

Jules and jim and thomas



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Perhaps the most iconic scene in Francois Truffaut's Jules and Jim (1962) begins at 11: 38. When Jules (Oskar Werner) and Jim (Henri Serre) are going to meet Catherine (Jeanne Moreau) to spend the evening together, and Catherine excites the scene by sporting a costume of Charlie Chaplin's The Tramp.

When the men enter Catherine's room, she greets them by name. The manner in which Jules corrects Catherine's pronunciation of " Jim" to Jim's preferred style further expresses the ' unambiguous queer subtext that runs throughout' (Oursler, 2014), though a small part of the scene it is an obvious and quite couple-like action. Truffaut had already established the possibility for a queer subtext in an earlier scene when the men are boxing. Jim reads Jules some pages from the Novel he is writing that he describes as " Rather Autobiographical", he reads the line " People thought they were a bit queer" regarding the characters relationship. The men then excitedly run to the showers, which almost acts as symbolism for a sexual relationship between them. It is their comfortability with people viewing them as ' queer' that may serve as a strong defense for this point. It seems odd that two heterosexual males, who are aware of other views on their relationship are comfortable with showering nude next to each other, in a time unforgiving of homosexual behavior in the pre-world war society.

There are several different ways in which analysis will view Catherine dressing up, relating to the previous point it is possible that she recognizes the queer nature of Jules and Jim, and in an effort to be a part of their relationship, she creates ' Thomas'. This scene is one of the most important in the film because it is where the ménage à trois begins. Serge Toubiana

describes Jules and Jim as a film “ that shows love as ardent and free”. The love we see represented in the film is love free from constraints by gender. Jules earlier in the film suggests that they “ abolish Monsieur, Madame and Mademoiselle” – The titles that confine the characters to their genders. By dressing as a man, Catherine can break from traditional gender roles while Jules and Jim break free from pressures on sexuality in their society using Catherine as Thomas like a loophole, finding their attraction in Thomas, a woman dressed as a man. Symbolically the ménage à trois begins with Jules, Jim and ‘ Thomas’.

It could be viewed that Catherines costume is Truffaut making a comment on second-wave feminism of which commenced at the beginning of the decade in which he was making this film. Jules gives Catherine the name “ Thomas”; the name derives from Aramaic to mean ‘ Twin’, Truffaut uses this name to create equality between the characters in this scene. Truffaut further expresses the idea of the ‘ twin’ in his use of framing at 12: 26 when he positions Jim and Catherine on opposite sides of the screen and places a mirror between them as she undergoes her metamorphosis by Jim drawing on a mustache resembling his own. Equality is an important factor in this film because “ for true love to flourish...the parties must be free and equal” (Greer, 2008). Truffaut expresses that Catherine is only able to gain freedom and equality by masquerading as a man, this performance continues throughout the film as we see Catherine adopting stereotypical male traits, such as a lack of housework, autocratic and promiscuous behavior, to achieve her goals. Even after her demise, Truffaut refuses to give Catherine

her freedom, “ Catherine wanted to be strewn from a hilltop. But that wasn’t permitted.”

“ Jules and Jim and their great love Catherine were flower children” (Ebert, 2004), Ebert describes the trio as being indirectly involved in the counter-culture movement of the 1960’s, the women who were involved in this campaign also had their reach on the feminist/gender movement occur around the same time. Through music Truffaut perhaps is aiming to express the characters rebellion as futile. Carousel music punctuates the film and acts as a metaphor for the Catherine being trapped in her role as a woman, While the men are stuck using a pawn (Catherine), to show their love for each other. A carousel has not set start or end it just moves continuously in a roundabout, it shows that the character’s efforts are useless, and we ultimately see the trio punished for trying to break free from their societal constraints, Catherine and Jim are dead and Jules alone losing the two people he loved most.

The end of this section of the film comes to a close when we see the trio racing across a bridge. The race is a metaphor for the journey to freedom that the characters make throughout the whole film and foreshadows the characters failing to achieve their goals. The mise en scene of wire mesh caging on the bridge physically traps them in a tunnel that stretches all the way to the horizon line of the shot that exaggerates its distance. The atmospheric sound quickly disappears during the race while the winded breaths of the three build to a crescendo, the heavy sexual undertones of these noises peak when Catherine lets out an enraptured scream. The race was on a set path, and perhaps these sounds were to show that it is the

characters sexual desires that will drive them and eventually give them their ending. The scream is one of excitement that comes from Catherine seeing her freedom and her way of achieving it- meaning the race/the end of the bridge or Jules and Jim themselves. At the end of the race, Jim confronts Catherine for starting to run before the men by saying " you cheated" this line is perhaps Truffaut way of foreshadowing the events to come as here we see Catherine cheating (in the race) causing conflict. Catherine's response to this is " But I won" to which Jules replies " Thomas always wins.". If Thomas is the real winner of the race Truffaut could be trying to indicate Jules, Jim and Catherine all lost, there is no winner, just like at the end of the film, no character is given a victory.

" Thomas always wins." Is a line in the scene put in place that shows very subtly what the characters want and the way they can ultimately achieve their victory as it separates Catherine and Thomas as two different people. Catherine wants to be free, the only way she can be in her society is through being a man or Thomas. However, she is incapable of being a man and therefore loses. Jules and Jim fall in love with Catherine, but they do so while she is Thomas, throughout the scene, the characters express longing looks at each other but perhaps unknown to Jules and Jim, their possibly repressed homosexuality makes a relationship with Catherine doomed. Thomas is the real desire of the two men, but they are unaware and therefore lose. Thomas always wins, while Jules and Jim and Catherine are doomed from the beginning.