

**FREEDOM AND CHOICE IN HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS IN
SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR'S SELECTED NOVELS**

BY

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CERTIFICATION

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DEDICATION

To Jehovah God, the Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ,
To my lovely mother, Ochade, and to my siblings,
Ifeanyichukwu and Uchechukwu.

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ABSTRACT

Freedom and choice are among the most fundamental ethics in Existentialism that have generated extensive research in French literature. Past studies concentrated on the works of French existentialist writers in the areas of freedom and choice in politics, religion, education and the meaning of human existence with little attention paid to writers like Simone de Beauvoir who focuses on freedom in human sexuality. This study, therefore, examined sexuality in human relationships in selected texts of Simone de Beauvoir with a view to portraying the author's core existentialist principles of freedom and choice.

The study adopted Existentialism and Radical Feminism as framework. Four novels of Simone de Beauvoir namely: *L'invitée*, *Le sang des autres*, *Les mandarins* and *Les belles images*, were purposively selected because they dwell on human relationships, and expose characters' exercise of existential freedom in their sexual relationships. The texts were analysed using "explication de texte."

Relationships portrayed within the texts include heterosexual, homosexual and bisexual, both in marital and extra-marital associations. The writer's ethics of freedom and choice within the context of love and passion are manifested differently in characters and situations. Characters that enjoyed true existential freedom are those who lived "authentic life," which gives the individual the opportunity to be himself in freedom and responsibility. *Les mandarins* and *Les belles images* demonstrated "authenticity" in heterosexual relationships through Lucie, Lucile, Josette and Nadine who exploited their sexuality to free themselves from unwanted and difficult circumstances. Other characters that enjoyed true existential freedom in their sexual relationships without societal constraints included Jean and Hélène in *Le sang des autres*, Robert, Anne, Lewis and Henri in *Les mandarins*. These characters rejected societal values that restrain their capacity to choose by having relationships with multiple sexual partners. However, when characters resorted to "inauthentic life," they denied their freedom and allowed the "Other" to choose for them. "Inauthentic life" suppressed the freedom of the individual by imposing uniformity or norm and often results in oppression and exploitation. Exploitation is one-sided in some relationships while it is mutual in others. Henri was the exploiter in his relationship with Paule, while he exploited and was also exploited by Josette. *L'invitée*, *Les belles images* and *Le sang des autres* portrayed that choice is consequential and could lead to the suffering of the "self." This is illustrated in the case of Laurence and Lucien who both suffered when their sexual relationship broke up due to pressures from the "Other."

Exploitation is part of human relationship; true existential freedom can only be enjoyed when there is "authentic" life. From the view point of Simone de Beauvoir, therefore, individuals must reject "inauthenticity" by owning up and readily accepting responsibility for their freedom.

Keywords: Existential freedom, Human sexuality, Authentic existence, French literature, Simone de Beauvoir.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The twentieth century to which the selected author for this study, Simone de Beauvoir, belonged, witnessed many different literary theories among which are Existentialism, Feminism, Dada and Surrealism. Of all the theories, however, the most influential was Existentialism (Fragonard 1981; Omoregbe 1991 and Cosper 2009). Existentialism was initially a philosophical movement, which later gave birth to the existentialist literary theory. It is mainly concerned about human existence and the individual's interactions with other humans in the world (Michelman, 2008). It is for this reason that Existentialism gained wide acceptance and became a very useful literary theory because French literature is noted especially for its examination of human society and the individual's place within the society. Existentialist philosophers and writers therefore insist that in order for literature to be of relevance to the human society, writers must be committed to the happenings around them. The major existentialists of this period, among others, include Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Albert Camus and Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

Many literary productions by writers between the two world wars, 1914-1918 and 1939-1945, were in reaction to the upheavals brought about by these wars. The devastation and untold sufferings that resulted from the war shook humanity's belief in the existence of God and the belief in the innate goodness of man's nature (Cosper, 2009). French writers were themselves affected, and they sought ways to redefine their role in the society. Writers of this period were fully involved in the political and social struggles of their times and decried the vices and oppressions that were going on in the French society. Their involvement in contemporary issues gave birth to literature of commitment or *littérature engagée*.

The issue of commitment is central to Existentialist literature. Stewart (2002:4) describes the origin thus:

The modern concept of committed literature emerged from the conflict of 20th century ideologies that have reflected the deep social changes of our times - the domination of Nazism and Communism in Europe, the victory of world Capitalism over Communism, and today the clash between market ideology and the rich world on one hand and on the other the growing rebellion of the impoverished non-developing four-fifths of our planet.

The term “littérature engagée” which is also known as “committed literature” or “literature of commitment” was coined by Jean-Paul Sartre. Fragonard (1981:86) has it that, “l’expression [littérature engagée] est de Sartre, mais cet auteur la restreint à une littérature qui s’engage à gauche,” [the expression “committed literature” is from Sartre, but this author limits it to a literature that is committed to the left wing]. Fragonard’s words make clear that Sartre used the term in reference to literature that championed the cause of the left wing, but with the passage of time, it gradually came to encompass all literature that engages in the political and social struggles or that advocate the political and social ideologies in the contemporary society.

In view of the foregoing, the twentieth-century French literary artist was expected to be a committed writer, that is, one who is deeply concerned about contemporary issues. Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre were renowned committed philosophers and writers of the twentieth century. As such, they were never neutral but rather took active part and produced literature through which they made their stand known to their audience. Highlighting Jean-Paul Sartre’s view of literature, Adebayo (2010:13) opines that, “literature is never a neutral activity as some formalists claim but a form of social commitment.” Being socially committed means that writers be involved in the happenings in their immediate society and beyond. All committed writers therefore share the view that there should be a close and observable projection or advocacy of the political and social ideologies of the society from which it is produced. Thus, in one way or another, every

literary work portrays the culture, tradition, habits, customs and the way of living of the people from which it was produced.

Accordingly, Ukoyen (1997:77) notes that “a literary text is first and foremost a cultural and artistic product, which, however revolutionary and innovative it may be, is never a mere assemblage of words; rather, it is the offshoot of a specific heritage, a particular culture whose imprint it inevitably bears.” As have been noted, issues in human society are a major preoccupation in French literature, and this is evident in the works of Simone de Beauvoir whose works form the primary data for the present study.

Simone de Beauvoir was among renowned existentialist writers of her time. As a committed writer, she was always on the side of revolution, defending and fighting for the rights of workers and the disadvantaged and was passionately committed to raising the awareness of the populace as well as changing the society through the ideals of justice and equality. Simone de Beauvoir wrote extensively about the philosophical, social, cultural and political issues of her time; part of her works dwell on human sufferings that took place in the concentration camps, the rounding up and killing of Jews, and the Occupation of France. De Beauvoir’s interest in philosophical, cultural and political issues notwithstanding, our interest in this study is on social issues of freedom and choice as they relate to sexuality in human relationships.

Sexuality occupies a central position in Simone de Beauvoir’s works. Human sexuality, as Sanders (2009) points out, refers to different sexually related aspects of the life of a human. It consists of physical and psychological development, behaviours, attitudes and social customs that are linked to the way an individual perceives his identity, his gender, his relationship with others, his choice of a mate/sexual partner as well as his sexual activity and reproduction.

Sexual behaviours differ from place to place. People in different parts of the world consider sexual behaviours from their own world view. Thus, what may be acceptable in certain places may not be acceptable in others. This idea is in consonance with Tyson (1999:27), who opines that sexual behaviour is “a product of our culture because it is our

culture that lays down the rules of normal sexual behaviour and definitions of what is considered proper and improper sexual behaviour.”

Sexuality is very central to Existentialism because in Existentialism, a person has the freedom to choose, hence the title of this study—Freedom and Choice in Human Relationships in Simone de Beauvoir’s Selected Novels. The theme of freedom permeates all the different schools of thought in existentialist philosophy and theory because existentialists consider human freedom as an intrinsic nature of man’s being. Freedom is identical with human existence and is inseparable from it (Jean-Paul Sartre 1968, Omoregbe 1991, and Tomes 2009).

Freedom, according to Michelman (2008:183), in the *Historical Dictionary of Existentialism* is “the capacity to shape one’s life according to one’s chosen projects and commitments rather than being determined by external factors such as heredity, society, family, or fate.” Humans in general have the freedom to become whatever they choose to become in life. This, existentialists maintain, is possible because there is nothing like human nature. The freedom to choose is a possession of all humans; it is up to each individual to decide what to do with their freedom. However, they also point out that human freedom is a heavy responsibility because although man has the freedom to choose what course to follow, he is also responsible for the consequences of his action or inaction.

The choice that an individual makes is committed in action. That is why existentialists believe that an individual can only have an authentic existence if he courageously assumes the responsibility of his choice, not blaming fate, or others for his actions. On the other hand, individuals who are afraid to exercise their freedom because they are apprehensive of what the consequences of their actions would be, are regarded as having inauthentic existence.

In true existential freedom, every individual must bear an inescapable responsibility for their own behavior. Thus, man’s destiny is in his own hands, since he is totally free to become whatever he chooses. His future is not predestined; rather it is the projects he resolves to carry out that determine his actions, because all his actions are geared towards fulfilling his life’s projects.

The freedom of man, however, can sometimes be constrained by the Other because as existentialists would say, man is a “*being-with-others*.” By the Other as used in the study, we mean “other people who are copresent with me in the world in an original sense and need not be constituted by analogy to myself or otherwise directly inferred” (Michelman 2008:69). For the individual, relations to other people are intrinsic because the individual, or the self, (the ‘I’) is never alone in the world but exists alongside others. The “Other” can deprive the individual of his freedom by imposing norms or societal values. Such societal conventions may eventually lead the individual to have an inauthentic existence as he struggles, sometimes against his own desires, to follow the dictates of the “Other” in making life’s choices.

Simone de Beauvoir’s focus on freedom and responsibility in human relationships, which has a direct bearing on whether characters have authentic or inauthentic existence, is our major concern in this study. As it has been noted earlier, existentialist literature is deeply concerned with man’s existence in the world and his interactions/relationships with the “Other,” thus our interest in de Beauvoir’s portrayals of these aspects of human life in her works. This study will therefore explore freedom and choice in human relationships, especially in the area of sexuality with a view to investigating the extent to which an individual can be himself in the world —authenticity.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

From previous studies, it has been discovered that Simone de Beauvoir is traditionally accepted as the precursor and proponent of modern French Feminism. Thus, her works have driven extensive research in literary scholarship. Existing studies have been carried out in different areas of de Beauvoir’s feminist and existentialist ethics, highlighting her great insight into the meaning of human existence, politics and religion. Some studies focused on distinguishing sex from gender, while others focused on women’s rights to choose or reject maternity.

However, little attention has been paid to the way individuals exercise their freedom to choose in male/female sexual relationships with differing levels of sexual commitment as portrayed in her works. The present study therefore, among other things, explores sexuality

in human relationships within the selected novels of de Beauvoir with a view to portraying her core existentialist principles of freedom and choice. The unique angle that de Beauvoir has chosen for representing commitment in human relationships and sustaining her position in the issue of freedom in sexuality deserves attention in scholarship.

The study departs from the areas many critics of feminist and existentialist studies have often researched on in de Beauvoir's novels; oppression of women, Occupation of France by the Nazi, and the political issues in Post-Second World War France, among others; rather, it examines the various forms of human relationships in which fictional characters in de Beauvoir's narratives are involved and the different ways in which they exercise their freedom to choose as exposed by their level of commitment in such relationships as well as what informs their choice of existence, be it authentic or inauthentic.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

First, the study critically examines de Beauvoir's existential ethics of freedom and choice on the issue of sexuality in human relationships as portrayed in the selected texts. It unravels the ways characters respond to the daunting challenges that threaten their existential freedom within and without their immediate relationships. It critically examines the intimacies and complexities of characters' relationships with the Other, as portrayed in the texts. Finally, the study explores the social, moral and psychological implications and consequences of authentic and inauthentic relationships of characters as portrayed in the novels.

1.4 Significance and Justification of Study

This study is significant in that it projects de Beauvoir as a core existentialist who is deeply interested in human relationships as the selected texts demonstrate. The work goes further to direct the attention of scholars and critics to the exercise of freedom and choice in human relationships, particularly sexuality, as a core human preoccupation. Therefore, focusing attention on French literature as the case is, this study will fill the gap created by a dearth of critical works on French existentialist narratives in Nigerian scholarship. Finally, the study will help in awakening the interest of scholars in the works of the French writer, Simone de Beauvoir and other French writers, especially for comparative purposes

thus, giving insight into French history and culture. This in turn, will elicit, motivate and give rise to more rewarding research on the relevance of French literature in the Nigerian society.

1.5 Scope of the Study

Four of Simone de Beauvoir's novels serve as the primary data for the study. They include *L'invitée*, 1943 (*She Came to Stay*); *Le sang des autres*, 1945 (*The Blood of Others*); *Les mandarins* 1954, (*The Mandarins*) and *Les belles images* 1966 (*Pretty Images*). All four novels were purposively selected because they are homogeneous in dwelling on human relationships, and they have incidences that expose characters' exercise of freedom to choose in sexual relationships.

It should be reiterated that human relationships, as well the way that the individual interacts with others alongside whom he exists in the world, is highly relevant in Existentialism. This is because man is a *being-with-others* and therefore cannot exist all by himself. Thus, man's projects in life, his relationship with others and the consequences of his choice all form a central concern in existentialist studies. In this study, the analysis of the selected texts, contexts, and characterisation enables us to identify characters who have authentic existence and those who do not. The scope exposes incidences of man's freedom to choose and, in other instances, the denial of such freedom which ultimately differentiates those whose existence is authentic from those whose existence is inauthentic.

1.6 Theoretical Approach and Methodology

In analyzing the selected texts, the study leans heavily on Existentialism as its major theoretical framework and uses a relevant brand of Feminism, namely, Radical Feminism. Both theories are relevant to the study because of their approach to freedom and choice.

De Beauvoir's works explore existential relationships, the issues of freedom and choice and their consequences and implications for the individual. De Beauvoir's notion of freedom is that the actual exercise of the freedom to choose is socially dependent on others, and as a result, it is constrained, to some extent, by the Other. Therefore, this brand of Existentialism, namely atheistic Existentialism to which Simone de Beauvoir subscribes, proves adequate to explain and answer the questions posed by freedom in human relationships. The French "explication de texte" which is the methodology used in doing the analysis of the selected texts also favours the theory of Existentialism, because it lays emphasis on themes and characterisation and this helps to expose the gap between theory and reality in sexual relationships. Radical Feminism on its part, often advocates for freedom of choice in sexual matters in order for women to escape patriarchal dominance and take total control of their body. It thus serves a useful purpose in analysing incidences where women have multiple sexual partners, thus demonstrating that they can exercise control over their sexuality, and in some instances they unabashedly disregard traditional limitations and resort to the use of their freedom in order to rid themselves of difficult and unwanted circumstances.

Existentialism emphasizes the idea of freedom and responsibility for one's acts (Sartre, 1965:63, Wallace, 2009:65 and Omoregbe 1991). Existentialists insist that in order for individuals to have authentic existence, their choices should not be based on external factors such as religion, society, or heredity. Rather, decisions should be made by the individual in accordance to what he wants and this can vary from situation to situation. This theory helps one to understand why Simone de Beauvoir's characters do not stoop before moral rules and conventions established in patriarchal society, but rather act according to their personal choices in any situation they face and then readily face the consequences of their actions. These and other relevant facets of the Existentialist theory are brought to the fore in the analysis of the selected texts.

