amanda is once again trying on the hat Adam gave her and that Doris Attinger wore during the trial when Adam reveals his last and perhaps best trick. To Amanda's disbelief, Adam demonstrates that he too can cry if he chooses, and reminds her that his tears are what ultimately won her back. The irony of his use of tears as a strategy is clear when compared with his earlier speech about "a few female tears, stronger than any acid." When Amanda asks him what he has proved, Adam replies, "It shows the score."

Adam's tears are the final demonstration that the couple's marriage exemplifies egalitarianism. Beauvoir writes, "One often speaks of the naïve and loyal man's disillusionment in the face of feminine perfidy . . . man criticizes women for their duplicity, but he must be very complacent to let himself be duped with so much constancy" (Beauvoir, 512). Adam has made it clear that a marriage based on equality means that "feminine duplicity" must be an acceptable tool for him to use as well, so that neither "masculine brutality" nor "feminine tears" come under the "exclusive province of any one sex." "There is no difference between the sexes. Men, women, the same,"

Amanda exclaims after Adam's tearful performance, though she adds, "Well, maybe there is a difference, but it's a little difference." Adam replies, "Well, you know what the French say...*Vive la difference*." Amanda asks the meaning of the phrase, which Adam translates as "Hooray for that little difference," and the film concludes with the couple retiring to bed together.

Cavelle (1981) argues that Amanda not knowing what the French words mean is inconceivable, and that what she is actually asking is "what difference is meant by that little difference" (122). According to Cavelle, *Adam's Rib* is the most explicit example of what he terms a "comedy of equality." He writes, "A working title for this structure might be 'the comedy of equality,' evoking laughter at the idea that men and women are different *and* at the idea that they are not" (Cavelle, 122). However, the conclusion the film seems to offer is that a "little difference" is necessary in order for marriage to operate smoothly.

Adam's earlier insistence that he is old-fashioned and likes two sexes, and Amanda's ambivalence when she states that men and women are really the same seem to suggest that neither would be happy without at least a little bit of typically masculine and typically feminine behaviors. Whether these behaviors are manufactured or innate, the film seems to suggest that they are necessary for a happy marriage, and although they can be utilized effectively by either husband or wife, the relationship is much more secure and navigable when both stick to their prescribed roles. Thus, Amanda Bonner remains a happily married woman in an (almost) equal relationship.

CHAPTER IV

LESBIANS? LUCY BERLINER, SYDNEY, AND AMY JOLLY

Lucy Berliner and Sydney

Beauvoir's chapter "The Lesbian" provokes mixed reactions for a number of reasons. Altman (2007) writes,

> Many U.S. lesbian feminists have found Beauvoir's lesbian chapter problematic since the 1970s: it provides no 'positive role models,' contains stereotypes, includes biologistic explanations, and appears to rely on problematic authorities, such as the discredited and rather bizarre early Freudian sexologist Wilhelm Stekel, author of the international bestseller *The Frigid Woman*. (Altman, 209)

Altman (2009) also notes, "I also had a deep suspicion of seeing lesbians marshaled as symbols in the texts of straight women" (Altman, 209). However, Altman's statement immediately raises a question of which Altman herself is aware: Was Beauvoir really a "straight" woman? Did she not, in fact, have sexual relationships with women such as her lover and adopted daughter Sylvie Le Bon (Simons, 1992)? Is the desire to affix an "accurate" label to Beauvoir's own sexuality in order to frame her analyses in "The Lesbian" not significant in its own right?

Noting these and other questions concerning Beauvoir's own sexual relationships and preferences, Altman (2009) concludes,

> What else can one reasonably say?—that she had a number of very important loving relationships with women early and late in life, which may or may not have been sexual; that she had sexual contact with women, at least through the early1940s, in ways that may or may not have been loving; that she never said she was a lesbian; and that she had her homophobic moments—like most people. (Altman, 211)

Butler (1990) is also acutely aware of the problems that surround the question of what it means to theorize as a lesbian and, more fundamentally, what it means to "be" a lesbian at all when referring to one's own identity in whole or in part (Butler, 120).

Explaining how "gayness" requires both production and performance, Butler (1990) writes,

> When I spoke at the conference on homosexuality in 1989, I found myself telling my friends beforehand that I was off to Yale to be a lesbian, which of course didn't mean that I wasn't one before, but that somehow then, as I spoke in that context, I *was* one in some more thorough and totalizing way . . . When and where does my being a lesbian come into play, when and where does this playing a lesbian constitute something like what I am? (Butler, 124-125)

These questions about what it means to categorize the sexuality of any individual, whether fictional or "real," apply when attempting to pin the identity of "lesbian" on the main characters of the film *High Art*, director and writer Lisa Cholodenko's first feature film. The lesbian element in *High Art* is not intended to be the main focus of the film, as Cholodenko herself states in an interview with Earls (1998): "I think there's certainly a lesbian element to it, and there's certainly a central lesbian relationship, but I specifically wrote it to be much more complex than that" (Earls, 28).

High Art (the name of the film is an allusion to the prominent role of the drug heroin in the plot) is indeed more complex than a film about lesbian identity politics. Sydney or "Syd" (Radha Mitchell) is an assistant editor for the tragically hip photography magazine *Frame*. Despite her title and her degree in critical theory, however, Syd is treated as more of an errand girl who is responsible for tasks such as bringing her supervising editor Harry (David Thornton) coffee and scones. The way Syd is treated at work is a point of contention between her and her live-in boyfriend James (Gabriel Mann), who complains

that she is bullied and scolds her for not standing up for herself. “The only one bullying me is you,” Syd replies gently (*High Art*, 1998).

Syd’s lackluster routine is immediately contrasted with the life of Lucy Berliner (Ally Sheedy). The next scene is of Lucy’s girlfriend Greta, a German actress discovered by Rainer Werner Fassbinder, snorting heroin in the bathroom of a restaurant. When she joins Lucy again at their table and is so high she has difficulty speaking clearly, Lucy is not pleased. “I thought you said you weren’t going to bring that here,” Lucy exclaims, and her irritation is evident (*High Art*, 1998). Each of these women is the polar opposite of stereotypical notions of “butch” lesbians. Beauvoir writes,

> People are always ready to see the lesbian as wearing a felt hat, her hair short, and a necktie; her mannishness is seen as an abnormality indicating a hormonal imbalance. Nothing could be more erroneous that this confusion of the homosexual and virago. There are many homosexual women among odalisques, courtesans, and the most deliberately ‘feminine’ women. (Beauvoir, 417)

Syd is young, blonde, fresh-faced, feminine, and beautiful. Both Greta and Lucy are older than Syd, but although Greta’s beauty is muted by her constant state of heroin-induced stupor, she is also feminine, stylish, and beautiful, as is the more androgynously dressed Lucy. Despite their beauty and femininity, however, none of the three women convey the vampish and overtly sexualized stereotype of what Bell, Binnie, Cream, and Valentine (1994) identify as “lipstick” lesbians.

Syd’s romantic relationship with a man also makes it difficult to classify her according to lesbian stereotypes. According to Beauvoir, “The lesbian is characterized simply by her refusal of the male and her preference for feminine flesh” (Beauvoir, 419). Syd, however, is characterized by her seemingly ordinary (even boring) life that consists of by mundane problems and activities. As Syd reads in the bathtub, she notices the

ceiling of her bathroom has begun to leak, and after unsuccessfully trying to contact the landlord, she goes to her upstairs neighbor's apartment in hopes of finding the source of the problem. Instead, she finds Lucy and Greta, who are both snorting heroin in their living room when Syd knocks on their door.

When Lucy answers the door and tells Syd that no one in the apartment has taken a bath recently, Syd is clearly taken aback by the oddness of her reply, but she immediately forgets that something seems amiss when she becomes entranced by the photographs covering Lucy's walls especially when she learns that Lucy herself has taken them. Syd returns to her own apartment and recounts her experience to a disinterested James, and receives a similar response when she attempts to tell Harry about Lucy's photographs at work. When she mentions that she knows of a photographer the magazine might be interested in, Harry flippantly replies, "What's his name?" However, he agrees to look at Lucy's work and instructs Syd to bring in a sample.

Syd's relationships with both James and Harry, the only two men she consistently interacts with throughout the film, seem tedious and unsatisfying. Both men seem to subtly treat her as a subordinate, and neither seems to take her opinions seriously. Their attitudes stand in contrast to Lucy's, who seems to genuinely appreciate Syd's analysis of her photographic style when she again uses the excuse of the leaky ceiling to return to Lucy's apartment. Harry and James both seem more aggressive than Syd, who seems to passively (though wearily) accept their behavior with an attitude that borders on meekness.

Passivity is a character trait that Lucy's own mother criticizes her of displaying, although it is clear that she uses it as a code for Lucy's lesbianism. In a scene in which

Lucy confronts her mother about her large credit card bill, her mother scolds her for being "passive" and failing to uphold the responsibility of carrying on the family name. Beauvoir writes,

> According to Jones and Hesnard, lesbians mostly fall into two categories: 'masculine lesbians,' who 'try to act like men,' and 'feminine' ones, who 'are afraid of men.' It is a fact that one can, on the whole observe two tendencies in homosexual women; some refuse passivity, while others choose to lose themselves passively in feminine arms; but these two attitudes react upon each other reciprocally . . . For numerous reasons, as we shall see, the distinction given seems quite arbitrary. (Beauvoir, 420)

As I have demonstrated in the previous chapters, Beauvoir argues that woman, whatever her choice of sexual object, is always constructed as immanent, passive, and inert. Though it comes from her clearly old-fashioned mother, the suggestion that Lucy's lesbianism is a result of passivity is a common one. The scene also reveals Lucy's mother's disapproval of Greta, and that Lucy comes from an extremely wealthy family. "I'm not worried," her mother replies to Lucy's questions about the credit card bill. Though Lucy and Syd may share passivity in common, the exchange between Lucy and her mother seems to suggest that the comparison ends there. The two come from different worlds, though they share their present location in common.

Minutes before Syd knocks on Lucy's door for the second time, Lucy and Greta are once again snorting heroin. The two begin to engage in hazy and passionate foreplay, which Syd interrupts when she knocks on the door. Though Lucy is clearly pleased to see Syd again, Greta's irritation is evident. When she introduces herself to Syd, she tells her, "I'm Greta. I live for Lucy. I mean, I live here with Lucy" (*High Art*, 1998). Greta's statement, which she thinly disguises as a momentary lapse in her English skills, is clearly intentional. Greta is both jealous of Syd and suspicious of her interest in Lucy,

fearing that she only wants to use Lucy as a means to furthering her own career. According to Beauvoir, ". . . the woman who regards herself as object sees herself and her fellow creatures as prey" (Beauvoir, 419), and Greta certainly seems to regard Lucy as such. However, Lucy does not share Greta's suspicion, and she gives Syd a book of her photography to show her superiors at *Frame*, although she warns her that the book is "really old."

When Syd shows the book of Lucy's photos to Harry and executive editor Dominique, she discovers that Lucy's world was once very different indeed. Dominique explains that ten years previously, Lucy was extremely well-known in the art world but abruptly withdrew herself from it and fled New York for Germany without any apparent reason. "A real 'fuck you' to everyone who helped her come up. You know, that was it—no explanations, nothing," Dominique explains. When Dominique demands to know why she was not informed that Lucy had returned to New York, Harry replies as though Syd had failed to tell him, making her appear incompetent. Nevertheless, Syd promises to set up a lunch date with Lucy, Dominique, and Harry in order to offer her the cover of *Frame.*

The information Syd discovers about Lucy's past only serves to make Lucy appear even more fascinating and enigmatic. After sending James off by himself to spend the evening with friends the two of them had planned to meet, Syd once again returns to Lucy's apartment. Several of Lucy's and Greta's friends are also there, and everyone is getting high in the living room. Syd accepts a line of heroin though it is clear she has never done the drug before, raising the question of just how far she might go in order to convince Lucy to shoot the cover of the magazine. Syd returns home and attempts to

initiate sex with the sleeping James, who is furious when he discovers that she has done heroin. “Is that what’s so fascinating upstairs?” he asks, and Syd responds by telling him he is being “uptight.”