1.7 Conceptual Clarifications

One of the concepts that stand out in the study is that of the "Other." In de Beauvoir's works, the "Other," otherwise known in French as "*les autres*," implies primarily the other person or another human consciousness with whom the "self", or the "I" exist in the

world (Michelman, 2008). Between the self and the Other, there is a constant struggle for recognition. De Beauvoir points out that the Other has a way of robbing me or the self of freedom. In some instances, the Other can simply be one single individual with whom I have dealings, whose values may differ from mine and who may judge me by their standards. At other times, it could be the society in general, whose cultures and norms may limit or constrain my freedom by judging some things I love to do or desire to do as wrong and unacceptable. Thus, there is a constant struggle between the self and the Other. It is this constant conflict that exists between the self and the Other that Sartre's captures with his well-known saying that "L'enfer c'est les autres," [Hell is other people].

Since existing alone in the world is impossible, an individual must therefore have dealings with the Other. De Beauvoir examines how the relationships between individuals are affected by the existence of the Other in some of her works. She presents some individuals who live in "bad faith" by pretending that they are not free as well as those individuals who may eventually resort to live for the Other. Mistakenly, such individuals think that they are the means to the Other's self-fulfilment and as a result they deny their personal freedom. In Existentialism, the Other cannot be avoided. The implication of this is that the freedom of the individual is enmeshed in that of the Other.

1.8 Structure and Organisation of the Study

The study is presented in six (6) chapters. Chapter One is the general introduction which provides a general background to the study. It states the research problem and the objectives. It gives the significance, the scope of the study and the theoretical framework and methodology used in the analysis of the selected texts.

Chapter Two contains a review of related literature, a critical examination of previous studies that are related to freedom and choice in human relationships both in existentialist and feminist studies. It points to the gap in knowledge which the present study intends to fill. Also, a portion of the chapter reviews earlier studies carried out on Simone de Beauvoir's works.

The focus of Chapter Three is on the Theoretical Framework that is used for the textual analysis. Two theories, namely Existentialism and Radical Feminism, are combined to serve as the framework. The chapter also explores the major existentialist themes such as freedom, choice and responsibility on which the study hinges.

Chapter Four is the analysis of exploitative and oppressive freedom in non-marital relationships. The focus is on the characters, the contexts in which their relationships are formed, their level of sexual commitment to their partners and the way they respond to societal restraints on their freedom.

Chapter Five is a continuation of the analysis of the texts but strictly focuses on marital relationships. Sexual liberality and double sexual standards make up another part of this chapter. It also shows instances of intra-gender conflicts as portrayed in the texts.

Finally, Chapter Six highlights the major findings of the research. The study reveals that egoism and exploitation are basic to human relationships; true existential freedom can only be enjoyed when there is “authentic” existence. Therefore, individuals must reject “inauthenticity” by owning up and readily accepting responsibility for their choices.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of literature that is related to the study. It critiques previous existentialist and feminist studies that have been carried out on the works of Simone de Beauvoir. The review sheds light on the important position that freedom to choose occupies in Existentialism as well as in studies done in different areas such as autobiography studies, gender studies, politics, economics and human relationships, with a view to setting forth the relevance of the present study. The chapter equally presents the author, Simone de Beauvoir, and her creative works.

2.2 Previous Studies on Simone de Beauvoir's Works

Few works, in the twentieth century, if any at all, have generated much research as has Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, which has been widely used in critical analyses (Bair, 1986; Butler, 1986; Bodkin, 2011; Holter, 1971; Klaw, 1998). As Unah and Dennis (2011:1) put it, "The Second Sex [is] perhaps the greatest contribution to gender philosophy and a quondam literature in Feminism and woman studies. Interestingly, studies that have been carried out on *The Second Sex* are in a wide range of fields such as gender studies, economics, Feminism, Existentialism, politics, psychology, and philosophy among others. It is possible to make out of one book researches in different fields because, as Hancock (2012:1) puts it, *The Second Sex* is "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."

As the critic Hancock puts it, de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* covers a wide range of disciplines, and so for decades, it has continuously been widely read and critiqued. Judith Butler (1986) carried out a study in which she shows how de Beauvoir distinguishes sex from gender, pointing that gender is an aspect of our identity that is acquired overtime. In this work, Butler explores the renowned statement of de Beauvoir that "one is not born, but rather, becomes a woman." She goes further to explain that while the term female is fixed, the verb *become* from which "become a woman" is derived is a purposive and appropriate set of acts. This is important to the present study because in the analysis of the selected novels, we find elements of unequal freedom in male/female relationships that are a direct result of socially constructed gender roles that characters have internalized over

time. De Beauvoir's well-known saying that "one is not born, but rather, becomes a woman" is expounded by Butler to show how this holds true.

Also, in *The Second Sex*, de Beauvoir argues that human freedom is undermined by social structures such as marriage and family. Her reason is that in conservative family values, women are expected to put the needs of the family ahead of their own personal needs. De Beauvoir argues that this is unhealthy for women as it denies them of their freedom. Therefore, advancing the cause of freedom for self and for others would include examining how gender and other forms of oppression and exploitation are socially constructed and passed on from one generation to another.

Toril Moi (1994), discusses what it means to be an intellectual woman. She, just like de Beauvoir in her *Second Sex*, explains how the patriarchal order undermines women's chances of attaining the fulfillment that their male counterparts attain as reputable intellectuals. Again, this is of importance to the study because in the novels under scrutiny, there are young women, who although are writers, were never given the opportunity to conclude what their writing. On the other hand, there are male characters that are presented as accomplished writers. In reality, socially constructed gender roles have a way of undermining women's ability as intellectuals and this is part of what de Beauvoir attempts to demonstrate in these texts.

Ronald Bodkin (2011), argues that although de Beauvoir did not project herself as an Economist *per se*, what she wrote concerning the inaccessibility of women to positions of major responsibility shows her great insight into the condition of women as the people who, more often than not, are the least paid in most organisations. According to Bodkin, by virtue of the way de Beauvoir described how women were treated, as far back as 1949, when the *Second Sex* was first published, it can be rightly said that she (de Beauvoir) pioneered the concept of the gender wage gap. He says that "we are entitled to claim Simone de Beauvoir as a pioneer in the development of this important concept." This thought expressed by Bodkin is of relevance to the present study because as the analysis of the selected texts shows, women and men are treated differently even when they work at the same job.

Furthermore, it is worthy of note that even though the study done by Bodkin was in the field of Economics, it is observed that he is concerned with the issue of freedom. One can therefore say that freedom remains a dominant ethic in the works of Simone de Beauvoir. In that study, Ronald Bodkin (2011:34) says that “de Beauvoir believed strongly in the equality of the two sexes . . . She believed strongly in women’s liberation.” The term liberation is very close to freedom in meaning. Thus, when Bodkin mentions liberation as being of great importance to de Beauvoir, it can as well be understood as freedom being important to de Beauvoir. De Beauvoir (1976:31) says that “freedom always appears as a movement of liberation.”

Apart from *The Second Sex*, other works of de Beauvoir have also been researched on. For the purpose of the present study, however, the review of previous studies on de Beauvoir’s works is limited to the ones done in areas of freedom and sexuality, because, that of course, is the focus of the present study. Before launching into that, a quick glance at what constitutes de Beauvoir’s ideology on freedom is necessary, thereafter, a review of studies that highlight her notion of freedom follows.

2.3 Simone de Beauvoir’s Ideology on Freedom

The concept of freedom has generated many studies because it is a major ethic in Existentialism. The twentieth century produced many philosophers and critics who were interested in issues that border on freedom and this was well featured in the works that were produced during that century. Existentialists, in particular, insist that man is free, and that man and freedom are inseparable. Atheist Existentialism, to which de Beauvoir belonged, has human freedom as its basis. According to this strand of Existentialism, there is no God whose laws would guide man in life; therefore man is free to choose his own essence.

Male and female critics have written on the subject of human freedom and the responsibility that comes with it. This has especially been true of studies done in Existentialism and Feminism, because the issue of freedom to choose is central to both fields. In Existentialism, for instance, man is referred to as a *being-with-others*. This implies that the individual is not alone in the world, but rather exists alongside other

humans. Therefore, one cannot help but be concerned about relationships with others since the possibility of the individual existing alone in the world is completely ruled out. As a result, human relationships are of special interest to Existentialist philosophers and writers. The freedom that humans have at their disposal to choose for themselves, for example, with whom to go into relationships, the type of relationships to pursue, and the level of commitment that the individual has to the Other constitute issues that are of concern to Existentialist writers and critics alike.

Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre have made tremendous contributions to Existentialism, and as a result, they both occupy key positions as Existentialist philosophers and writers. Freedom occupied a central place in their works, philosophical and literary alike. That notwithstanding, they differ in their notions of what constitutes existential freedom. In some of his works, Sartre spoke of absolute freedom. In his *Being and Nothingness*, for example, Sartre argues that every human being as an individual consciousness is at the same time what it is and what it is not. According to him, a slave's consciousness is as free as that of his master even though there is little that the slave can do to change his situation.

De Beauvoir, on the other hand, did not accept the idea of absolute freedom, and not for once did she project the idea that human freedom is absolute. For de Beauvoir, humans are unequally free. The society in which we find ourselves and the institutions in it as well as other humans with whom we live and are into relationships with, are all factors that modify the recognition and exercise of our freedom as active, moral choice makers. De Beauvoir in *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (1948) illustrates her point by using oppression as an example. She speaks of physical oppression such as the type that slaves are subjected to, economic oppression that labourers suffer, and then an oppression of sexism which is felt mostly by women. Thus she maintains that while all humans are free, they are unequally so, as a result of the aforementioned factors.

De Beauvoir accepts the idea that humans by nature are free. Still, each of us will have to assume that freedom by actively engaging in the world, and not flee from the freedom and anxiety that could result from such engagement which would amount to 'bad faith' or *mauvaise foi*. She contends that our natural freedom is not a moral condition, but that,

“freedom must project itself toward its own reality through a content whose value it establishes. An end is valid only by a return to the freedom which established it and which willed itself through this end. But this will imply that freedom is not to be engulfed in any goal; neither is it to dissipate itself vainly without aiming at a goal” (de Beauvoir 1948:70).

2.4 Critical Works on Simone de Beauvoir’s Notion of Freedom

Over the decades, critics have sought to establish the difference between de Beauvoir’s and Sartre’s existential freedom as is evident in many scholarly works that have so far been carried out. For example, Eva Gothlin (1999:83), points out that although de Beauvoir accepts the concept of existentialist freedom, her notion of freedom differs from that of Jean-Paul Sartre in that Simone de Beauvoir “does not accept the idea of an absolute freedom.” The works of de Beauvoir point out that humans are both separate and connected to each other (de Beauvoir, 1948). In other words, the freedom of an individual encompasses the freedom of the Other, or has a direct relationship with that of the Other.

Gothlin’s comment is in line with our view that de Beauvoir’s notion of freedom is more plausible than that proposed by Jean-Paul Sartre. Hardly is absolute freedom possible in any sphere of human life. The fact that humans are social beings lends enough credence to this. Granted, if the individual were to exist alone in the world, radical freedom would not be a problem since his actions, no matter what they may be, would have no impact on anyone else. But as it is, man is a being-with-others, and as such, he is connected to others with whom he shares the world.

Baa Mensa (1999:69), attests to the difference between de Beauvoir’s concept of freedom and that of Jean-Paul Sartre when he says of Sartre’s existentialist freedom, that “la liberté, pour l’existentialisme sartrien, c’est l’effort constant que fait l’homme qui se trouve dans une situation de choisir, sans aucune contrainte extérieure, l’attitude qui lui est convenable. Ce choix libre est également continu et renouvelable à chaque moment, dépendant de la situation” [for Sartrean existentialism, freedom is the constant effort that a man who is in a situation to choose makes, without any exterior constraint, a convenient attitude for him.

This free choice is equally continual and renewable on every occasion, depending on the situation].

Sartre's notion of freedom according to what Mensa says in the preceding paragraph is that there is no "exterior constraint" to freedom. This is opposed to what de Beauvoir writes in *The Ethics of Ambiguity* where she maintains that for an individual to truly live an authentic life, he must understand that "human reality is social, not merely individual." This implies that the society has a way of restraining the freedom of the individual because the individual is never alone, rather, they always exist alongside others. Again, this supports Beauvoir's notion of freedom. In the novels under scrutiny, examples of societal restraints on the freedom that the individual enjoys are abundant and the analysis well demonstrates this.

Galic Dusan (2004:19), has written that "while Beauvoir stresses the importance of communal activity and being with others, Sartre finds the world of others as problematic and inherently ridden with conflict. . . It is only through our interactions with others that we are able to fully become morally free beings." This conclusion that Dusan reached in that study, further highlights the fact that although Sartre and de Beauvoir both agree on the concept of freedom as being basic to Existentialism, they differ in their notions of what constitutes existential freedom.

In examining her work titled *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, we find that de Beauvoir speaks of a two-fold moral freedom. These are the recognition and adoption of the individual's (my own) freedom and the freedom of the Other. She writes that in order to achieve this moral freedom, first, the individual must become aware of the injustices that are taking place in their immediate society as well as those that the Other is experiencing before any action to end to such injustices can take place. She says that "in order for men to become indignant or to admire, they must be conscious of their own freedom and the freedom of others. Thus, everything occurs within each man and in the collective tactics as if men were free" (1976:18).

Another critic that contrasts Sartre's notion of freedom with that of de Beauvoir is Amy Leask (1999:11). Leask points to the fact that for de Beauvoir, "one is morally responsible

for others not only in the Sartrean sense, which claims that with any choice, moral or non-moral, we set an ontological example for all, but also that our moral choices have concrete and potentially harmful consequences for those with whom we interact on a daily basis.”

The study projects that de Beauvoir's concept of freedom is more plausible than that of Sartre because it emphasises the impact that the freedom of the individual could have on the Other. The consequences that the choices of the individual could have on the Other form a significant part of the analysis in the present study. In other words, one finds that unlike what Sartre said in his *Being and Nothingness*, external factors, do indeed affect the choices that the individual makes in his relationships/interactions with other humans. Additionally, the consequences of the said choices are not limited to the individual who makes them, but, rather, affect the Other with whom the individual exists. In a way, this is applicable, even in real life situations, because, taking into cognizance the possibility of the potentially far-reaching effects that our choices can have on others, in itself, has a way of reducing the occurrence of causing the Other pain and hurt. It follows that many of de Beauvoir's works point to the fact that the individual's exercise of freedom has its attendant consequences, not only for the self, but also for the Other.

Slattery and Morris (1999) reach the conclusion that freedom is something that is acted out in the world, not just an ideal that we contemplate, and is never absolute. Their findings are similar to those of Gothlin who holds that the notion of absolute freedom has no place in de Beauvoir's ideology. Unlike Sartre, de Beauvoir suggests that we are not condemned to be free; rather, as Debra Bergoffen points out, “we take joy in our freedom.” Freedom, for de Beauvoir, as noted by Slattery and Morris, is not radical; rather, because de Beauvoir projects the idea that our freedom is limited by our facticity.

Pauline O'Flynn (2009:67), notes that “de Beauvoir's ethics is based on two notions of freedom: that is, freedom, as it is understood by both herself and Sartre, as constituent of humanity (natural freedom), and the concept of moral freedom that de Beauvoir introduces to existentialism and that is inherently linked with the concept of situation (facticity).” O'Flynn goes on to argue that de Beauvoir's ethics are both individual and relational, thus she concludes the study on the note that freedom is the defining characteristic of human

existence. This is important because, as Existentialists say, and as the study attempts to demonstrate, freedom is at the root of human existence.

Suleiman (2010) explores de Beauvoir's novel *Les Mandarins* which won the Prix Goncourt in 1954. In it she lauds de Beauvoir for mentioning Drancy and documenting other facts about the Jews who were persecuted and deported during the Second World War at a time when few others did.

A close and careful examination of de Beauvoir's works reveals that human freedom forms a valid and vital area of her concerns. Thus there has been substantial scholarship on the issue. De Beauvoir's works have been read and reread, and they continued to be a major debate for scholars in Existentialism and Feminism alike. Ursula Tidd (2004:2) highlights the important place that freedom occupies in the works of de Beauvoir when she says that de Beauvoir's works often analyse "questions of power and freedom as they arise within the dynamics of interpersonal relationships as well as within a broader collective framework."

This aspect of "questions of power and freedom as they arise within the dynamics of interpersonal relationships" as raised by Tidd (2004:2) is especially important to this study. A critical look at the title of this study which reads as "Freedom and Choice in Human Relationships in Simone de Beauvoir's Selected Novels" tells it all. This is because the questions raised about freedom that the study answers border on 'interpersonal relationships' and are not about the individual alone. It is also noted that the individual's exercise of freedom or his denial of it, as the case may be, results in feelings of shame and guilt. Either of these feelings could therefore restrain the freedom of the individual.

A study done by Panichella, a literary critic in 2008 identifies feelings of shame and guilt as part of the things that could restrain the freedom of an individual to choose. Although guilt and shame are closely related, Panichella points out that they are not the same. Guilt is more often associated with one's actions and their negative effects on another individual. Feelings of guilt can also serve as a force for good in that it can motivate an individual to make amends and restrain themselves from causing further harm to others.

Shame on the other hand is often irrational because it makes a person feel as if they had committed an offence even though they have not. These two feelings can present serious challenges to individuals in general, but especially to those who have inauthentic existence. The next chapter would dwell more on what constitutes authentic and inauthentic existence, but first, Radical Feminism, which serves as one of the theories on which the present study is based, will be discussed briefly.

In a study titled “Pursuing Freedom: Simone de Beauvoir and Hannah Arendt” Rita A. Gardiner (2013:128) speaks of de Beauvoir’s “emphasis that a willingness to stand up for our beliefs is crucial to the pursuit of freedom. Thus, the act of judging is part of our ethical responsibility if we care about the freedom of others. By being prepared to take a personal stance and judge for ourselves, we are actively engaging in the world. In doing so, we promote the cause of freedom, and the dignity of the human spirit”

In reality, one cannot build a free society without first; attempting to understand how and in what ways oppression limits human freedom. For there to be a truly free society, each individual that makes up that society should ask this soul-searching question: “Do my actions work for or against the freedom of others?” Therefore, individuals must refuse to act if they think their actions may cause suffering for others (Beauvoir, 1948:138). This is what is demonstrated by Jean Blomart, a character in *Le sang des autres*, who refuses to act because he realises that that one act could lead to suffering and death for others.

De Beauvoir’s ethic of freedom sometimes may appear contradictory. Even though she condemns action that could lead to the suffering of others, there are times that acts of violence are justified. For example, de Beauvoir was in support of the Resistance activities that took place during the German Occupation of France. This is because, according to her, violence may become necessary to stop more severe atrocities as was true in the case of the Nazis. In a study of Simone de Beauvoir’s *Le sang des autres*, Donovan Miyasaki (2008) says of two Resistance fighters Jean Blomart and H el ene Bertrand that “through their participation in violent political resistance against the Occupation, they recognise their responsibility to humanity and actualise that responsibility in the form of positive political engagement.”

The importance of de Beauvoir's contribution to philosophy and literature cannot be overemphasised. This is evident in the comments of Claudia Card (2004:3) who opines that "Beauvoir's major contributions to philosophical thought, to ethics in particular, lie in her development and employment of the concepts of . . . freedom, the Other, embodiment, . . ." In her works, de Beauvoir expounds on the freedom that man has at his disposal and how the way he chooses to exercise his freedom has a direct bearing with the Other.

In her works *Pyrrhus and Cinéas* and *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, de Beauvoir deals mainly with self/other relationships between individual consciousnesses. In her *Second Sex*, we notice a shift, because rather than simply discuss the differences between individual consciousnesses; she deals with self/other relationships between men and women. In this work, she attempts to uncover why men has assumed superiority over women. She places men and women side by side and reached a conclusion that the subservient position that the woman occupies in the society today cannot be explained on the basis of biology.

2.5 Freedom and Human Sexuality

Apart from the studies on the works of Simone de Beauvoir that have just been reviewed, there are also others that have been done in the areas of freedom and human sexuality. In other words, the present study does not claim to be the first of its kind in demonstrating how freedom has a huge impact in human relationships as it relates to sexuality. Be that as it may, we have also discovered that the area is yet understudied. Thus, this study explores sexuality in human relationships within the selected novels of de Beauvoir with a view to portraying her core existentialist principles of freedom and choice.

Studies which have been carried out on human sexuality, both quantitative and qualitative point to the conclusion that our sexual identities are not 'fixed' in biology but more on psycho-social factors such as peer pressure, conformity and locational circumstance (Buttler, 2006; Fine, 2010). In our judgment, locational circumstance appears to be the most influential of these factors because the environment in which an individual grows up has a great impact in his worldview. From infancy to adulthood, the individual imbibes habits and internalises socially established values and norms within his immediate environment, these, in turn informs his general outlook in life.

In his study on human sexuality Rodrigues (2014) opines that all humans are sexual beings; as a result, sexuality is a predetermined feature of existence. However, the way each individual deals with his/her sexuality is the result of an existential choice. In other words, apart from the fact that biology has determined individuals as either male or female, it is the individual that determines what their sexual orientation would be and how to respond to their sexuality. An individual chooses either to accept or to reject the values that were handed down to them as part of their upbringing. This choice, according to Rodrigues earlier quoted, “involves a deep commitment to an existential project.”

This is a very important issue when we put into consideration the sensitivity of the debate which is going on the world over regarding gay marriage. In the novels under study, there are instances where characters reject or accept socially determined ways that individuals express their sexuality. This is of interest because the author, de Beauvoir, presented homosexual relationships at a time when homosexual unions were considered unacceptable and homosexual couples were not fully recognized as legitimate partners. Apart from the representations of homosexual unions, there are also bisexual individuals in these texts. One can safely say that the writings of Simone de Beauvoir, especially as presented in her works of fiction, are quite a departure from the norm, considering the time that she wrote, for example, *L'invitée* (1943). At the time, it was heterosexuality that was encouraged while sex outside of marriage was discouraged. This is in consonance with Ursula Tidd's (2004) comment that “in the first half of the twentieth century, women's sexuality was mainly contained within marriage for heterosexual women, particularly since the birth rate was a highly political issue and contraception was illegal. In the 1930s and 1940s, the French Communist Party spoke out against divorce and sex outside marriage.”

De Beauvoir's works point to the fact that she is deeply concerned with freedom in sexual relationships. As Tidd notes, when Simone de Beauvoir wrote in the 1940s, sex outside of marriage was spoken against, yet her novels are replete with instances where characters have sex outside of marriage, and where characters that are married detest sexual fidelity. The difference in de Beauvoir's works with what was socially acceptable in that era is also evident in the comment made by Tina Chanter (200:138) when she says that “from the

point of view of her contemporaries, Beauvoir might well have seemed shocking and unconventional.” Thus, it came as no surprise when the book *Le deuxième sexe* was put on the Vatican’s list of proscribed books (Chanter, 2000:141).

Years later, things changed, and in recent times, there have been studies carried out on sexual fluidity. Sexual fluidity, as Lisa Diamond (2008:3) puts it, “means situation-dependent flexibility in women’s sexual responsiveness. This flexibility makes it possible for some women to experience desires for either men or women under certain circumstances, regardless of their overall sexual orientation.” Diamond argues that heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual identities are dependent on a number of inter-relational and socio-cultural contextual factors. She highlights three key ideas in sexual fluidity, (i) the non-exclusivity in attraction to either gender, (ii) the open possibility of change in the focus of attraction and (iii) that attraction is directed toward the person, not the gender. This aspect of women’s sexuality is worth mentioning because as the analysis of the selected texts shows, de Beauvoir portrayed characters with sexual fluidity. In a study entitled Ernesto Spinelli has written that people’s sexuality is associated with their worldview. In an important study titled “Simone de Beauvoir ou l’entreprise de vivre” by Francis Jeanson (1966) de Beauvoir was perceived as one who always talks about her personal life and relationships with others. an investigation of the selected texts touches an aspect of this claim as well.

Apart from praising the works of de Beauvoir and acknowledging her tremendous contributions both to literature and philosophy, critics have also pointed out areas in which they find her works deficient. One of such areas is on the issue of homosexuality. Ann Ferguson (1990:285) in her critique of the chapter titled “The Lesbian”, in de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*, claims that there is a weakness in de Beauvoir’s approach to lesbianism. Ferguson says that this weakness lies in de Beauvoir’s ignoring “the social and historical meaning of a lesbian identity in order to focus on the individual choice of sexual preference.”

In her statement, Ferguson raises not just one but two issues—the first is the issue of lesbian practices and the second is that of identity. Ferguson insists that social and material conditions constrain women’s choices and therefore accuses de Beauvoir of

ignoring this fact. However, there are views that are opposed to Ferguson's as can be found in studies that were done later. For instance, Sue Kentlyn (2008:46) contends that "Ferguson has misapprehended the actual nature of Beauvoir's central in the *Second Sex*." She disagrees with Ferguson whose view is that the actual nature of de Beauvoir's work is "a feminist appropriation of an Existentialist metaphysic to analyse motherhood as a biological, economic and social institution which perpetuates male dominance cross-culturally."

Instead, Kentlyn argues that "Beauvoir's central preoccupation [is] the question of woman as the Other attaining a sense of agency, escaping the state of being object to become subject, moving from immanent to transcendent, contingent to autonomous, inessential to essential." Despite this disparity in the views of the two aforementioned critics, namely, Ferguson and Kentlyn, we observe that there is of course a point of agreement in their views on de Beauvoir's works. They both agree on how social and historical conditions affect women's choices as far as going into lesbian relationships are concerned. More importantly, we agree with Kentlyn that de Beauvoir's main preoccupation is "the question of woman as the Other attaining a sense of agency, escaping the state of being object to become subject." It is this question of women attaining a sense of agency, having rights over her body among other issues that have been the contention of Radical Feminism.

2.6 The Theory of Radical Feminism

Feminism started in the Western world and dates back to the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries (Adebayo, 1999:24; Ogini, 1996:11 and Davies & Schleifer 1989). Feminists the world over, no matter the strand they belong to, are interested in making the world a better place for women. Feminism, as Nnamani (2004:45) says, "is not a new phenomenon. It is as old as the human desire to be treated fairly and judged equally." As described by Ann Curthoys (200:3), Feminism is "a set of ideas, a political and social movement, a cultural renaissance . . . a force for change and a guide for living." Another notable writer and critic, Bell Hooks (2000: viii), holds that feminism is "a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression." With that simple, yet, all encompassing definition, Bell Hooks points out the major problem that all the different brands of

Feminism such as, Radical Feminism, Liberal Feminism, Black Feminism, Western Feminism and African Feminism among others want to end—sexism.

Radical Feminism is one of the offshoots of twentieth century Feminism. As the name suggests, Radical Feminism attempts to go to the roots of women's oppression so as to put an end to it. Like any other brand of Feminism, it earnestly desires to put an end to all forms of oppression that women face. It is a theory of women, by women and for women (Bryson, 2003:163). Radical Feminism considers patriarchy the ultimate perpetrator of oppression against women. As a result, it focuses on issues such as sexual rights, reproductive health, contraception and abortion (Melton, 2011). When this brand of Feminism emerged in Europe in the 1960's, its focus was on male violence against women, prostitution and inequalities between the genders (Dahlin-Jones, 2014:5). Thus, male oppression of women and sexism has remained central to radical feminist criticism.

As opposed to Liberal Feminism which accepts the notion of determinism, radical feminists reject it and insist rather that either sex could be nurturant depending on the social conditions in which each develops. Radical Feminism accuses patriarchy as being primarily responsible for women's oppression regardless of colour, race and economics. In a patriarchal society, women are forced by the dominant male ideology to adopt male reasoning, interpretation and assessment of gender and language to their own (the women's) disadvantage.

Patriarchy permeates almost all aspects of our daily life. Millet (1971), cited in Lawal (2010:11), says that "so deeply rooted is patriarchy that the character structure it creates in both sexes is more of a habit of mind and a way of life than a political system." Thus, radical feminists maintain that patriarchy is very oppressive to women in many ways, since it conditions the world view not only of women but also that of men, and the result is that in some societies, women oppression is considered a norm. Feminist scholars who fight to combat gender inequality are vehemently opposed to patriarchy and are poised to confront it through what Firestone (1970) describes as "a feminist revolution".

Ojaruega (2012:201) describes Radical Feminism as "that brand of feminist ideology which seeks extreme and total redress of the devalued status of women. To achieve this

objective, proponents do not shy away from employing confrontational means. The principal aim of Radical Feminism is a total overthrow of agents and agencies of women oppression in all spheres of life.” Thus, radical feminists contend that women must wrest power out of men’s grip. This is why the focus of Radical Feminism is on fighting gender related violence (Chukwuma 1994).

Radical feminists consider controlling women’s sexuality and reproductive powers the worst manifestation of patriarchy. Thus, for the oppression of women that have biological roots, Radical Feminism seeks biological revolution in order to liberate the women. For instance, radical feminists believe that women must seize control of the means of reproduction in order to stamp out the sexual class system. In proposing some aggressive solutions to the pregnancy/childbirth related problems facing women, Radical Feminism advocates the use of contraceptives, safe abortions and lesbianism.

Another notable point is that radical feminists believe that women as a group, should struggle together in order to become liberated. Additionally, Radical Feminism challenges the male power in areas of life such as the family and sexuality, because both are seen as instrumental to patriarchal domination and oppression.

In a book titled *The Dialectics of Sex*, Shulamith Firestone (1970) who was also one of the founders of the radical feminist movement “Redstockings of the Women’s Liberation Movement” called for women’s sexual liberation. Sexual liberation views the acceptance of the lesbian culture as a way of escape for women. In addition to this, radical feminists direct hostility towards men by rejecting heterosexual sex, marriage, childbearing, home-making among others. As a result, there are radical feminists who settle for lesbianism, since it allows women to explore their own sexuality without male encroachment and they condemn men who simply see or regard women as a tool for sexual pleasure that can be exploited for selfish motives.

In her book *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir recognised and highlighted the problems and oppression of women in different parts of the world. She developed the idea that women are seen as the *other* in human society. The first perspective in Radical Feminism is that women are enslaved due to “the ideology of patriarchy which emphasizes male

importance, dominance and superiority” (Njoku, 2001:195). Therefore, radical feminists are committed to the overthrow of patriarchy.

Simone de Beauvoir wrote extensively on the contribution of patriarchy to the perpetration and sustenance of women’s oppression through social conditioning. Evans (1986:85) opines that “Simone de Beauvoir has been a strong champion for the cause of women by challenging traditional values.” Such traditional values include the patriarchal view that women are inferior to men and that domestic work, which remains unpaid for, must be done by women. Long before Feminism became a welcome cause in France or elsewhere, Simone de Beauvoir has demonstrated that she is an outspoken defender of women’s rights. As Moi (1987: 2) puts it, De Beauvoir argues that “the social, economic and ideological structures of patriarchy deny women access to the material and intellectual resources required to become artists in their own right.”

De Beauvoir explains the affects that social conditioning has on the careers of women when she says that “however gifted an individual is at the outset, if his or her talents cannot be exploited because of his or her social conditions, because of the surrounding circumstances, these talents will be still-born.” She disagrees with what some people say that women by nature are inferior to men and therefore are not capable of achieving the same level of success with men in any endeavour. She affirms that the number of women in certain professions such as Law and Medicine pales into insignificance when compared with that of men, and she provides reason for this. According to her, the statistical law states that the larger a group, the more likely that one of its members will stand out as exceptional. She used as an example two groups of medical students taken at random, a group numbering one hundred and the other twelve. If one is asked to guess which of these two groups is likely to have a great doctor in the making, it is obvious that the group with the larger number will be chosen for the person will have a ten to one chance of winning. In the same vein, many women do not often attain exceptional achievements in this and other fields not because they cannot, but because their numbers in these areas are indeed very much limited.