Comparing lesbians’ treatment of women with that of men’s, Beauvoir writes, “They detest their power over women, they detest the ‘soiling’ to which they subject women” (Beauvoir, 435). Beauvoir’s observation clearly does not apply to Lucy, however, who seems to relish initiating the younger, more naïve Syd into her world of heroin chic and the bohemian lifestyle. When Syd returns to Lucy’s apartment the next day to convince Lucy to meet with Dominique and Harry, she finally hears Lucy’s explanation for abruptly ending her career as a photographer. “I stopped working ten years ago. It was kind of a mental health decision. Actually, no, it wasn’t a decision. I just made it impossible for myself to continue,” Lucy tells her (*High Art*, 1998). Lucy also claims she could not tolerate having her work “pigeonholed” by the industry.

Though Lucy is reluctant at first, again explaining that she no longer does “industry work,” Syd eventually convinces her to meet with Harry and Dominique. Lucy playfully asks Syd if she can take pictures of her, an idea Syd dismisses without much consideration. During the lunch with Harry and Dominique, however, Lucy states that she will only agree to shoot the cover if Syd can be her personal editor. Lucy’s motives for requesting Syd as her editor are clear to the viewer. She is both attracted to and fascinated by her. However, it is clear that Dominique and Harry interpret Lucy’s request as orchestrated by Syd in order to further her career at *Frame* despite Syd’s obvious surprise at the situation.

Later in the evening, Syd again makes it clear to James that working with Lucy is not about furthering her own career. James comments that perhaps she will finally get a raise for securing the deal for the cover with Lucy, but Syd explains that "It's not about a raise" (*High Art*, 1998). Though Syd clearly does want to further her career, her interest in Lucy and her art also seems evident. However, even Lucy sees Syd's ambitiousness. Syd once again goes to Lucy's for a party, this time bringing James with her. Leaving James on his own to mingle, Syd wanders off to the bedroom to get high once again with Lucy.

The two are on the bed together, and the atmosphere between them is intimate and sexually charged. "That's a wonderful thing about you—your ambition, your focus, your drive. I really love having that around me again. I didn't know how much I missed it," Lucy tells Syd (*High Art*, 1998). When Syd replies that she "can't believe" Lucy requested Syd for her editor at the lunch appointment, Lucy asks, "That's what you want, isn't it?" Lucy and Syd then share their first kiss, again raising the question of how far Syd will go to make sure that Lucy will follow through with shooting the cover. As previously mentioned, Syd's claims that her interest in Lucy's work is about more than securing a raise seem genuine. However, Syd's decision to do heroin and her willingness to be physically intimate with Lucy raise the question of whether she is only playing a role to get closer to Lucy and gain her trust.

Lucy's and Syd's first kiss is interrupted by Lucy's friend and dealer, who bursts into the bedroom to tell Lucy that Greta has overdosed and is unconscious in the bathtub. Though Syd performs CPR and revives Greta, the minute she regains consciousness, she begins screaming obscenities at Syd and insisting that she leave. When Syd returns home,

her clothes soaked from pulling Greta out of the bathtub to resuscitate her, James demands to know if she had been taking a bath with Lucy. He is angry that Syd abandoned him in a roomful of strangers to spend time with Lucy at the party, and he is also clearly jealous.

James's jealousy is only trumped Greta's. When Lucy confronts Greta about her overdose the night before, Greta deflects her concern and instead complains about Syd, insisting that she is a "sycophant" and a "parasite," and that Lucy is simply blind to her true motives. Beauvoir writes,

> Women among themselves are pitiless; they foil, provoke, chase, attack, and lead each other on to the limits of abjection . . . their patience in endlessly going over criticisms and explanations is insatiable. Demands, recriminations, jealousy, tyranny—all these plagues of conjugal life pour out in heightened form. (Beauvoir, 433)

Though Beauvoir's description above of how women treat other women may be applicable in many instances, Greta's attitude towards Syd is justified. She is, after all, Lucy's partner of several years. She "lives" for her, as she tells Syd earlier in the film. Not only is Syd the "younger woman," she has obviously piqued Lucy's interest, and the two share a bond that Greta and Lucy do not: Lucy's art.

After Lucy's confrontation with Greta, Syd arrives at her apartment to remind her of the deadline for the cover, and is dismayed when Lucy rejects her idea to reserve a room at the Chelsea Hotel in order to begin working on something immediately. "I don't work that way. I don't set things up," Lucy reminds her. Syd becomes even more panicked when Lucy tells her she needs to leave town and head upstate, but when Lucy asks that she come with her, Syd agrees. Syd's willingness to accompany Lucy on what appears to

be a romantic getaway seems to suggest that she would go to any lengths in order to ensure that Lucy completes the cover of the magazine.

When Syd informs James that she is leaving town with Lucy, he demands to know if she is sleeping with her. When she assures him that she is not, he asks if she is "working up to it." James has clearly had enough, and he makes his opinion on Syd's motives clear: "I guess you're really at the center of it all now, aren't you? Got your power job, and your hipster friends, and all that *access*. I mean, this is the real shit. It's just what you wanted," he tells her (*High Art*, 1998). However, Syd once again seems to demonstrate that her fascination with Lucy is about more than furthering her career. Echoing Lucy's feelings on her experience with fame and working in the industry, Syd accuses James of being fixated on "pigeonholing" her and "putting her in a box."

When James demands to know what Syd means by her statement, she defends herself for the first time in a manner that is far from passive:

> It means that no matter what I do, you can't stop telling me it's wrong. I mean, I'm trying to get somewhere, and all I get from you are these slurs about my job, and the people that I've met, and how pretentious and meaningless and idiotic it all is, and you know what? It's not meaningless to me. This is what I care about. What do *you* care about, James? (*High Art*, 1998)

While Syd is delivering her passionate monologue to James, Lucy is in a restaurant with Greta, who is so high that the waitress has warned her that they will be asked to leave if she can't stay awake. It is the breaking point for Lucy, who tells Greta that she can no longer tolerate her addiction, and that she needs to seek help. "Look at *yourself*, Lucy," Greta replies.

The confrontations with both Greta and James set the stage for Lucy's and Syd's trip upstate together. Both of them are now more "free" to pursue each other in the sense of

having dealt with their less that satisfying partners. However, instead of continuing the dynamic of joining in with Lucy when she escapes via heroin, Syd refuses to partake, telling Lucy she does not want the drug to be their only connection. “I don’t want to be with you like that right now,” she says (*High Art*, 1998). Syd’s refusal to get high with Lucy seems to confirm that she has not accompanied her solely for the sake of overseeing the cover project. She wants to remain connected with Lucy rather than escaping into a heroin-induced haze. Once again, Lucy asks Syd if she can photograph her, and it is clear that Syd is uncomfortable with the idea.