Furthermore, Simone de Beauvoir argues that women hardly have the opportunity to develop their talents to the full. For, as she argues, talent is not something that you are

born with; rather it is something you acquire overtime through constant effort and practice. Then, too, when you are faced with difficulties or challenges and you struggle to overcome them, then you can excel. However, women do not always have such opportunities where they are tested and allowed to show their full ability in medical practice, since people always refer difficult cases to male doctors. Thus, Simone de Beauvoir demonstrates by using multiple examples that the condition of women is socially determined, and this in turn, influences their ability to act and excel.

Coming to the home front, Simone de Beauvoir tells of the double role that women bear, that of working secularly, and then secondly working at home as a wife, mother and housekeeper. Men, on the other hand, have no such constraints. In their careers, many women, according to de Beauvoir, do not 'dare' to be too successful as this would risk annoying, upsetting or humiliating her husband. In lending credence to this fact, Simone de Beauvoir cites two different examples. The first is that of a group of female students who handed in a mediocre assignment. When she inquired why they did not put in their best, they said that although they wanted to succeed in their careers, they do not want to excel as this may make marriage impossible. In other words, if people consider these ladies pedantic or intellectuals, nobody will want to marry them.

A second example that Simone de Beauvoir gives is that of a friend who together with her husband was preparing for an examination in philosophy. Although she went in well prepared, she deliberately failed the exam for fear that her husband may fail while she passes. Thus, one can say that many social factors are responsible for the professional mediocrity of women. It is far from being a product of their nature, but can rather be explained by a wide range of circumstances surrounding their situation. It is because of this insight into feminist discourse that Simone de Beauvoir became a renowned feminist writer.

Ozouf (1995:397) opines that for de Beauvoir, "womanhood is neither nature nor essence but a situation always changeable through strength of will." Many of de Beauvoir's novels are devoted to showing that dependence, the inability to assert oneself as an autonomous individual is a major factor responsible for the misfortune of women. This factor is well captured in the novels under study, and as would be shown much later in the analysis,

dependence ultimately means that the individual lacks the ability to assert herself as an autonomous individual.

Tidd (1998:18) with regards to Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1928) and Simone de Beauvoir's *The second Sex* (1949) says that both women, that is, Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir, are the foremothers of Feminism. While the former begot American feminist criticism, the latter begot French feminist criticism. The book *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir had much impact on French Feminism, for it exposed the different ways in which women are oppressed.

Some critics, like Simons (1986:177), say that "in the *Second Sex* it is the masculine bias of psychoanalysis that de Beauvoir criticises, as well as its failure to perceive the wider socio-political context of psychological gender differences. Rather than throw it away entirely, Beauvoir modified psychoanalytic theory through the use of feminist, Marxist and existentialist insights." Other critics disagree with Simone de Beauvoir in some areas. For example, Toril Moi, although an admirer of de Beauvoir, points out some areas where *The Second Sex* of Simone de Beauvoir are found wanting. She points out where Simone de Beauvoir used Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialist philosophy in her work.

Before concluding Chapter Two, it would be useful to take a quick glance at sexuality in twentieth century French society in which Simone de Beauvoir lived and wrote. Her personal trajectory during this period will shed light on what likely informed her interests as well as contribute to the understanding of how the author represents her ideas on human sexuality in the texts selected for the study.

2.7 Sexuality in 20th-Century French Society

Human sexuality, as Sanders (2009) points out, is a term that refers to different sexually related aspects of the life of a human. It consists of physical and psychological development, behaviours, attitudes and social customs that are linked to the way an individual perceives his identity, his gender, his relationship with others, his choice of a mate/sexual partner as well as his sexual activity and reproduction.

Sexual behaviours differ from place to place. People in different parts of the world consider sexual behaviours from their own world view. Thus, what may be acceptable in certain places may not be acceptable in other places. This idea is in consonance with Tyson (1999:27) who opines that, sexual behaviour is “a product of our culture because it is our culture that lays down the rules of normal sexual behaviour and definitions of what is considered proper and improper sexual behaviour.”

As history has it, in times past, most attitudes and behaviour of people in the Western world toward sexuality were guided by Judeo-Christian moral codes (Tyson 1999). Under such moral codes, some sexual conducts were judged as right and acceptable while others were rejected and viewed as wrong and unacceptable or even as sinful. This view is what Yip (2005:275) calls “the shackles of religion that upholds moral absolutism and a heteronormative power structure.”

In recent times, though, especially in the last century, things began to change from the latter part of the twentieth century. During the first half of that century, attitudes towards people who are homosexuals or bisexuals were overwhelmingly negative. As a result, people that practiced homosexual acts were not viewed by others as ‘normal’ and were subject to prejudice. Furthermore, it was this view that made homosexuals to be a target of persecution in Nazi Germany in the 1930s and during the World War II.

Traditionally, doctors viewed homosexuality as an illness, until 1973, when the American Psychiatric Association declared that homosexuality would no longer be considered a psychiatric disorder. Following that declaration, people’s view began to change gradually, and people became more liberal in their acceptance of homosexuals and bisexuals. This liberal view is well represented among characters found in Simone de Beauvoir’s works. Some of the selected texts portray characters with liberal sexual attitudes, attitudes that emphasise the idea of personal freedom, choice and responsibility for one’s actions. This shift in moral values, from that of rejecting the Christian moral code to accepting sexual liberalism, which allows for setting standards for oneself, opened the way for a change in sexuality in 20th century post-second World War French society.

A major factor that necessitated this change in people's view of sexuality is their experience in the two World Wars, the World War I (1914-1918) and the World War II (1939-1945). These wars had a great impact on sexuality in 20th century French society and its literature. By the end of the World War II, hundreds of cities lay in ruins; two in Japan were devastated, each by a single atomic bomb. Millions died in gruesome concentration camps. Altogether, the conflict took the lives of some 50 million men, women, and children. During the horrid circumstances of World War II, instead of adhering to long-held traditional standards of propriety, people adopted their own codes of behavior. The horrors of these wars along with the untold suffering that humans experienced resulted in the questioning of the belief in the existence of a God and the belief in the goodness of human nature (Casper, 2009).

Besides that, in the 1960's and 1970's, the sexual revolution hit many Western countries. Free love became widely accepted. Traditional values were demolished in the lives of millions. Thus, there was a shift from looking up to God as being the One to set standards for right and wrong to an emphasis on personal choice and responsibility, that humans should be considered responsible for their actions. Secularism became the order of the day thereby profaning the sacred and sacralising the profane. Multiple partnerships within the heterosexual and homosexual lifestyles of characters are common in the selected texts, and this well demonstrates the 20th century French society.

As a committed writer, Simone de Beauvoir is deeply interested in the contemporary issues of the post-Second World War French society. This is in consonance with Robert Eaglestone's (2004: vii) postulation that "no critical thinker ever existed in a vacuum but, instead, emerged from a broader intellectual cultural and social history." Thus, prevalent issues that were of importance during the period that she wrote became part of her literary concerns and are recurrent in her works. Such issues include sexual liberality; double standards of sexuality, intra-gender conflicts, writing in France during the German occupation, Resistance activities, and racial prejudice among others. Although the study does not cover all the issues that preoccupy the writer, each of the ones that concern the study is briefly discussed as they form the basis of the analysis that follows in the next two chapters.

2.8 Life and Works of Simone de Beauvoir

Simone de Beauvoir, whose works form the thrust of this study, is one of the most committed writers of her time. She came to be known as a very influential Existentialist philosopher and feminist theorist. As a committed writer, she wrote about the philosophical, social, cultural and political issues of her time. In her book *Le deuxième sexe*, for example, de Beauvoir presents an existentialist analysis of the situation of women in the world. Interestingly, *Le deuxième sexe* became very influential in the formation of feminist theory. Through the lens of de Beauvoir's literary productions, one can see a close rapport between literature, life and society.

The famous French feminist and existentialist philosopher, Simone-Ernestine-Lucie-Marie Bertrand de Beauvoir was born on 9 January, 1908 in Paris to Georges Bertrand de Beauvoir and Françoise (née) Brasseur. Georges Bertrand de Beauvoir studied law and worked as a civil servant, as a legal secretary. Although an atheist who had extreme right-wing political views, he got married in 1906, to Françoise Brasseur, a deeply religious woman from north-east France who was devoted to raising her children in the Catholic faith.

As Simone grew up, she experienced political and religious ideological conflicts between her parents which left lasting impression on her, for she was a precocious child with high intellectual capacity. Her father always provided her with edited selections from great literary works and these books deepened de Beauvoir's love for literature. She desired to be a writer and a teacher, and was enrolled in a private Catholic school for girls. She studied in this school (Institut Adeline Désir) until she was seventeen years of age. She enjoyed an intimate friendship with Elizabeth Mabile who was fondly called Zaza. But in 1919, Zaza died, and her untimely death haunted de Beauvoir throughout the rest of her life.

The training de Beauvoir received from her mother who was a Catholic, coupled with her education in a Catholic school made her to have a religious background. But when she turned fourteen, she rejected the belief in the existence of God and decided to study philosophy. She remained an atheist until her death in 1986.

She sat for and passed the *baccalauréat* examination in mathematics and philosophy in 1925. Thereafter she studied mathematics at the *Institut Catholique* and literature and languages at the *Institut Sainte-Marie*. It was after her success in these examinations that she started her study in philosophy in earnest in 1927. During her study of philosophy at the Sorbonne, de Beauvoir passed examinations in General Philosophy, Greek, History of Philosophy and Logic.

During a highly competitive philosophy aggregation examination that was held in 1929, de Beauvoir took a second place; she narrowly lost the first place to Jean-Paul Sartre, for Sartre had sat for that same exam the year before but failed. Thus it happened that at age twenty one, Simone de Beauvoir became the youngest student ever to pass the aggregation examination in philosophy as well as the youngest philosophy teacher in France.

It was during the period that de Beauvoir was attending lectures in preparation for the aggregation examination that she met Jean-Paul Sartre and she kept an intellectual and romantic relationship with Sartre throughout her life. Although Sartre proposed to her in 1931, Simone de Beauvoir never got married or raised a family. The relationship between her and Sartre was liberal, allowing both parties to have other lovers. On her part, de Beauvoir did not restrict her liaisons to only men for she had female lovers too. Among her lovers were Olga, the American author Nelson Algren, the journalist Jacques Bost and Claude Lanzmann.

With the publication of her first novel *L'invitée* in 1943, de Beauvoir turned to a career as a full-time writer and never returned to the teaching profession. She, along with Sartre became the leading figures of French atheistic existentialism through the publication of their philosophy, novels and drama. They launched *Les Temps Modernes* in 1945 and in 1947, she travelled to the United States for the first time, this later resulted in the production of a work titled *L'Amérique au jour le jour* (America Day by Day 1948). In 1949, she published her most widely read work *Le deuxième sexe* (The Second Sex), a ground-breaking study on women's condition which sold 22,000 copies in the first week. In 1954, she won the prestigious Goncourt prize for *Les mandarins*.

Also, during the Algerian war (1954-1962) she supported the Algerian struggle for independence by becoming directly and actively involved in politics. She boldly and openly condemned the French government for their oppressive policy in North Africa. In the mid 1950s, she began the first volume of her memoirs which appeared in four volumes. In all, de Beauvoir left a great legacy for writers and critics who came after her. Her novels and memoirs among others include: *L'invitée*, 1943(*She Came to Stay*), *Le sang des autres*, 1945(*The Blood of Others*), *Les bouches inutiles* 1945(*Useless Mouths*), *Tous les hommes sont mortels* 1946(*All Men Are Mortals*), *L'Amérique au jour le jour* 1948(*America Day by Day*), *Le deuxième sexe*, 1949(*The Second Sex*), *Les mandarins*, 1954(*The Mandarins*), *Mémoires d'une jeune fille rangée*, 1958 (*Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*), *La force de l'âge*, 1960, (*The Prime of Life*), *La force des choses* 1963, (*Force of Circumstance*), *Une mort très douce*, 1964, (*A Very Easy Death*), *Les belles images* 1966 (*Pretty Images*), *La femme rompue* 1968, (*The woman Destroyed*), *La vieillesse* (*The coming of age*) 1970, *Quand prime le spirituel* (1979), *Tout compte fait* (*All Said and Done*) 1972.

An issue that is central to this study was earlier raised, which is, de Beauvoir's concept of freedom and the role it plays in human relationships as portrayed in her philosophical and literary writings. The present study is based on four of her novels namely, *L'invitée*, *Le sang des autres*, *Les mandarins* and *Les belles images*. Among the fictive works of de Beauvoir, the selected novels that have just been mentioned are the ones that best portray her existentialist and feminist ideologies of freedom and choice in human relationships.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

The study employs Existentialism and Radical Feminism as its theoretical framework in the analysis of the selected novels. Existentialism is concerned with the individual's existence, freedom, choice and responsibility. It is submitted that the dominant issues expressed in these works lend themselves most easily to existentialist interpretation. This theory is used in the study to show the operations of human relationships in the lives of characters and to aid in understanding human behaviours as portrayed in the novels.

In this study, the selected novels namely, *L'invitée*, *Les mandarins*, *Le sang des autres* and *Les belles images* are examined to highlight the representations of male/female sexual relationships at two levels: first, in extra-marital relationships and second, in non-marital relationships. This brings in the relevance of Feminism whose main concern is male/female relationships. Thus, while the study leans heavily on two principles of Existentialism namely, freedom and choice, it also uses Radical Feminism in the analysis because this aspect of Feminism often advocates for multiple sex partners in order for women to take total control of their body.

Andronne (2012:172) posits that Existentialism is closely related to Feminism when he says that "Existentialism is a philosophical doctrine that tallies with Feminism, emphasising man as an individual, his freedom and responsibility, his possibility to make choices without any constraint, bringing forward the idea of subjectivity." It is this point of agreement between Existentialism and Feminism regarding freedom and choice that informs our choice of combining an aspect of Feminism with Existentialism as the major theoretical framework of the study. Jean-Paul Sartre's Atheist Existentialism holds that man creates himself and carves out a future for himself since he is believed to be his own artisan. Consequently, the study sets out to explore Beauvoir's existential ethics of freedom, choice and responsibility as well as the complexities of characters' relationships with others.

3.2 Existentialism

Existentialism is traditionally associated with the post-war era in France (Baert, 2011:620). It is a philosophical movement or tendency in the first half of the twentieth century which dates back to the Danish philosopher Kierkegaard, the father of

Existentialism. According to Michelman (2008:2) “the first phase of Existentialism occurred after the World War I in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s by two philosophers Karl Jaspers and Martin Heidegger.” The thoughts of these two philosophers were later absorbed into the French intellectual life during the 1930s and 1940s and eventually gave birth to the second phase of Existentialism.

Existentialist writers emphasize individual existence, freedom and choice. Dreyfus (2009) identifies “moral individualism, subjectivity, choice and commitment, dread and anxiety” as the major themes in existentialist literature. Michelman (2008:2) puts it that:

Existentialism takes its name from a philosophical reference to human *existence*, that is, to the uniquely self-conscious and self-determining character of a human life as it is lived, enjoyed, and suffered in the first person rather than described or explained from an ostensibly neutral third-person perspective.

Existentialists are concerned with the distinctive features that separate humans from other things in nature such as plants and animals.

According to Ursula Tidd (2004:14), “if Existentialism could be summarized in three words, they might be ‘freedom’, ‘responsibility’ and ‘authenticity.’ Existentialists claim that human beings have no predetermined purpose or essence laid down by God [in whom they do not believe] or nature. They are responsible for creating their lives according to their own values — and not by following the ‘herd’ — by reflecting clearly on their situation and relationships and by acting authentically.” When existentialists say that there is nothing like ‘human nature,’ they mean that humans are not predetermined to act in a particular way. In other words, humans are not predestined. Humans rather create who they are through the choices they make, the things they do or fail to do. Existence precedes essence is another way to put it concisely and it is a principal concept in Existentialism.

As a way of enlarging on the existentialist principle, Walsh (2000:174) says that “Existentialism starts from the premise that there is no such thing as human nature and

that our duty and responsibility is to create who we are. Its starting point is that humans are born with no fixed essence, that is, existence precedes essence.” Different characteristics of human existence are thus examined, described and analyzed by existentialist philosophers and critics in an attempt to understand fully what is meant for human beings to be “in existence.” This is because the sole preoccupation of Existentialism is human existence. Wallace (2009:69) affirms that “existentialist philosophy posits that humans are beings that create and define themselves in interactions with others.” This creating and defining of oneself becomes possible when humans make conscious choices, reach decisions, set goals (or projects) and work towards attaining them and thereafter assuming full responsibility for those choices.

A consideration of Jean-Paul Sartre’s notion of “l’existence précède l’essence” [existence precedes essence] contributes greatly to a good comprehension of the theory of Existentialism. Sartre (1968:21-22) says : Qu’est-ce signifie ici que l’existence précède l’essence? Cela signifie que l’homme existe d’abord, se rencontre, surgit dans le monde, et qu’il se définit après. L’homme, tel que le conçoit l’existentialiste, s’il n’est pas définissable, c’est qu’il n’est d’abord rien, il ne sera qu’ensuite, et il sera tel qu’il se sera fait,[what does it mean that existence precedes essence? It means that man first of all exists, encounters himself, moves into the world and defines himself after. Man, as the existentialist conceives him, if not definable, is because he is nothing at first, he only becomes later, and he will become what he makes of himself].

Thus, Sartre argues that humans have no fixed essence, but rather they create their own essence after coming into existence. Unlike previously held views by some philosophers prior to him, Sartre argues that man is not a ‘finished product’ but is rather a ‘self-creating being.’ There is nothing like predetermined essence since it is the choices that the individual makes constantly in the face of different situations that eventually determine what he becomes, his essence. Further, the unlimited freedom that man has at his disposal also makes it possible for him to change his decisions at whatever point he desires to do so. That is why Sartre says that man is nothing else but what he makes of himself. “L’homme n’est rien d’autre que ce qu’il se fait.” Basically, Existentialism is about what it means for man to be in existence in the world.

Although there were many philosophical movements in the twentieth century France, Existentialism is by far the most influential of them all. Mario Neva puts it this way, “L’existentialisme [. . .] c’est le mouvement philosophique qui a eu la plus grande diffusion après la deuxième guerre mondiale surtout parmi les intellectuels français et surtout parisiens” [Existentialism . . . is the philosophical movement that had the greatest circulation after the Second World War especially among French intellectuals and above all Parisians]. Three twentieth century French writers and philosophers, namely, Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Simone de Beauvoir are known as proponents of French Existentialism.

In general terms, humans speak of the existence of plants and animals and other creatures that we can easily see or touch. Existentialist philosophers on the other hand do not use the word existence when making references to such life’s realities but rather restrict the word to human existence. To existentialist philosophers, “only humans exist, all other kinds of being are, but do not exist (Omogbe 2012:38).

Further, Walsh (2000:174) adds that “the focus of Existentialism is freedom and the individual, as Existentialism attempts to reinforce the liberal individual as a conscious choosing being.” Andronne (2012:172) says that “this freedom is like death.” Because man is free, he is constantly faced with situations where he is obliged to choose, to decide, to determine what to do, the manner in which to do it, and then what time to do so. His way in life is totally at his own free will.

Existentialists “employ not only strictly technically philosophical works, but also popular writings, plays, novels, drama, etc. as a means of disseminating this philosophy” (Omogbe 2012:38). Existentialists consider every human being on earth as an actor on a stage. To exist, thus, involves making choices “freely” among the many available choices and thereafter assuming full responsibility for them. Existentialism as Tomes (2009:62) notes, promotes the view that humans should chart their own course in life, control their affairs and then assume full responsibility for the consequences of their actions and choices.

For existentialists, when an individual chooses what to do, it is a choice; when he refuses to choose, that is also a choice, because that individual has chosen not to choose. In Sartre's own words, "Ne pas choisir, c'est encore choisir" [refusing to choose is still a choice]. Thus, there appears to be no middle ground in Existentialism as regards freedom and choice.

There are two kinds of Existentialism. There is a Christian form of Existentialism associated with Karl Jaspers and Gabriel Marcel, and there is Atheistic form of Existentialism associated with Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Simone de Beauvoir. Although philosophers in these two strands of Existentialism have differing views, there are areas that all of them are in agreement. The common link between them is that both strands accept the idea that existence precedes essence. Other areas include human freedom, choice and responsibility, anguish, commitment, the facticity of human existence and death. This will thus concern itself with the atheist Existentialism and its major principles since the author of the selected novels under study belongs here. The following existentialist principles and concepts will be discussed: existence precedes essence, freedom, choice and responsibility, the concept of the 'Others', commitment, authentic and inauthentic life, and finally, death.

3.3.1 Existence Precedes Essence

Jean-Paul Sartre (2009:42) in his *L'existentialisme est un humanisme*, says that "l'existence précède l'essence" that is, [existence precedes essence]. This concept of l'existence précède l'essence [existence precedes essence] is a major concept in Existentialism. This concept implies that, man does not have any essence before he exists; instead he exists first of all and thereafter creates his own essence through his free choices and actions. Sartre (1944:12) has it that:

En termes philosophiques, tout objet a une essence et une existence. Une essence, c'est-à-dire un ensemble constant de propriétés, une existence, c'est-à-dire une certaine présence effective dans le monde. Beaucoup de personnes croient que l'essence vient d'abord et l'existence ensuite ...

L'existentialisme tient, au contraire, que chez l'homme – et chez l'homme seul – l'existence précède l'essence.

In philosophical terms, every object has an essence and an existence. As essence, that is to say the whole constant properties, an existence, that is to say a certain effective presence in the world. A lot of people believe that essence comes first, followed by existence . . . Existentialism holds that on the contrary, in man, . . . and only in man that existence precedes essence. (*Our translation*)

Thus, in Existentialism, existence is said to precede essence because when man appears on the world stage, he is at first nothing. Only much later does he become whatever he makes of himself. Humans are responsible for 'creating' their lives according to their own values. It is for this reason that existentialists stress that man should understand that the full responsibility of his existence rests on him. There is nothing like human nature, rather people become whatever they choose to be. Once thrown into the world, man is responsible for everything he does. Existentialism is against determinism which is a belief that every human act is caused by something, and that there is no real free will.

Man chooses his own essence through his attitude, his comportment, and his actions in the face of different situations that confront him in life. Such situations are not always brought about by man, nor are they always under his control. When confronted with such situations, the individual is obligated to make a choice and his choice and actions define who he is. There is no middle ground because even when a person refuses to choose, Sartre says that that in itself, is also a choice "Ne pas choisir, c'est encore choisir" [refusing to choose is still a choice].

3.3.2 Freedom, Choice and Responsibility

The themes of freedom, choice and responsibility permeate all the different schools of thought in existentialist theory. Existentialists, in general, consider human freedom as an

intrinsic nature of man's being and as a result they do not make any effort to prove that human freedom is a reality. As Omoregbe (1991:45) notes, "existentialists maintain that one does not acquire freedom since it is identical with human existence and is inseparable from it." This view differs from that of "Hegel who maintains that freedom is something that man acquires in the course of life."

Michelman (2008:183), in the *Historical Dictionary of Existentialism* describes existentialist freedom as "the capacity to shape one's life according to one's chosen projects and commitments rather than being determined by external factors such as heredity, society, family, or fate." He goes further to say that freedom "is a general power of choice and self-determination, evident in a range of behaviors and **actions** that lends existence its human character."

Human freedom, however, is a heavy responsibility because although man has the freedom to choose what course to follow, he is also responsible for the consequences of his direction or action. In other words, existentialists maintain that humans bear an inescapable responsibility for their own behavior. Thus, man's destiny is in his own hands, since he is totally free to become whatever he chooses. His future is not predestined; rather, it is the projects he resolves to carry out that determine his actions, because all his actions are geared towards fulfilling his life's projects.

Among all the twentieth-century existentialist philosophers, Jean-Paul Sartre concentrated most on the issue of human freedom in his works. According to Tomes (2009:62) freedom is not a quality that humans have; it is the very nature of humans:

La liberté n'est pas une qualité qui viendrait s'ajouter aux autres propriétés constituant la nature humaine, mais elle constitue l'être même du Pour-soi : c'est parce que chez l'homme l'existence précède l'essence, autrement dit parce qu'il n'est déterminé par rien à exister qu'il est libre. L'homme est donc « condamné à être libre », parce qu'il est délaissé et parce qu'une fois

dans le monde, il est responsable de tout ce qu'il fait. C'est ce que lui révèle l'angoisse, à savoir qu'il est le fondement lui-même et non fondé de tous ses actes.

Freedom is not a quality that adds itself to other constituents of human nature, but it constitutes the being itself for itself: it is because in man, existence precedes essence, in other words, it is determined by nothing that he is free. Man is therefore "condemned to be free", because he is abandoned and because once in the world, he is responsible for all that he does. This is what brings him anguish, to know that he himself is the foundation and not founded on all his acts. (*Our translation*)

A concrete conclusion that can be drawn from the excerpt above is that man's existence precedes his essence, and that it is only after man's existence that he creates his own essence. First, he maps out his projects in life and then strives towards their realization. But then when he realizes that his freedom comes with responsibility, which he considers a heavy burden, he is seized by anguish and tries in vain to run away from his freedom through various devices (Andronne 2012, Omoregbe 2012, and Sartre 1965). That is why Sartre says that man is condemned to be free, and this freedom is a permanent challenge because it is a task he faces permanently. In other words, there is no way that man can escape from freedom because it is his very being.

Sartre considers human freedom as "the power to get involved or fully engaged in the present situation to build the future. It means that involvement or engagement is by definition an act, the power of human freedom is the power of engagement, active participation in the life of a community" (Andronne 2012:174). Man is thus not only responsible for his life, but for the life of others.

Both Beauvoir and Sartre believe that "the focus of Existentialism is freedom and the individual, as Existentialism attempts to reinforce the liberal individual as a conscious choosing being" (Walsh, 2000:174). The exercise of human freedom is central in de Beauvoir's philosophy. Embedded in the chosen texts are issues that border on characters'

exercise of freedom in different areas of life; these include matters on sexual relationships among other issues hence the great attention placed on characterization.

As Baskin (1965:172) puts it, Existentialism, from the Christian standpoint, has been charged with denying the reality and seriousness of human undertakings since it rejects God's commandments, projecting the idea that everyone is permitted to do as he pleases, and that others are incapable of condemning the viewpoints or actions of others. On the other hand, adherents of atheist Existentialism have a differing view from that of Christians. For them, Existentialism is "a doctrine which makes human life possible and, in addition, declares that every truth and every action implies a human setting and a human subjectivity." (ibid)

In his *Essays on Existentialism*, Jean-Paul Sartre (1965:35) says "atheistic existentialism states that if God does not exist, there is at least one being in whom existence precedes essence, a being who existed before he can be defined by any concept, and that this being is man, or as Heidegger says, human reality." This form of Existentialism denies the existence of God as well as human nature. The reason for this, according to Sartre (1965:36), is that "there is no human nature since there is no God to conceive it. Not only is man what he conceives himself to be, but he is also only what he wills himself to be . . . Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself. Such is first principle of Existentialism." As it has been outlined earlier on, there are different themes in existentialist philosophy, and the same is true in it as a literary theory. For the purpose of this study, the focus will be on the theme of freedom, choice and responsibility. This is because the selected texts which will be analysed are replete with instances where characters are faced with choices that they must make.

3.3.3 Commitment

Commitment is very important to the existentialists whomaintain that man should not be afraid to commit himself. Commitment is related to freedom because existentialists insist

that if man is to exercise his freedom, then this freedom must be committed in action. The reason is that seeking freedom without commitment is simply self-deceit. Freedom must thus be expressed in concrete actions, otherwise it is no freedom. Therefore, when humans consistently make choices and commit themselves to their actions courageously, they can give meaning to their lives. It is for this reason that commitment occupies a key position in existentialist philosophy and criticism

3.3.4 The Other

It should be reiterated that Existentialism is preoccupied with the individual, yet it also points out that the individual would be unable to exist without the “Other.” This, existentialists support, saying that man in addition to being a *being-in-the-world*, man is also a *being-with-others*; that is to say, the existence of the individual means the existence of others because he exists with others.

Every man alive exists with other men; still he realises that he is unique. He “has his own life to live and his own death to die (Omoregbe, 1991:44). The implication of this is that an individual must choose for himself the kind of life to live, and not allow himself to be carried along by the crowd. In Existentialism, a relationship can only be true if it allows the Other to enjoy his/her uniqueness. An individual should not allow the Other to dictate for him what to do. In most cases, however, the Other becomes the obstacle to self-fulfilment. It is for this reason that Sartre could say “L’Enfer c’est les autres” [Hell is other people]. In marital as well as in non-marital relationships, one’s spouse or partner for instance, can be the Other. This can happen when both parties have conflicting interests, or when one tries to coerce the other to do things his own way. For a partner who is domineering, they may go as far as trying to hinder their partner from doing things, or even or expressing themselves the way they want, thereby robbing the Other of their freedom. In most situations, the Other has a way of constraining the freedom of the self because the freedom of the individual has a direct relationship with that of the Other since it is impossible for the self to exist alone.

3.3.5 Authentic and Inauthentic Existence/Life

Another concept that is closely related to the Other is authentic and inauthentic life. Humans in general often make self-deceptive attempts to escape their freedom when faced with difficult situations or circumstances. Granted, some situations are more difficult than others, but all those involved are at the same time, free and responsible in the face of these situations. Individuals may choose to act authentically by confronting the situation, or act in *mauvaise foi* (bad faith) by choosing to avoid it. Bad faith is an important notion in which humans deny their freedom. According to Tidd, (2004:26), when people act in bad faith, they pretend that:

We are not free and that we are part of the inert given situation, while at the same time being aware that we are transcendent beings and could choose to change the situation – but our anguish at the realization of our freedom prevents us from doing so.”

In a work titled “Simone de Beauvoir and Existentialism,” Michèle Le Doeuff (1980), describes bad faith as the pretense that humans put up of being determined by external factor and they achieve this by the refusal to recognize themselves as free subjects.

While “authentic life” gives the individual the opportunity to be himself in freedom and responsibility, “inauthentic life” suppresses the freedom of the individual by imposing uniformity or norm. When an individual freely chooses a particular way of life for himself and does not subject himself to the dictates of others, this is referred to as authentic life. Rather than do things simply because it is the custom of the place, the individual makes his/her own free choice and assumes full responsibility thereafter.

An “inauthentic life” is the opposite of “authentic life.” An individual who lives an inauthentic life simply ‘follows the crowd.’ When confronted with situations, he tries to avoid them, or tries to follow the customs of the place where he lives, instead of choosing for himself. This attempt that an individual makes to deny his freedom is known as “la

mauvaise foi”, self-deception or bad faith. Deouff (1980:280) says that “bad faith consists in the refusal to recognize oneself as a free subject and the pretense of being determined by external forces.”

Another way that *la mauvaise foi* is manifested is through the belief in determinism. Determinism is when people fail to accept responsibility for their actions but rather shift the blame to ‘human nature.’ Existentialists hold that there is nothing like ‘human nature’ but rather, that humans become whatever they choose to be. In other words, when a person decides to take an action or react in a certain way in a given situation, that individual should own up and accept responsibility for their action, not shifting blames. Ultimately, it is the individual who decides what to do, no matter what external factors may have triggered his reaction, and therefore must accept responsibility for it.