Just before the two finally have sex for the first time, Syd tearfully tells Lucy, “I think I’m kind of in love with you” (*High Art*, 1998). Syd’s awkwardness is both touching and endearing. “I don’t really know what I’m doing,” she tells Lucy. Only after they have shared this intimate experience does Syd agree to let Lucy photograph her. Describing the particular character of intimacy between two women, Beauvoir writes,

> Eroticism often has only a very small part in these unions; sexual pleasure has a less striking character, less dizzying than between man and woman, it does not lead to such overwhelming metamorphoses; but when male and female lovers have separated into their individual flesh, they become strangers again . . . between women, carnal tenderness is more equal, continuous, they are not transported in frenetic ecstasy, they never fall into hostile indifference; seeing and touching each other are calm pleasures discreetly prolonging those of the bed. (Beauvoir, 432-433)

Though Syd is agreeing to be Lucy’s subject, she is actually submitting to be object. However, it is a “safe” submission, one that, as Beauvoir states above, will not render her and Lucy strangers even after she has given herself.

Remarking on lesbians who assume what Beauvoir labels a “masculine attitude,” she writes, “What is spontaneous is the conquering and sovereign subject’s shame at the idea of changing into a carnal prey” (Beauvoir, 423). That women are passive prey is, again,

the result of their situation as immanent beings. Of women who adopt masculine attitudes regardless of their sexual orientation, Beauvoir writes,

> Even if she has a good figure and is pretty, the woman who is involved in her own projects or who claims her freedom in general refuses to abdicate in favor of another human being; she recognizes herself in her acts, not in her immanent presence . . . she feels the same disgust for her submissive female companions as the virile man feels for the passive homosexual (Beauvoir, 422-423)

Both Lucy and Syd are involved in their own projects, and both claim their own freedom, though the act of doing so seems much more difficult for Syd. Despite Beauvoir's sometimes questionable terminology and assumptions throughout "The Lesbian," her main argument is that "masculine behavior" is in fact "virile behavior," and that any subjects who posit themselves as transcendent beings will act in a virile manner regardless of their sexual orientation (Beauvoir, 423).

Whether or not "carnal tenderness" is truly more equal between women as Beauvoir claims (Beauvoir, 432-433), the bond Lucy and Syd share is based on more than the bonds they share with Greta and James. Lucy finds Syd's youth and ambition both refreshing and revitalizing, and Syd finds in Lucy someone who exemplifies the talent her life is centered upon as well as someone who can truly understand her passion for the artistic world. However, when the two return to the city, Syd is still left empty-handed, with no completed cover to submit to Dominique and Harry.

Syd arrives home to find a note from James saying he has gone to stay with friends. After Lucy visits her mother again and explains that both her love life and her drug use have become a problem, she goes to Syd's apartment for the first time in the film. Syd confides in her that James will not return her calls, and begs Lucy to give her photos of Greta she had taken in the past in order to meet the deadline and satisfy Dominique and

Harry. Lucy refuses, and instead gives Syd the pictures she took of her during their time together upstate. Syd is completely taken aback: “I’m naked in all of them,” she protests, but whether she is really referring to her naked body, her naked ambition, or her passion for Lucy is unclear.

Lucy finally relents and gives Syd the pictures of Greta to take to Dominique and Harry, although she warns Syd that the pictures of her would be better. “It’s all about you right now,” Lucy tells her, and she is correct. When Syd shows the photos to Dominique and Harry, they are furious with the lack of quality and context and threaten to call off the deal for the cover. In a desperate attempt to salvage the situation, Syd privately shows Dominique the pictures Lucy had taken of her during their time upstate. Dominique demands to know why Syd did not show her the pictures initially, and Syd replies that she did not feel they were “appropriate.”

Dominique also demands to know whether the photos are meant to be a critique by Syd. “It’s not a critique, it’s just what happened,” Syd explains. Dominique then demands to know whether Syd is Lucy’s sitter or her lover. Though Dominique is the executive editor and certainly entitled to know the details of important projects, her insistence on classifying Syd and Lucy’s relationship also seems to echo the theme of labels and pigeonholing. Beauvoir acknowledges that affixing labels to sexuality is often a meaningless task. She writes,

> For all these reasons, it is wrong to establish a radical distinction between heterosexual and homosexual. Once the indecisive tune if adolescence has passed, the normal male no longer allows himself homosexual peccadilloes; but the normal woman often returns to the lovers—platonic or not—that enchanted her youth. (Beauvoir, 431)

Meaningless or not, however, the desire to categorize sexual orientation is overwhelmingly pervasive as the discussion at the beginning of this chapter of Beauvoir's own sexuality indicates.

High Art ends tragically. When Lucy returns from another trip upstate, this time presumably to fully detoxify herself from heroin, she confronts Greta yet again and informs her that she can no longer live with her. Greta begs Lucy to be with her on her own "level" one last time, and the two spend the evening doing heroin together. On her way to work the next morning, Syd encounters a friend of Lucy's who tells her Lucy had died from an overdose hours before. Syd is devastated, and when she arrives at work, the new issue of *Frame* has arrived, featuring her own image on the cover, naked, tousled, and in bed. Syd is exposed not only in the sense that her face is on the cover of the magazine, but also because her motives for her relationship with Lucy are now on display for all to see, and are subject to questions and speculations.

One might be tempted to argue that Syd was not a "real" lesbian. At least, not in the same way Lucy and Greta were "real" lesbians, just as one might argue that Beauvoir herself was not a "real" lesbian. Beauvoir is aware of the absurdity of such classifications, however:

> In truth, homosexuality is no more a deliberate perversion than a fatal curse. It is an attitude that is *chosen in situation;* it is both motivated and freely adopted . . . It is one way among others for woman to solve the problems posed by her condition in general and by her erotic situation in particular. (Beauvoir, 436)

For Beauvoir, all sexuality is "chosen in situation" (Beauvoir, 436). The question of whether sexuality "motivated" or "freely adopted" is nonsensical, because it is always both, regardless of whether the end result falls under the label of a homo or heterosexual

relationship. Syd chooses to love Lucy as a result of her situation, but her love is authentic in that she and Lucy are both subjects. They are true lovers regardless of whether they can be pigeonholed as "true" lesbians.