Another form of bad faith is *postponement of decision or indecision*. This happens when individuals find themselves in situations where they need to make decisions. They realize that the consequence of the decision would be unpleasant; still the situation demands that a decision be made. They simply resort to postponing or avoiding taking the needed decision. In bad faith, they rationalize that they can avoid taking that decision or that it is not really a pressing need. This is another means of self-deceit that humans use to escape or deny their freedom. Bad faith, in whatever forms it manifests itself, makes individuals to live an inauthentic life. In the novels under study, there are different levels of relationships where individuals are on these two sides of existence, namely the authentic and the inauthentic. A critical analysis will illustrate by the use of concrete examples from the selected novels where they belong as their actions and inactions demonstrate.

3.3.6 Death

Death is a theme that features remarkably in existentialism. Existentialists vary on their view of death. For instance, Heidegger's notion of death is different from that of Sartre. While Heidegger holds that death is meaningful, Sartre argues that death is a meaningless absurdity that robs human existence of all meaning. In one of the novels under study, we see one of the characters who view death as a way of escape. In yet another novel, *Les mandarins* Françoise uses death as a tool to do away with an opponent that she found to be robbing her of her joy. As is evident in many existentialist works, death is one of the constant themes, while it puts an end to all hopes of the individual and leave those that love them grieving, there are actually other instances where death is a preferred option.

3.4 Radical Feminism and Human Sexuality

As discussed in Chapter Two, radical feminists view patriarchy as women's worst enemy. The reason is that adherents of this brand of Feminism consider controlling women's sexuality and reproductive powers the worst manifestation of patriarchy. Thus, in radical feminist works, there are themes such as acceptance of lesbianism as a way of escape for women, the use of contraceptives to control pregnancy/childbirth, and sometimes female characters are presented as carefree individuals, who live in and out of hotels and hostels as opposed to the traditional home-keepers that women are expected to be. Furthermore, such works present men who see or regard women simply as a tool for sexual pleasure that can be exploited for selfish motives in bad light or condemn them outright. Themes like these and characters that fall in this category are explored in the analysis to demonstrate how they are portrayed in de Beauvoir's novels.

3.5 Types and Levels of Relationship in the Novels

This study deals with human relationship in three different forms as found in the novels under study. These include heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual relationships within marital relationships and non-marital relationships. Thus, all three forms are explored in the analysis; including characters that enjoy true existential freedom in interpersonal relationships as well as those who do not, thereby highlighting its moral and social implications on characters.

3.5.1 Heterosexual Relationships

Heterosexuals are people whose sexual orientation is toward people of the opposite sex. Thus, in heterosexual relationships, men and women are involved, and they could have this union within or outside marriage. Usually, a marital relationship is a union between individuals that are socially recognized and approved, and they commit to each other, expecting that the relationship would be a stable, lasting and intimate relationship. Depending on the culture or tradition of those involved in the union, there is a kind of contract which defines a partner's rights and obligations to the other.

Non-marital relationships, on the other hand, usually involve people that are in a relationship, and sometimes they may be living together without getting married to each other. Two people of the opposite sex living together without the benefit of marriage is a common phenomenon in industrialised societies across the world, and the same is true in the selected novels. We find de Beauvoir's presentation of heterosexual relationships in the texts interesting because, although radical feminists would prefer lesbian relationships to heterosexual ones, the author's existential ethic of freedom comes into play here, as we observe her efforts to make a balance between these relationships.

3.5.2 Homosexual Relationships

Homosexual relationships are simply same-sex relationships. This could exist between two or more males or between two or more females. There are multiple examples of this type of relationship in the novels under consideration. As the radical feminists would point out, this type of relationship does not allow men to have control over women. Besides, there is no threat of unwanted pregnancy which would in turn lead to abortion, such as can happen in heterosexual relationships. Examples from the texts are used copiously to establish this.

3.5.3 Bisexual Relationships

A bisexual by definition is a person who experiences sexual desire for persons of both sexes (Mathews, 1969:126). Bisexual people are able to fantasise about and enjoy both homosexual and heterosexual acts of lovemaking. It is a sexual identity shared by millions of people worldwide. A homosexual, on the other hand, feels attracted to people of the same sex. In the fictive world of Simone de Beauvoir, there are a number of characters with this form of sexual identity. Xavière in *L'Invitée* for instance is a bisexual. In the text, she is presented as Françoise' (a lady) lover and as Gerbert's (a man) lover. Another bisexual in the same novel is Françoise for has both Pierre and Xavière as her male and female lovers respectively. In otherwords, a bisexual relationship involves heterosexuality as well as homosexuality. Examples of this kind of relationship abound in the novels under study.

3.6 Double Standards of Sexuality

In almost all societies, social life and behaviour of people are governed by norms and rules, formal as well as informal. Criteria or standards used to evaluate and regulate women, most times, differ from those used for men. In feminist theory, this concept is known as double standard. Plicher and Whelehan (2004:34) observe that instead of having “a single standard for all, there exist two-fold or ‘double standards’, one relating to men and the other to women.” Such double standards benefit men more often than they do women.

The concept of double standard in sexuality is not an entirely new one. Back in the 18th century, there were female writers who protested against it. One such writer was Catherine Macaulay, a radical who responded thoughtfully to the Revolution in France. In 1790, she wrote a work titled *Letters in Education* wherein she argued that the apparent weaknesses of women are not natural, but rather the product of mis-education. According to Walters (2005:30) “Macaulay also attacked the sexual double standard, insisting that a single sexual experience does not transform a virgin into a wanton.”

Lee (1989:19) quoted by Pilchen and Whelehan (2004:35) points out that within the sexual cultures of young people, “a girl's standing can be destroyed by insinuations about

her sexual morality, a boy's reputation in contrast is usually enhanced by his sexual exploits." Simone de Beauvoir (1976:149) well captures this view when she says :

La situation patriarcale a vouée la femme à la chasteté; on reconnaît plus ou moins ouvertement le droit du mâle à assouvir ses désirs sexuels tandis que la femme est confinée dans le mariage : pour elle l'acte de chair, s'il n'est pas sanctifié par le code, par le sacrement, est une faute, une chute, une défaite, une faiblesse; elle se doit de défendre sa vertu, son honneur ; si elle « cède », si elle « tombe », elle suscite le mépris ; tandis que dans le blâme même qu'on inflige à son vainqueur, il entre de l'admiration."

Patriarchal situation has destined women to chastity ; one recognizes more or less openly the rights of men to satisfy their sexual desires while women are confined to marriage: for a woman, sexual intercourse, if not within marital bond is a fault, a fall, a defeat, a weakness; so she must defend her virtue, her honour; if she "succumbs", if she "falls", she will be looked down on; while in the blame that is inflicted on her lover, there is admiration. (*Our translation*)

An important point to note in de Beauvoir's works is that she does not blame only the men as being responsible for double sexual standards. She equally blames the women because their acceptance of the prevailing patriarchal ideology greatly contributes to their oppression. Some women accept and resign themselves to the inauthentic roles that patriarchy assigns to them.

Examples abound in the selected novels that demonstrate the existence of double sexual standards. There are situations where men and women who are involved in a sexual relationship are judged differently by the society. The analysis will also demonstrate instances where men are applauded for the same act that women suffer shame and rejection from the same society. Indeed, double standards are damaging to women, both in the real and fictive worlds!

3.7 Intra-gender Conflicts

Intra-gender conflicts threaten the harmonious and peaceful co-existence that naturally should exist among women. As Chesler (2003:7) notes, “men alone are not responsible for patriarchy; women are also their willing, even ardent, collaborators.” Thus, although woman’s inhumanity to woman is not on the same level as man’s inhumanity to woman, women do have enormous influence over other women, and often this leads to oppression and exploitation of fellow women.

Sometimes, as it is portrayed in the texts selected for this study, the reasons for such conflicts could be for self-actualization, at other times, it could be for empowerment or for economic or other reasons. At other times, it could also result in a mother-daughter relationship where a mother may verbally, physically, sexually, and psychologically abuse her daughter, or even consent with those that do so. Whatever form intra-gender conflict and oppression may take, and for whatever reasons, the fact remains that aggression, direct or indirect, by women against women, ultimately snuffs out the freedom of victims and forces them to live inauthentic life as our analysis well illustrates.

Simone de Beauvoir presents a concretely patriarchal situation where she places men and women in different relationships. It is therefore pertinent to examine, in the following Chapters, how Radical Feminism modifies the existentialist stance in some of the works explored in this study. In order to achieve that, we concretely applied all the features of Existentialism and Radical Feminism to do a comprehensive analysis of the selected texts. Both theories are used as we critically examined the selected texts in an attempt to portray Simone de Beauvoir’s existential ethics of freedom and choice in human relationships. The varying features of the theoretical framework also proved helpful in unravelling the ways that characters respond to the daunting challenges that threaten their existential freedom within and without their immediate relationships, thereby exposing the social and psychological implications and consequences of authentic and inauthentic existence.

CHAPTER FOUR

EXPLOITATIVE AND OPPRESSIVE FREEDOM WITHIN NON-MARITAL RELATIONSHIPS

4.1 Introduction

In many literary productions, whether in Existentialism or Feminism, themes relating to human sexuality are often presented. Ajah (2012:86) notes that “no literary world as painted by writers is complete without the representation of woman and her paradigmatic relationship with men and other women or *vice versa*.” According to Shannon (1992:293) “sex[uality] is a major aspect of personality. It is intimately related to emotional and social development and can be best understood by relating it to the total adjustment of the individual in the family and society.” Thus, human sexuality which is a vital issue in human existence becomes a major preoccupation in literary texts of French expression. Major real life experiences in 20th century France have a significant influence on the themes that make up the writing of Simone de Beauvoir.

In many societies, there are ethical standards, and, based on such standards, people differentiate between what they may regard as moral or immoral, right or wrong and good or bad. For the existentialists however, there is no meaningful difference between normal and abnormal, or of moral and immoral behaviour, since the differences in sexual behaviours among individuals are considered a matter of choice. The focus of this chapter, therefore, is to explore characters’ abusive use of freedom within non-marital relationships which, in most cases, leads to sexual exploitation and oppression.

4.2 Male Oppressive Freedom in Male/Female Relationships

Existential freedom, although is a possession of every living human, can become oppressive or exploitative when exercised without restraints or without consideration for the interests of the “Other.” This is evident in some of the relationships that are analysed in this chapter. A brief consideration of what constitutes existential freedom will help in understanding when the “Other’s” exercise of freedom has negative impacts on the self/individual.

According to Michelman (2008:183),

Existential freedom refers to the capacity to shape one's life according to one's chosen projects and commitments rather than being determined by external factors such as heredity, society, family, or fate. . . . It is a general power of choice and self-determination, evident in a range of behaviours and actions that lends existence its human character.

The theme of freedom is very near to the heart of existentialist writers and philosophers, and as a result, is present in all the different strands of Existentialism. In the ethics of de Beauvoir, freedom is relational. This means that for freedom to exist between individuals, it requires reciprocal recognition. To deny other's freedom is to live in bad faith, the same holds true when one denies his/her own freedom. When the freedom of an individual is denied him/her, this is oppression.

An oppressive person seeks to dominate, or subject others by treating them in a cruel and unfair way, not allowing them to enjoy their freedom. Andrew (2003:36) opines that "oppression is a failure in bad faith, to recognize the other's freedom. . . . it is also a failure to recognize one's own ambiguity. The oppressor takes her own freedom as paramount, and acting out of hubris, fails to see that she is nothing but an object without the other's recognition."

Although freedom touches different areas of human life, the focus of this chapter is on the manner that characters exercise freedom in sexual relationships which sometimes results in oppression and exploitation of their partners. In the study, it is observed that characters' exercise of freedom without self-restraint or without consideration for their partners' feelings is oppressive to those with whom they have dealings or relationships. Existentialists thus insist that an individual is obliged to put his freedom as well as the freedom of the Other into consideration at all times. Sartre (1968:83) puts it this way, "Je suis obligé de vouloir en même temps que ma liberté et la liberté des autres, je ne puis prendre ma liberté pour but que si je prends également celle des autres pour but" [I am obligated to desire at the same time my freedom and the freedom of others, I can only make my freedom a goal if I also make the freedom of others a goal].

There are instances presented in the selected texts which demonstrate that unless an individual makes the freedom of others his goal, there really cannot be true freedom. As existentialists say, 'true' interpersonal relationships must be dialogic and mutual in order for the two parties in the relationship to get the most out of their relationship. From the existentialist standpoint, a true relationship preserves the other person in his or her uniqueness. Even when the level of a relationship is deep, there must be some distance, without which the relationship becomes one-sided, dominating or possessive. The first example considered in this regard is the relationship between Henri Perron and Paule Mareuil.

4.2.1 Exploitative and Oppressive Relationship between Henri and Paule

Henri Perron and Paule Mareuil are example of individuals, who, although, are in a non-marital relationship, live together. Henri is a writer, while Paule is a singer. Henri has numerous lovers and so did Paule before coming to live in Henri's house. But once with him, Paule decides to limit her sexual interest to Henri alone, and abandons all her lovers as well as her singing profession. Henri on his part still keeps other lovers. Thus, their relationship sets off on an unequal footing—unequal commitment.

Henri hides nothing and tells Paule that although he will continue to live with her, he desires to have as many female lovers as possible:

Il faut que je te parle franchement ; je ne vivrai jamais avec une autre, jamais. Mais, c'est sans doute à cause de l'austérité de ces quatre années : j'ai envie de nouveauté, d'aventures, j'ai envie d'histoires sans importance avec des femmes. (135, Vol.1)

It is necessary that I speak frankly with you; I will never live with another woman, never. But this is no doubt as a result of austerity these four years: I desire new things, adventures; I desire to have casual love affairs with women. (*Our translation*)

A close reading of the excerpt above reveals Henri's conception of women. He views women in low esteem as is evident in his words "j'ai envie de nouveauté" [I desire new things]. In other words, Paule, to whom he is speaking, no longer belongs to his class of "new things" since she has already become 'old' in his eyes. He only derives pleasure from a woman at the beginning of a relationship, but as soon as the initial passion wanes, he dumps her for another. Henri exercises his freedom by going from one relationship to another in order to retain his object of pleasure.

Henri's actions are exploitative and oppressive not only to Paule, but also to other women with whom he goes into relationships because he takes a selfish and unfair advantage of them by going into relationships devoid of love and emotion, without any consideration for the woman's interests. He rather considers his exploitation of women as adventurous and so refers to it as 'adventures,' he says, "j'ai besoin d'aventures" [I desire adventures]. Radical feminists are against Henri's view of women because it reduces them to mere objects of pleasure for men. Henri's actions reveal that he is not only callous but also inconsiderate.

Another fundamental truth about Henri's nature that is revealed in his numerous sexual exploits is his *fear of intimacy*. *Fear of intimacy* is a concept in psychoanalysis which can show itself in the sexuality of humans in two ways. It either makes an individual to avoid sexual encounters altogether, or to seek frequent sexual encounters with different people (Tyson 1999:27). Henri plays out this *fear of intimacy* through the latter way, by having casual affairs with many women.

In order to ensure that he maintains an emotional distance from Paule, Henri withdraws the open communication that initially marked their relationship. He dreads Paule's deep sense of commitment toward their relationship because it threatens his desire to maintain some distance from her, and avoids becoming very intimate with her, something that he dreads. Henri lacks the commitment that Paule has.

At the outset of their relationship, whenever Henri gets a new lover, he tells Paule about it, and they both discuss it openly. “Henri avait avoué à Paule quelques infidélités qu’elle avait excusées avec superbe” [Henri had confessed some acts of infidelity to Paule which she had superbly excused]. But with the passage of time, especially after Paule moves in with him, that rule is broken and Henri begins to hide his love affairs from Paule. Eventually, Paule gets to know about Henri’s romance with Nadine, who is a family friend. As a result of this knowledge, when Henri tells Paule that he wants to have many casual relationships with women, Paule replies him that he already has one with Nadine:

Mais tu en as une [. . .] avec Nadine. Oh ! Rassure-toi ! je ne suis pas jalouse d’une enfant, surtout pas de Nadine ! [. . .] Je te l’ai dit la nuit de Noël : un homme comme toi n’est pas asservi aux mêmes lois que les autres. Il y a une forme banale de fidélité que je ne réclamerai jamais de toi. Amuse-toi avec Nadine et avec qui tu voudrais [. . .] Tu vois que je respecte ta liberté. (135, Vol.1)

But you have one . . . with Nadine. Oh! Rest assured! I am not jealous of a child; especially not of Nadine! . . . I told you on Christmas night: a man like you is not enslaved to the same laws as other men are. There is a form of banal fidelity that I will never demand of you. Have fun with Nadine and with anyone you wish . . . You can see that I respect your freedom. (*Our translation*)

In this study, this relationship between Henri and Paule is critically examined, and it reveals that there is unequal commitment between the two partners, and this in turn leads to infidelity. While Paule is faithful to Henri and is fully committed to their relationship, Henri is not. As a way to overcome her feelings of helplessness, despair and abandonment, Paule denies that she hates Henri’s actions. The words she uses, “je ne suis pas jalouse d’une enfant”(135), [I am not jealous of a child] do not portray her real feelings, but rather

are the exact opposite of how she feels. Although she tells Henri that she is not jealous of Nadine in an attempt to excuse his infidelity, she is burning with jealousy deep inside.

In an attempt to lighten her emotional burden, Paule tells Henri that she respects his freedom and that she will never demand banal fidelity from him, “Il y a une forme banale de fidélité que je ne réclamerai jamais de toi” [There is a form of banal fidelity that I will never demand of you]. Ironically, it is Henri’s fidelity that Paule earnestly desires and yearns for, yet in a vain attempt to deny the truth; she refers to fidelity as “banal.” This, however, is a far cry from her real emotions because Paule experiences feelings of despair because of Henri’s infidelity.

Existentialists describe Paule’s unwillingness to face up to the truth as “fleeing” from the task of becoming “becoming a self.” This strategy is referred to as “*la mauvaise foi*” [bad faith] by Sartre and as “*inauthenticity*” by Heidegger. Henri’s infidelity pushes Paule to live an inauthentic life which provokes an experience of anxiety in Paule, and makes her cry. This demonstrates that unequal commitment either from one individual or from the two parties involved in a relationship, leads to serious and deep emotional hurt, thereby supporting the popular saying that “l’Enfer c’est les autres,” [Hell is other people]. For Paule, Henri is Hell, in other words, a constant source of pain and hurt.

Worse yet, the relationship further degenerates, and the oppression aggravates when Henri indulges in lies. When Henri plans to embark on a trip to Portugal he refuses to take Paule along on the pretext that he does not have enough money to pay for both of them. As a result, it came as a shock to Paule when she learns that Henri will travel together with Nadine to Portugal instead. Paule confronts Henri but rather than pacify Paule, Henri puts pressure on her and uses subtle emotional blackmail on her and forces his wishes on her by saying: « Tu viens de dire que tu respectais ma liberté » p.136 [You just said you respected my freedom]. Thus, Henri exploits his wife’s emotions in order to get away with oppressing her. She replies Henri ““Je suis sans défense et tu en abuses”, p 139 [I am defenceless and you are abusing it].

On returning from Portugal, Henri abandons Paule in the house and moves into a hotel. Desperate for Henri's love, Paule gives him further excuses for his infidelity. She asks Henri why he rarely comes home:

Tu ne rentres plus souvent. Ça fait partie de ton nouveau plan? [. . .] Je t'ai dit qu'à présent je t'aimais en toute générosité dans un respect absolu de ta liberté. Ça signifie que je ne te demande aucun compte ; tu peux coucher avec d'autres femmes, et me le taire sans te sentir coupable envers moi. Ce qu'il y a de quotidien et de banal dans ta vie, j'y suis de plus en plus indifférente. (478, Vol.1)

You no longer return often. Is that part of your new plan? I told you that at present, I love you with all generosity, in an absolute respect for your freedom. That means that I will not ask for any explanations from you, you can sleep with other women and hide it from me without feeling guilty. I am becoming more and more indifferent to the daily and banal things in your life. (*Our translation*)

In the face of such abusive treatment from Henri, Paule has at least two choices. She can decide to have an 'authentic existence', which would mean abandoning the relationship, suffer a momentary emotional pain as a result of the breakup and thereafter get over it and live a happy life. On the other hand, she can choose to have an 'inauthentic existence' and that would entail submitting to the abuses of Henri and remaining in pains perpetually. It is the choice that an individual makes in the face of a difficult situation that existentialists refer to as responsibility. Mensa (1999:69) has it that "La responsabilité existentialiste consiste à faire un choix devant un problème posé par une situation dans laquelle se trouve un homme. C'est de ce choix que l'existentialiste est responsable. . . il est responsable du choix de l'attitude qu'il prend qui fera de lui un héros, un révolutionnaire ou un lâche"[existentialist responsibility consists of making a choice in the face of a difficult situation that one finds himself. It is this choice that the existentialist is responsible for . . . he is responsible for the choice of attitude he takes which will make him a hero, a revolutionary or a coward].

Unfortunately, Paule makes the latter choice, which is, living an 'inauthentic' life. As revealed in her words to Henri, she resigns herself and grudgingly accepts all sorts of oppressive treatment from Henri. On that note of resignation, she tells Henri to sleep with as many women as he likes, "tu peux coucher avec d'autres femmes, et me le taire sans te sentir coupable envers moi" (478), [you can sleep with other women and hide it from me without feeling guilty]. Although this is to her own detriment, she tells Henri that it is out of an absolute respect for him, "un respect absolu de ta liberté" (478) [an absolute respect for your freedom] that she does so. She does not stop at that, but says further "je ne te demande aucun compte", [I will not ask for any explanations].

This is cowardice on Paule's part, a concept that Heidegger refers to as "inauthentic" life or what Sartre calls "la mauvaise foi" [bad faith]. As discussed in Chapter Three of this study, inauthentic life is "a life lived in conformity to the dictates of an authority, tradition, custom or habit" (Omogbe, 1991:72). Inauthentic life means submitting to the dictates of another person, making it impossible for the individual to enjoy his freedom. In this instance, the 'Other' to whom Paule submits is her partner, Henri. Thus, one can say that through her actions, Paule chooses to live an inauthentic life when she fails to confront Henri or do something that could alleviate her suffering.

Despite Henri's oppression, Paule is ready to give up all for the sake of their relationship. Henri further exploits Paule's commitment to their relationship when he tries to justify his actions. He tells her that it is impossible for a man to love a woman for long. He says "Un homme, c'est impossible qu'il désire indéfiniment le même corps. Tu es aussi belle qu'autrefois, mais tu es devenue trop familière" (479), [A man, it is impossible that he desires the same body indefinitely. You are as beautiful as you were formerly, but you have become too familiar to me]. This view that it is impossible for a man to be in love with a woman for long is detrimental to women. This is what drives men to seek sexual pleasure from different women. Radical feminists are very much against this opinion because it has a way of giving men control over women's sexuality.

Henri's perception of women, that they should be changed as often as a man desires, leads him to ask Paule that they break up. He tells her that they would no longer spend their nights together:

Ecoute Paule, je vais te parler franchement : Je trouve que nous ne devons plus passer de nuits ensemble. Toi qui tiens tant à notre passé, tu sais bien quelle belles nuits nous avons eues autrefois ; n'en gâchons pas le souvenir. Il n'y a plus assez de désir entre nous maintenant. (478, Vol.1)

Listen Paule, I am going to speak frankly with you. I see that we can no longer spend nights together. You that hold so fast to our past, you well know what pleasant nights we had together before; let us not spoil that memory. There isn't enough desire between us any longer. (*Our translation*)

This final blow becomes unbearable for Paule, and this leads to her loss of psychological and emotional balance. The case of Henri and Paule clearly illustrates how far-reaching the consequences of exercising freedom without consideration for the Other can be. Of course, Henri has the freedom to decide what to do, but as the existentialists would say, my freedom involves the freedom of the Other. Both in the real and fictive worlds, the freedom of the Other must be considered along with that of the self. Henri should have been considerate and refrain from causing Paule loads of emotional and psychological blame.

In *Le deuxième sexe* (Second Sex) Simone de Beauvoir describes forms of neurosis that women in an oppressive patriarchal society unconsciously adopt in order to survive. One is when the woman chooses to sacrifice everything for love and the other is mysticism. In the case of Paule, she plays the role of the woman who sacrifices everything for love because as de Beauvoir (1976:540) explains:

Pour la femme l'amour c'est une totale démission au profit du maître. . . . elle choisit de vouloir si ardemment son esclavage qu'il lui apparaîtra comme l'expression de sa liberté ; elle s'efforcera de surmonter sa situation d'objet inessentiel en l'assumant radicalement ; à travers sa chair, ses sentiments, ses conduites, elle exaltera souverainement l'aimé, elle le posera comme la

valeur et la réalité suprême : elle s'anéantira devant lui. L'amour devient pour elle une religion.

For a woman to love is to relinquish everything for the benefit of the master. . . . She chooses to desire her enslavement so ardently that it will seem to her the expression of her liberty; she will try to rise above her situation as inessential object by fully accepting it, through her flesh, her feelings, her behavior; she will enthrone him as supreme value and reality: she will humble herself to nothingness before him. Love becomes a religion for her. (*Our translation*)

Obviously, such is what love becomes for Paule, “une totale démission au profit du maître” [relinquishing everything for the benefit of the master]. She gives up *everything* for Henri, to the point that she constantly keeps adjusting the terms of their relationship to her own detriment in the face of Henri's persistent assaults. This is a typical inauthentic attitude in which Paule denies her freedom. Furthermore, Paule reduces herself to nothingness as she considers Henri the supreme value and reality “elle exaltera souverainement l'aimé, elle le posera comme la valeur et la réalité suprême : elle s'anéantira devant lui,” (540), [she will enthrone the lover as supreme value and reality: she will humble herself to nothingness before him]. Having reduced herself to nothingness, Paule feels she could not live without Henri and loses her mental balance when Henri finally pulls out of the relationship. This aspect of de Beauvoir's novel is devoted to showing that dependence, the inability to assert oneself as an autonomous individual is a major factor responsible for the misfortune of women, and in this instance, of Paule.

4.2.2 Exploitation in the Relationship between Jean, Madeleine and Hélène

In *Le sang des autres*, Jean Blomart, the protagonist, exercises his freedom by having different women as lovers, one of whom is named Madeleine. Jean Blomart is like Henri Perron in *Les mandarins* in the sense that he does not strictly confine his romantic affection to one woman. However, between Jean and Madeleine, there is a mutual understanding; they both find having multiple sexual partners acceptable.

Thus, they are in a mutually exploitative relationship, and this allows Jean, from time to time, to go out with other ladies, and Madeleine does the same with other men. On these occasions, Madeleine will relate her sexual exploits to Jean, who in return, would do the same to her. Put in another way, there is no commitment in the relationship between Jean and Madeleine. This is how Jean describes the relationship between him and Madeleine:

C'était vrai, aucun engagement ne nous liait, pendant certaines périodes, nous nous rencontrions chaque jour et puis Madeleine disparaissait pour plusieurs semaines; elle me confiait avec candeur ses déboires sentimentaux. Si j'avais eu des aventures, si je m'étais épris d'une femme, je le lui aurais dit sans embarras. (95, 96)

It is true, no commitment binds us together, for some time, we were meeting each other everyday and then Madeleine would disappear for several weeks; she would then honestly confide in me her emotional heartbreaks. If I have had affairs, if I had fallen in love with a woman, I would tell her about it without embarrassment. (*Our translation*)

The passage illustrates what is considered mutually acceptable to both characters—that a person should respect the other person's freedom and not constitute an obstacle to the other's self-fulfilment. In this relationship, tolerance of multiple sexual partners is mutually acceptable to both Jean and Madeleine. This is much unlike the relationship between Henri and Paule where Henri oppresses Paule because she does not share his view on the issue. The key points in the passage above are highlighted in Jean's words which point out that he and Madeleine mutually consent to having multiple sexual partners. He says of Madeleine: "elle me confiait avec candeur ses déboires sentimentaux" (95), [she would then honestly confide in me her emotional heartbreaks]. He also says regarding himself: "Si j'avais eu des aventures si je m'étais épris d'une femme, je le lui aurais dit sans embarras" (96), [If I have had affairs, if I had fallen in love with a woman, I would tell her about it without embarrassment]. In summary, three things mentioned in the excerpt above lend credence to the claim that both Jean and Madeleine accept multiple

sexual partners First, no commitment binds both of them together; second, they do not reproach or accuse each other of infidelity, and third they openly tell each other of their sexual exploits without any feelings of embarrassment.

Madeleine gives herself to men; in other words, she engages in self prostitution. Prostitution is viewed in a bad light within the patriarchal system. According to a patriarchal ideology, there are only two identities a woman can have. Tyson, (1999:88) says that if a woman accepts her traditional gender role as an “Angel of the house” she becomes very submissive and does all that is expected of her in a patriarchal system, she will be regarded as a “good girl”; if, on the other hand she fails to do so, then she is a “bad girl.” These two roles that are recognized within a patriarchal system are also known as “madonna” and “whore” or “angel” and “bitch” (Tyson, 1999:88).

According to this patriarchal ideology, “bad girls” violate patriarchal sexual norms when they are sexually forward in appearance or behaviour, or when they have multiple sexual partners. “Good girls” on the other hand, are modest, honest, unassuming, self-sacrificing and sexually pure. The role that Madeleine plays is that of a whore, or “bad girl” and as such, she gives her body to anyone that wishes. As Jean describes her, “elle se livrait avec indifférence à qui l’en sollicitait”(83), [she gives herself away indifferently to whoever asks for it] thereby defying social norms within the patriarchal society where she finds herself.

Besides that, Madeleine has a forceful personality that resists Jean, and this puts some strain on their relationship. This makes him feel somewhat inferior to Madeleine since he finds it difficult to ‘possess’ Madeleine, to have a ‘total control’ over her. This is better understood when their relationship is compared with that which exists between Jean and another young lady named Héléne. Jean honestly admits that with Héléne, he enjoys sexual relations to the full, as opposed to his experience with Madeleine. Interestingly, Jean frankly evaluates the two relationships and according to him, he feels like a criminal whenever he is with Madeleine but feels at home when he is with Héléne. He highlights the difference between his two lovers thus:

Avec Madeleine, nous faisons l'amour en silence et presque toujours dans la nuit: quand je la caressais, je me sentais toujours criminel. Toi, [Hélène] tu n'étais pas dans mes bras un corps abandonné, mais une femme tout entière. Tu me souriais bien en face, pour que je sache que tu es là, librement, que tu n'étais pas perdue dans le tumulte de ton sang. Tu ne te sentais pas la proie d'une fatalité honteuse ; au milieu des élans les plus passionnés, quelque chose dans ta voix, dans ton sourire disait "C'est parce que j'y consens." ...tu me mettais en paix avec moi-même. Devant toi, j'étais sans remords. (137)

With Madeleine, we make love in silence and almost always in the night: ... when I caress her, I always felt like a criminal. You, [Hélène] you were not an abandoned body in my hand, but a whole woman. You smiled to my face, so that I know that you are here, freely, that you were not lost in the tumult of your blood. You did not feel like the prey of a shameful fatality; in the midst of most passionate moments, something in your voice, in your smile would say "It is because I consent to it." ...you put me at peace with myself. Before you, I was without regrets. (*Our translation*)

Emphasising the difference between his two lovers, Madeleine and Hélène, Jean uses some strikingly vivid expressions to describe his impression of Hélène, the things that make him comfortable with her. These include "Tu ne te sentais pas la proie d'une fatalité honteuse" (137), [You did not feel like the prey of a shameful fatality]. Obviously, this implies that that is how Jean interprets Madeleine's attitudes towards him, that when he makes love to Madeleine, her response is far from desirable. She abandons herself to Jean as if she were a prey in the hands of Jean. As the narrator describes Madeleine, "elle se livrait avec indifférence," [she gives herself away indifferently]. This feeling of abandonment makes Jean feel like a criminal, when engaging in the sexual act with Madeleine.