Amy Jolly

Despite the absurdity of attempting to define what constitutes a "real" lesbian, the character of Amy Jolly (Marlene Dietrich) in *Morocco* (1930) is often read as heterosexual. What sets *Morocco* apart from *High Art* (1998) and the other films discussed in this thesis is that a single provocative scene takes primary importance over all other plot developments with regard to the character of Amy Jolly and lesbianism. The majority of this chapter is an analysis of that scene and a discussion of its various interpretations, as well as representations of homosexuality in general in films released under the Hollywood Production Code.

Amy Jolly is a French singer caught between the amorous attentions of two men, La Bessière (Adolphe Menjou) and Tom Brown (Gary Cooper). La Bessière is a high class, wealthy, and cultured European gentleman, while Tom Brown is a younger man and a Foreign Legionnaire. In the famous drag scene, however, it is Tom who receives Amy's attention, though not until after her famous kiss with the female audience member. Dressed in a top hat and tuxedo, Amy comes down from the stage and into the audience to perform the song. She is smoking a cigarette, and the way she holds it is unmistakably masculine, as is her swagger and the way she hitches up the leg of her tuxedo pants to perch on the rail separating the stage from the rest of the cabaret.

When Amy has finished singing, a man sitting at a table with another couple offers her a glass of champagne. She accepts it, and then strolls around to stand in front of the woman sitting next to him. She drains the glass of champagne, looks at the woman, and then does a sharp double-take, as if the woman's beauty has captivated her. She boldly stares at the woman, who is giggling and flustered by the attention. "May I have this?" Amy asks, removing a flower from behind the woman's ear. "Of course," the woman replies. Amy smells the flower, then lifts the woman's chin and kisses her square on the mouth while the woman's companions and the rest of the audience in the cabaret laugh uproariously. Amy flicks the brim of her top hat in a roguish mock salute, another bold and masculine gesture, then strolls over to Tom, who stands up to applaud her. She tosses him the flower much to the annoyance of his female companion, then swaggers back up to the stage, her hands in her pants pockets.

Though, as previously mentioned, the rest of *Morocco's* (1930) plot centers around Amy deciding between the affections of La Bessière and Tom Brown, this one iconic scene is the subject of wealth of scholarship dealing with what appear to be allusions to homosexuality in movies subjected to the censorship of the Hollywood Production Code. Though the sex scenes featuring Lucy, Greta, and Syd in *High Art* (1998) are by no means gratuitous, such obvious depictions of homosexuality were clearly prohibited in movies subject to the Production Code because they constituted "deviant behavior."

Though the Production Code has not been in effect since 1960, Jenkins (2005) points out that obvious portrayals of lesbian sexuality are still a relatively new phenomenon in movies and a variety of other media:

> In the last eight years, however, lesbian sexuality has become more explicitly manifest in mainstream film, and since the debut of the August 1993 issue of *Vanity Fair*, which features Cindy Crawford erotically shaving country singer k.d. lang, several critics have marked a trend in popular culture that promotes the idea that 'lesbian sexuality is hot.' (Jenkins, 491)

Recent popular culture may reflect a trend towards promoting lesbian sexuality as "hot" rather than an unacceptable manifestation of deviant behavior, Amy Jolly's drag performance seems to suggest that hints of lesbianism have been used to titillate movie audiences for decades.

In addition to the regulatory force of the Production Code and its prohibitions against blatant depictions of homosexuality, Wilton (1995) argues that lesbian sexuality had to remain invisible because the success of Hollywood stars such as Dietrich depended on their image as straight sex symbols. Citing Wilton (1995), Jenkins (2005) writes,

> Wilton posits that despite the odd cinematic lesbian moments, such as when Greta Garbo kisses her maid servant in *Queen Christina* or Marlene Dietrich kisses a female night clubber in *Morocco*, lesbian sexuality in the starlet era has remained invisible primarily because the actresses who comprise the pantheon of early Hollywood goddesses were conferred their immortality precisely as heterosexual icons. (Jenkins, 491).

Russo (1987), however, argues that Hollywood allows for many incarnations of "real" women, but only one type of "real" man is permissible, and that the famous drag scene in *Morocco* (1930) only serves to enhance the image of Gary Cooper's masculinity:

> There could be all kinds of women who were considered 'real' women, to be manipulated sexually for maximum fantasy appeal to men, but there could be only one kind of real man, with no deviation allowed. In *Morocco*, Dietrich's intentions are clearly heterosexual; the brief hunt of lesbianism she exhibits serves only to make her more exotic, to whet Gary Cooper's appetite for her and to further challenge his maleness. (Russo, 14)

Russo (1987) also notes that, although the Hollywood Production Code was in effect when *Morocco* was released, representations of homosexuality are still present in films

made during the Code years, although they are often couched in other imagery (Russo, 30).

Beauvoir also notes that only one kind of "real man" is permissible as evident in cultural attitudes toward homosexual men: "The homosexual man inspires hostility from male and female heterosexuals as they both demand that man be a dominating subject; by contrast, both sexes spontaneously view lesbians with indulgence" (Beauvoir, 419). She provides an example of the intolerance of homosexual men in a juridical context, noting that "English law punishes homosexuality in men while not considering it a crime for women" (Beauvoir, 420n), though English law would decriminalize homosexuality in 1967 (Weeks, 1980), nearly twenty years after the first edition of *The Second Sex* was published.

Russo's (1987) analysis of Amy's lesbian performance as a titillating test of Tom Brown's masculinity also seems to resemble Beauvoir's discussion of what she terms "show-off zealots" (Beauvoir, 435). Despite Beauvoir's assertion that it is wrong to draw sharp distinctions between heterosexuality and homosexuality as cited in the previous section, she nevertheless delivers a scathing criticism of women she appears to consider faux-lesbians:

> It must be added that many women only declare themselves homosexual out of self-interest: they adopt equivocal appearances with exaggerated consciousness, hoping to catch men who like 'perverts.' These show-off zealots—who are obviously those one notices most—contribute to throwing discredit on what public opinion considers a vice and a pose. (Beauvoir, 435)

As much as Amy's drag performance can be considered just that—a performance—Beauvoir's accusation of adopting the guise of the lesbian in a self-interested attempt to attract men seems to apply. Yet, in the above quote, Beauvoir also notes that such a guise

"discredits" the public stance on lesbianism as intolerable deviance, and the favorable reception of Amy Jolly's performance seems to as well.

Smelik (1999) demonstrates that, regardless of the remainder of *Morocco's* (1930) plot, Amy Jolly's performance can still be received as homoerotic and enjoyed by lesbian spectators:

> Amy Jolly inverts the heterosexual order of seducer and seduced, while her lesbian flirtation and her butch image make the scene even more subversive. However fleeting and transitory such moments may be in classical cinema, Dietrich's star persona allows the lesbian spectator a glimpse of homoerotic enjoyment. (Smelik, 362)

However, as Russo (1987) demonstrates, no parallel dynamic seems to exist for depictions of male homosexuality in popular Hollywood film. Though some imagery such as male cross-dressing seems to clearly convey male homosexuality, the associations are almost never positive (Russo, 31).

In addition to cross-dressing, Russo (1987) points out other more subtle representations during the pre-Code years:

> But while censorship laws were becoming more specific and explicit homosexuality remained a forbidden subject in every statute, it was clear that cross dressing, weakness in men and overintellectualism were sometimes direct statements about deviant sexuality. And whether expressed directly or not, the classic definition of homosexual men as frivolous, asexual sissies was firmly established during the last of the pre-Code years. (Russo, 31)

Russo (1987) also notes that negative public sentiment concerning lesbianism was also a common public sentiment, such as the use of the term "disgusting perverts" by a film critic for a 1926 issue of *Photoplay* in reference to the "vaguely lesbian" spy featured in Rex Ingram's *Mare Nostrum* (Russo, 30). Again, however, as Beauvoir and other previously cited authors argue, such negative sentiments regarding homosexuality are at

odds with actual behavior, including the favorable reception of Amy Jolly's drag performance by audiences both past and present.

Given the many readings of Amy Jolly's drag performance discussed in this section, the question of whether or not she is a "true" lesbian is much more difficult since, as Smelik (1999) observes, the sexuality of the spectator is often more significant than the plot of a movie itself (Smelik, 362). In her discussion of drag, Butler (1990) writes,

> I do not mean to suggest that drag is a 'role' that can be taken on or taken off at will. There is no volitional subject behind the mime who decides, as it were, which gender it will be today . . . In this sense, gender is not a performance that a prior subject elects to do, but gender is performative in the sense that it constitutes as an effect the very subject it appears to express. (Butler, 130)

In other words, Amy Jolly's drag performance is no more or less genuine than the role she performs when conveying her "real" sexuality. All gender is a performance according to Butler, and one that produces an illusion of authenticity only through the act of repetition.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Each of the female characters discussed in this thesis display characteristics of what Beauvoir refers to as woman's immanence. From Bella Swan, who acts as a mediator between the worlds of fleshly immanence and pure masculine transcendence for her vampire boyfriend, to Amy Jolly, whose drag performance serves to make her more appealing to Tom Brown and spectators of any sexual orientation, Beauvoir's analyses of women's situations and characters are reflected in these Hollywood creations.

Though the films discussed only represent a tiny sampling of movies produced both during and after the Hollywood Production Code, finding characters in popular Hollywood cinema that *do not* echo Beauvoir's analyses of woman's immanence is a difficult task. Beauvoir takes the intertexual approach of constructing the figure of woman by synthesizing images from history, biology, mythology, literature, and psychoanalysis, all of which influence the filmic history of women as well. Smelik (1999) notes,

> Such fixed and endlessly repeated images of women were considered to be objectionable distortions which would have a negative impact on the female spectator. Hence, the call for positive images of women in cinema. Soon, however, the insight dawned that positive images were not enough to change underlying structures in film. (Smelik, 353)

The above quote from Smelik neatly summarizes what Beauvoir so painstakingly demonstrates in *The Second Sex,* and what the analyses of female characters in this thesis

reveals: the idea of woman is a construction woven from an all-pervasive framework that posits women as immanent being in both film and in actual lived experience.

As mentioned in the Method section, the fourth step of CDA involves analyzing the contradictions present in Beauvoir's discourse on woman as immanence. However, Smelik (1999) points out that a feminist analysis of film must acknowledge a theoretical contradiction of feminism itself:

> We witness a theoretical contradiction of feminism here: while feminists need to deconstruct the patriarchal images and representations of 'Woman', they historically need to establish their female subjectivity at the same time. That is to say, they have to find out and redefine what it means to be a woman. A relentless formalism may be too much of a one-sided approach to the complex enterprise of (re)constructing the female subject. (Smelik, 354)

Smelik's (1999) acknowledgement of the theoretical contradiction of feminism echoes Beauvoir's statement in the Introduction in which she explains that the first thing she realized she must do in order to speak about herself is to declare that she is in fact a woman, and then to define what it means to make such a declaration, which is the purpose of *The Second Sex* itself.

Feminism has achieved significant victories since Beauvoir wrote *The Second Sex*, yet one need look no further than the following quote to see that negative notions of femininity still pervade representations of women in a variety of cultural forms:

> We can now understand why, from ancient Greece to today, there are so many common features in the indictments against woman; her condition has remained the same throughout superficial changes, and this condition defines what is called the woman's 'character': she 'wallows in immanence,' she is argumentative, she is cautious and petty, she does not have the sense either of truth or of accuracy, she lacks morality, she is vulgarly self-serving, selfish, she is a liar and an actress. There is some truth is all these affirmations. (Beauvoir, 638)

Given Beauvoir's description of women's character in the above quote, it is not surprising that in an interview with Beauvoir, Brison (2003) notes that, despite Beauvoir's exhaustive analysis of women's situation as immanent beings, positive conceptions of femininity are scarce in *The Second Sex* (Brison, 189).

Brison (2003) repeats a question Beauvoir herself posed to Sartre, which Brison (2003) feels he avoided: "Should women reject the masculine universe or should they find themselves a place in it?" (Brison, 189) Beauvoir replies,

> I think feminists, at least those I'm involved with, want to change not only women's situation but also the world. That is, these are women who would like to see a certain dismantling of society and who think that if feminism were victorious, if the oppression of women were completely eliminated, well, society would be shaken to its foundation . . . So, it's a matter not of women taking men's place in this world, but of their being emancipated in such a way as to simultaneously change this world. (Brison, 189)

So for Beauvoir, nothing short of the complete restructuring of society is necessary in order for women to exist as transcendent subjects. Simply assuming men's place is to live inauthentically as well, since men fail to acknowledge their own immanence according to Beauvoir (Beauvoir, 16). Beauvoir's analyses of women's situations and characters in *The Second Sex* apply to representations of women in nearly any medium precisely because the category of woman is multi-layered and all-encompassing. On using the existing tools of the "masculine universe" such as psychoanalysis, science, and a variety of other male-dominated fields, Beauvoir states, "You can, indeed, steal the tools and use them, but you have to use them carefully and, for that matter, nothing prevents you from changing at the same time" (Brison, 2003).

Brison (2003) also questions Beauvoir about another inquiry she posed to Sartre concerning certain positive characteristics traditionally associated with femininity:

> It seems to me that there are also certain traditionally feminine features that ought to be preserved in both men and women, as you yourself say to Sartre: 'If we consider ourselves as possessing certain positive qualities, isn't it better to convey them to men rather than suppress them in women?' I wonder what qualities you have in mind. (Brison, 191)

In her response to Brison's question, Beauvoir makes a number of compelling claims concerning qualities of women that appear in her analyses in *The Second Sex* and that also appear in my own analysis of the characters discussed in this thesis.

Demonstrating that situation above all else dictates the positive or negative aspects of any characteristics for Beauvoir, she replies,

> Precisely because they don't generally have power, women don't have the flaws that are linked to the possession of power . . . Women have more irony, more detachment, more simplicity. They play fewer roles, wear fewer masks . . . There are also qualities of devotion. Devotion is very dangerous because it can become a way of life and can devour people sometimes, but it has its good sides . . . There is often, in women, a kind of caring for others that is inculcated in them by education, and which should be eliminated when it takes the form of slavery. (Brison, 191)

Devotion and caring for others is a wonderful thing according to Beauvoir, but as a way of life it can also consume women as the chapter "The Married Woman" and my analysis of Barbara Rose demonstrate. Outside of the situations Beauvoir describes in *The Second Sex*, however, caring and devotion are traits that both sexes should reflect. Beauvoir states, "But caring about others, the ability to give to others, to give of your time, your intelligence—this is something women should keep, and something that men should learn to acquire" (Brison, 191).

Like positive conceptions of femininity, examples of how women can navigate romantic relationships without succumbing to the situations Beauvoir describes in *The Second Sex are* also scarce. Beauvoir's analysis of the woman in love presents many examples of how, in deifying the man to which she gives herself wholly, woman seeks to

return to the childhood state of protection where all decisions are made for her, and she is shielded from the risks of living itself. The fate of the woman in love is bleak; for woman, love is not, in Beauvoir's terms, an intermediary between self and self, but rather a prison of solitude, an acceptance of her existence as forever immanent and dependent (Beauvoir, 707). Love between men and women is also doomed to the same failure as marriage because it envelopes the general in the particular, just as the titles of "husband" and "wife" function to do the same (Beauvoir, 699).

A prescription for how men must conduct themselves in order to love authentically is also largely absent from "The Woman in Love" chapter. Beauvoir clearly states that she believes Gusdorf is wrong in his assertion that men represent an indispensable intermediary for women in the same way women do for men (Beauvoir, 707). According to Beauvoir, men remain themselves even as they are revealed in the guise of another, and woman can only do the same if she exists for-herself rather than for-other (Beauvoir, 707). Beauvoir appears to believe that men set the standard for equal love, but if this is true, it is not clear how it can be reconciled with Beauvoir's arguments concerning the inauthentic life of men in which their immanence is only ever acknowledged through the intermediary of woman.

What Happens Next?

Though Beauvoir's descriptions of the consequences for the woman in love are extensive, as is her painstaking demonstration of both women and men's complicity in perpetuating the mentality that cements their inability to love each other authentically, she offers only glimpses of what a route of emancipatory change would entail. In

accordance with the fifth step of CDA, the following is an analysis of Beauvoir's attempts to elucidate how widespread social change might occur with regard to women's emancipation from the permanent realm of immanence.

Only twice in "The Woman in Love" does Beauvoir offer a positive description of the conditions necessary for authentic love to exist between men and women. First, she writes, "An authentic love should take on the other's contingence, that is, his lacks, limitations, and originary gratuitousness; it would claim to be not a salvation but an inter-human relation" (Beauvoir, 694).

Beauvoir's second description of an authentic love is slightly more extensive:

> Authentic love must be founded on reciprocal recognition of two freedoms; each lover would then experience himself as himself and as the other; neither would abdicate his transcendence, they would not mutilate themselves; together they would both reveal values and ends in the world. For each of them, love would be the revelation of self through the gift of self and the enrichment of the universe. (Beauvoir, 706)

Beauvoir also offers examples of women who do not suffer for the "generous mistake" of putting themselves entirely in another's hands, such as the literary heroines of Heloise and Colette. In running the abbey, Heloise has constructed what Beauvoir terms an "autonomous existence" (Beauvoir, 706). Colette's heroines have "too much pride and too many resources" to fall to pieces as a result of failed love (Beauvoir, 706).

In Beauvoir's descriptions of women who suffer for putting themselves complete in another's hands, material conditions that enable self-sufficiency are necessary in order for women to love authentically and to avoid becoming broken when love goes awry. However, despite significant gains won by feminists with regard to women's ability to sustain themselves financially, contemporary examples of female characters who suffer

annihilation of the self when love fails them are still present, such as Bella Swan. In *New Moon* (2006), the second book of the *Twilight* series, Edward becomes convinced that he must leave Forks in order to keep Bella safe from other vampires. Bella falls into a deep depression, during which the character Jacob Black cares for her. The tragically romantic notion of a woman who is falls apart without her man is clearly alive and well, as is the idea that only another man can take his place to protect and care for her.

Though "happily ever after" is a trope that thrives in many genres of popular Hollywood film and a variety of other media, Beauvoir is deeply suspicious of what happiness actually means in the context of women's situations:

> The joy that is a surge of freedom is reserved for the man; what the woman knows is an impression of a smiling plenitude. One understands that simple ataraxia, in her eyes, can be of utmost importance, as she normally lives in the tension of denial, recrimination, and demands . . . But it is a delusion to try to find here the true definition of the hidden soul of the world. Good *is* not; the world is not harmony, and no individual has a necessary place in it. (Beauvoir, 658)

When the heroine of a plot lives "happily ever after," when she walks off into the sunset, hand-in-hand with the man of her dreams, this "simple ataraxia" (Beauvoir, 658) is the answer to the question, "What happens next?"

In Bella Swan's case, what happens next is permanent access to Edward's world of pure transcendence. In *Breaking Dawn* (2008), the final book in the *Twilight* series, Bella and Edward marry. She becomes pregnant, and during the birth of their half-human, half-vampire child, Bella sustains massive blood loss and injuries, the most severe of which is a broken spine that would claim her life. Edward transforms her into a vampire in order to "save" her once again, but now she is immortal as Edward himself is, forever liberated from the realm of immanence. She has earned her place in Edward's masculine world of

transcendence by fulfilling every role assigned to her in the feminine world of immanence: she has given herself to him as a wife, given herself to him sexually, and given him a child.

In Barbara Rose's case, what happens next is an existential crisis followed by a war not only for the house and objects she has used to build her identity, but for her independence from Oliver as well. Imagine Barbara "going to pieces" without Oliver is difficult. She is the initiator of the split, and she has succeeded in building a successful business solely through her own efforts. If her story did not end with her tragic (though comic) death, it is easy to imagine that what happens next involves Barbara getting on with a better and more fulfilling life without Oliver. However, like Bella Swan, Barbara Rose has also fulfilled her duties in the feminine world of immanence by giving herself sexually, as a wife, and as a mother. She too has earned the right to posit herself as a transcendent subject through far more authentic means according to Beauvoir's terms.

Imagining Amanda Bonner "going to pieces" without Adam is also difficult. Unlike Barbara Rose and Oliver, Amanda is still deeply in love with Adam. However, she has a thriving law practice of her own, and she is highly educated, cultured, and savvy. She too possesses the material conditions necessary for self-sufficiency, and is involved with projects outside of the world of women's immanence. Imagining Amanda experiencing an existential crisis like Barbara Rose's is also difficult. Though she fulfils her wifely duties for Adam, she fights for her own "little causes," causes that exist outside of her immanent roles. Though what happens next in Amanda's story is the resolution of her conflict with Adam and a "happily ever after" of sorts, it is easy to imagine Amanda going on with her with her life without Adam in spite of the inevitable sadness and regret.

Imagining what happens next for both Tracy Lord and Sydney is somewhat more difficult. Tracy's family is exceedingly wealthy, and she will never want for a way to meet her material needs. However, even though Tracy wants to be regarded as a human being rather than a goddess, it is clear that she can only find such validation in a husband even if he is actually the "wrong" one, as George Kittredge proved to be. If Tracy had married neither George nor Dexter, it is not difficult to imagine her pining away in privileged boredom. Resources alone are not enough to prevent "going to pieces" unless they are accompanied by what Beauvoir refers to as "pride" (Beauvoir, 706).

Though Sydney has succeeded in increasing her status and career by submitting the photos Lucy has taken of her, in doing so, she too has sacrificed her pride. Even though her feelings for Lucy may have been sincere, her success is marred because it hinges upon what appears to be coldly ambitious manipulation, and it is all too easy to imagine that what happens next for Syd is the same fate Beauvoir describes for the woman in love. Under the weight of her guilt and in the wake of Lucy's tragic death, Syd might indeed "go to pieces." Likewise, "going to pieces" also seems a plausible fate for Amy Jolly, who takes off her sandals and follows Tom Brown into the desert in devoted pursuit in the final scene of *Morocco* (1930).

Regardless of the particular situations, characters, and even the sexuality of women in popular Hollywood film, Beauvoir's descriptions of women's immanence in *The Second Sex* are clearly visible in both pre and post-code popular Hollywood films. This does not suggest that the victories achieved by feminism are insignificant or that progress has not been made, a fact Beauvoir herself acknowledges:

> In her interview with John Gerassi, on "*The Second Sex*: Twenty Five Years Later," published in early 1976 . . . Beauvoir acknowledges that, increasingly, leftist groups 'feel compelled to keep their macho male leaders in check. That's progress. Here in our newspaper, *Libération*, the male-oriented majority felt obliged to let a woman become its director. That's progress.' (Brison, 204)

However, as mentioned in the beginning of this section, the underlying structures of society remain unchanged in many ways, especially with regard to women's roles and characters. As a result, images of women in film remain largely unchanged as well, and *The Second Sex* remains a valuable lens through which to view them.

Further research using *The Second Sex* as a critical lens might include an analysis of characters in popular Hollywood films that contradict images of woman as immanent and display instead aspects of masculine transcendence. Such an analysis might examine any consequences female characters experience as a result of positing themselves as transcendent subjects, especially with regard to how their sexuality is conveyed. Do women in film experience rejection by supporting characters and "suffer" as a result of positing themselves as transcendent? How do depictions of romantic love differ from those discussed in this thesis when both men and women reflect the qualities of transcendence?

Possible limitations of this thesis and any research that draws on the new English translation of *The Second Sex* derive from the criticisms of scholars such as Moi (2010), who argues that despite the improvements made upon Parshley's translation, Borde and Malovany-Chevallier still fail to recognize many of Beauvoir's references resulting in a translation no more reliable than Parshley's:

> The translators claim that their aim was to bring 'into English the closes version possible of Simone de Beauvoir's voice, expression and mind'. . . The obsessive

> literalism and countless errors make it no more reliable, and far less readable than Parshley. (Moi, 60)

In contrast to Moi's criticisms however, Altman (2010) calls the new English translation of *The Second Sex* "a small miracle," though she criticizes Thurman's introduction to the text (Altman, 4). Additional limitations of this particular thesis may also include the absence of an analysis of any user-generated content such as blogs or fan websites related to the six films I discuss.

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