On the contrary, Jean admits that Hélène puts him at ease whenever she is with him. He says to Hélène: "tu me mettais en paix avec moi-même," [you put me at peace with myself]. Again it is evident that while Jean feels at peace when with Hélène, that is far

from his emotions when he is with Madeleine. Unlike Madeleine, H  l  ne is a more likeable person to Jean because he can easily manipulate her to do as he pleases while Madeleine has a more forceful personality that resists him. Thus, Jean could say that with H  l  ne, he feels no regrets. In a way, Madeleine represents the picture that radical feminists want to paint. They do not want men to have control over the female body, and that is the attitude we see Madeleine display. In other words, she sleeps with men when she wants to, yet she never allows them to have control over her sexuality.

In an attempt to compare and contrast the personality of Paule in *Les mandarins* with that of H  l  ne and Madeleine in *Le sang des autres*, it becomes clear, that there are characters who lend themselves more easily to exploitation and oppression. Such individuals put up little or no resistance in the face of oppression and exploitation. On the other hand, there are others who have a strong personality that resists the oppression coming from their partners and are able to maintain their ground and have authentic existence. In this regard, our findings show that Paule and H  l  ne belong to the same class of people whose partners can easily manipulate and exploit, whereas, Madeleine is different from them because of her strong personality. This ultimately results in Madeleine's having an upper hand in her relationship with Jean and as such is able to enjoy her authenticity.

4.3 Freedom and Choice in the Issue of Courtship

In *Le sang des autres*, the issue of freedom and choice is further highlighted in the issue of courtship. Generally, it is men who initiate courtship, yet *Le sang des autres* portrays it the other way round. This reversal of roles well represents the feminist view which maintains that women should go for what they want. Phyllis Chesler (2003:xix) holds that "a woman must be encouraged to put what she wants into words, to ask for it directly rather than waiting for someone to guess what it is she wants."

An example of a woman who directly asks for what she wants is a character named H  l  ne. When Helene meets Jean for the first time, she discovers that she likes him and immediately courts him. In doing this, she resists the patriarchal programming which maintains that "good girls" should *always* wait for men to woo them, or that they *should* remain sexually dormant until a man awakens them. As has been noted earlier,

according to patriarchal ideology, women who violate sexual norms or those that are sexually forward in behaviour are referred to as “bad girls.” Due to this view, it is expected that a man should first indicate his interest in a girl, and not vice versa.

However, in *Le sang des autres*, Hélène, shows that taking the initiative to indicate sexual interest in an individual can equally be taken by a woman. Helene neither bows before any societal norms or established conventions nor does she accept gender roles that are in opposition to her interests but is rather sexually forward in her behaviour towards Jean. She sees Jean for the first time, falls in love with him and goes ahead to woo him. She visits Jean at his workplace and indicates her interest in him. Initially, Jean refuses, telling her that he does not desire to go into any romantic relationship with her. He says:

Ecoutez, je vous comprends très bien; vous êtes à l'âge où on s'ennuie, n'importe quelle distraction vous est bonne. Mais moi, c'est différent; je n'ai que trop de choses à faire; je n'ai absolument pas le temps de m'occuper de vous. (75)

Listen, I understand you very well, you are at the age where one becomes easily bored, whatever distraction may be enticing to you. But me, I am different; I only have a lot of things to do; and I absolutely do not have time for you. (*Our translation*)

Hélène perseveres and with time, her persuasion and perseverance pay off as Jean succumbs and accepts her as a lover. In the existentialist view, Hélène lives an authentic life because she does not simply do things because she sees others do them or because it is the custom of her place. She does them because she freely chooses to, decides and thereafter takes steps in order to see her desire fulfilled. As we will yet see, she accepts full responsibility that resulted from this choice that she made.

The novel portrays Hélène as a bold and courageous woman who goes for, and succeeds in getting what she wants. Although it does not come easy, she perseveres and succeeds, thereby showing that it is not necessarily a man that must court a woman in the fictive

world of Simone de Beauvoir. This is in consonance with Calixthe Beyala's challenge of a widely held view in her *Femme nue femme noire* where men think that "seul le mâle doit déclencher l'acte d'amour," (20) [only the male should initiate the act of lovemaking]. Simone de Beauvoir and Beyala debunked this view by creating female characters that go against set societal gender roles in the area of courting and sexuality.

Another character named Elizabeth in *L'invitée* is someone who believes in usurping traditional gender roles that pertain to courtship and human sexuality. As noted at the preceding part of this chapter, women living in patriarchal societies are expected to be sexually dormant until a man arouses her. In other words, a man should propose to and court a woman, but Elizabeth is a deviant in this regard. She proposes to men whom she finds attractive, believing that in order for a woman to get what she desires, she should take the necessary steps and secure the object of her desire, even if this means going against what the society considers 'normal.' In the relationships that she forges, Elizabeth is always the initiator, the one who does the courting.

For example, when Pierre Labrousse's entertainment industry gets a new intake named Guimiot, Elizabeth falls in love with the young man at first sight because of his outstanding handsomeness. She immediately proposes to Guimiot who accepts her offer. Apart from the sexual fulfillment that she gets from her relationships with men, Elizabeth considers her actions as a way of exploiting men since she is always in control when she initiates such relationships. This is obvious from what she says of herself when telling Françoise about how her relationship with Guimiot develops:

Tu connais mes principes, je ne suis pas une femme qu'on prend, je suis une femme qui prend. Dès le premier soir, je lui [Guimiot] ai proposé de passer la nuit avec moi ; il en était bleu. (57, Vol.1)

You know my principles, I am not a woman that one takes, I am a woman who takes. From the very first night, I proposed to him [Guimiot] to pass the night with me; he was blue about it. (*Our translation*)

Elizabeth's choice of words in the description of her action is striking. She considers herself to be the one exploiting or manipulating men, and not the other way round as it is usually viewed. The key words in that passage are: "je suis une femme qui prend" (57), [I am a woman who takes] This is in opposition to traditional gender roles where women are considered 'givers' and the men as 'takers.' Expatiating on the generally held view on this issue, de Beauvoir (1976:149) notes:

Depuis les civilisations primitives jusqu'à nos jours, on a toujours admis que le lit était pour la femme un « service », dont le mâle la remercie par des cadeaux ou en assurant son entretien: la femme *se donne*, l'homme la rémunère et *la prend*. (*italics is ours*)

From the primitive civilization till date, it is believed that the bed is for the woman a "service" for which the male thanks her by showering her with gifts or by assuring her upkeep: the woman *gives herself*, and the man *takes her* and pays her for it. (*Our translation*)

Elizabeth rejects the role that patriarchal society expects her to play as a woman, which is "se donne" [giving herself] to men. She rather "takes" men. Elizabeth considers her action as a deviation from the norm and takes pride in this, boasting about it and speaking disparagingly of patriarchal gender roles. Further proof of Elizabeth's deviance is her proposal to Guimiot on the very first day she sets her eyes on him, "Dès le premier soir, je lui [Guimiot] ai proposé," [From the very first night, I proposed to him [Guimiot]]. This shows that she has a mastery over the men with whom she goes into relationships, she is in firm control over her male lovers and virtually exploits them. One of the contentions in radical feminism is that women should not be under the control of men when it comes to sexuality, and here we are presented with Elizabeth who does just that.

Apart from taking the initiative to court men, Elizabeth detests sexual fidelity, viewing it as a form of slavery. As a result, she seeks sexual pleasure with different men. Immediately Elizabeth meets a man that she finds to be attractive, she sleeps with him. This is well captured in the words of Françoise about Elizabeth: "Dès qu'un type lui plaisait, Elisabeth parlait de coucher avec lui," (57) [As soon as Elizabeth finds a man attractive, she talks of sleeping with him].

Elizabeth condemns fidelity outright, telling Françoise that sexual fidelity is nothing but bondage:

C'est ridicule, la fidélité sexuelle, ça conduit à un véritable esclavage. Je ne comprends pas que tu acceptes ça pour ta part. (58)

It is ridiculous, sexual fidelity, it leads to real slavery. I do not understand that you accept it on your part]. (*Our translation*)

Another instance where a woman is seen exercising her freedom in matters pertaining to courtship is in *L'invitée*. A female character, named Françoise, initiates courtship with Gerbert, a man that she finds attractive. She proposes to him outright, when the two of them go on a hiking trip together. Françoise asks Gerbert how he will respond if she asks him to make love to her; the conversation between them goes thus:

- Quelle tête vous feriez, vous qui n'aimez pas les complications si je vous proposais de coucher avec moi. Eh bien, répondez: quelle tête feriez-vous?
- Ce n'est pas que je n'aimerais pas, dit-il. Mais ça m'intimiderait trop.
- Eh bien, faites-le, stupide petit Gerbert, dit-elle en lui tendant la bouche.
- J'aime bien la forme de votre crâne, murmura Gerbert . . . Ça me fait drôle de vous embrasser. (458, 460)

- How would you react, you that do not like complications if I proposed that you sleep with me. Yeah, tell me, how would you react?
- It is not that I would not like to. But that is too intimidating for me.
- Ok then. Do it, little silly Gerbert she says, offering him her lips.
- I love the shape of your skull very well, murmured Gerbert . . . I find kissing you amusing. (*Our translation*)

As Gerbert frankly admits, although he strongly desires to have a sexual relationship with Françoise, he finds initiating a courtship intimidating and refrained from it. Françoise'

action in courting Gerbert is rather much in consonance with what Chesler (2003:xix) says women should do to assure that their needs are met. She proposes that women should “ask for it [what they need] directly . . . If she cannot get what she wants, she does not have to blame herself, give up, disconnect, or become enraged. She must learn that she can get what she wants another day.” Due to Françoise’s boldness in this regard, in asking for what she wanted, she ends up making love with Gerbert and they are both happy at Françoise’s display of boldness.

The examples of Héléne, Elizabeth and Françoise that have just been considered show that freedom and choice affect the area of dating and courtship. In each of these instances, we find a reversal of roles: ladies initiate courtship, they act to realize their goals, without waiting for others to decide for them what to do. This is an exercise of freedom that existentialists and radical feminists advocate. Also, in Existentialism, this is referred to as authentic life, making choices devoid of external influences, without the ‘Other’ curtailing one’s freedom to choose.

4.4 Compromised Freedom in the Relationship between Pierre, Françoise and Xavière

Sharing of sexual exploits between lovers is one of the ways characters enjoy their freedom, and it is a recurrent feature in many relationships in the novels under study. For instance, this is true of the relationship between Robert and Anne Dubreuilh in *Les mandarins*, the one between Jean Blomart and Madeleine in *Le sang des autres* and also that between Henri and Paule in *Les mandarins*, at the onset of their relationship, when open communication existed between them.

In *L’invitée*, the same holds true for Pierre and Françoise who are lovers and work together in an entertainment industry, writing and acting plays. Pierre and Françoise freely gratify their sexual desires in whatever way they deem fit. Pierre restricts his sexual relations to women but Françoise being a bisexual, keeps both girlfriends and boyfriends alike. They find sharing the sexual experiences they have had with others acceptable.

Describing the freedom that he enjoys in his relationship with Françoise, Pierre once told her:

On ne peut pas parler de fidélité, ou d'infidélité entre nous. Toi et moi, on ne fait qu'un; c'est vrai, tu sais on ne peut pas nous définir l'un sans l'autre. (29)

One cannot talk of fidelity or infidelity between us. You and I, we are one; it is true, you know one cannot define us, one without the other. (*Our translation*)

Both to Pierre and Françoise, neither fidelity nor infidelity matters. Pierre and Françoise have it as a rule to tell each other everything. No dark corners, no secrets, their relationship is a very transparent one. This openness leads to their becoming closely-knit such that it appeared as if both of them were fused into one. Pierre's words "toi et moi, on ne fait qu'un" (29), [you and I, we are one] lends credence to this claim.

As their relationship deepens, Françoise senses the fading away of her personality. Although she can still do things on her own, they may not appear completely real to her, unless, first, she narrates them to Pierre. "Tant qu'elle ne l'avait pas raconté à Pierre aucun événement n'était tout à fait vrai"[if she had not told Pierre about it, no event appeared real to her]. To a great extent, she becomes dependent on Pierre.

After forming another relationship with a young girl named Xavière, Françoise begins to notice that her relationship with Pierre is being threatened by this latter one existing between her and Xavière. Xavière lives with her parents in Rouen but comes to see Françoise in Paris. On Pierre's suggestion, Xavière comes to live with them in Paris. Her presence made problems start to develop between Françoise and Pierre, between Françoise and Xavière as well as between Pierre and Xavière. The trio relationship that Pierre has in mind of forming begins to take a heavy toll on all three of them as it turns out that Xavière is an extremely jealous individual.

Strong feelings of rivalry and jealousy begin to develop between Xavière and Françoise, between Françoise and Pierre, and between Pierre and Xavière. Pierre was forced to realize that building a strong trio relationship will not only prove to be costly but is also an impossible mission. Although all three of them suffer when things begin to deteriorate, Françoise suffers the most because she cannot become as close as she desires to Xavière,

yet she cannot remain close to Pierre as she was before the arrival of Xavière. Xavière constantly seeks for opportunities to take Pierre away from Françoise.

Pierre notices the change in Françoise disposition and suggests they put an end to his relationship with Xavière, but Françoise denies it:

- En fait quand je suis inquiet à cause d'elle [Xavière] je suis négligent à ton égard ; quand je la regarde je ne te regarde pas. . . Réfléchis bien, c'est sérieux. Si tu penses qu'il y a là un danger quelconque pour notre amour, il faut le dire : c'est un danger que je ne veux courir à aucun prix.
- C'est tout réfléchi, dit-elle, il n'est pas question. (206)
- In fact when I am worried about her [Xavière] I am negligent toward you; when I am concerned about her I am not concerned about you . . . Think well, this is serious. If you think that there is any danger whatsoever to our love in this relationship, it important you say it: because it is a risk that I won't run at any cost.
- I have thought about it already, she says, that is not an issue. (*Our translation*)

From this moment onward, Françoise starts to live an inauthentic life. She begins to hide her true feelings from Pierre. Pierre opens the opportunity, but rather than speak her mind and tell him that the relationship that they have with Xavière is weighing her down, Françoise refrains from doing that and lies to Pierre that Xavière is no threat to their relationship, when in fact, the opposite is the case. The account says that Françoise “commençait à étouffer dans ce trio qui se refermait de plus en plus hermétiquement sur lui-même (296), [Françoise was beginning to choke in this trio that is closing in more and more tightly on itself].

At a time, Françoise could no longer put up with the situation because she is constantly in and emotional turmoil; Xavière is bent on making life unbearable for her. The account says concerning Françoise and her feelings:

Françoise serra les dents. Elle fut traversée d'une envie farouche de battre Xavière, de la fouler aux pieds [. . .] C'était trop, ça ne pouvait pas durer ainsi : elle ne le supportera plus. (362)

Françoise clenched her teeth. She became filled with a fierce desire to beat Xavière up, to trample her underfoot . . . This was too much, it cannot continue this way: she can no longer put up with it. (*Our translation*)

This strong desire to suppress Xavière and put an end to her own suffering pushes Françoise to decide to kill Xavière. She goes to Xavière's room, and unknown to Xavière, Françoise opens the gas jet and kills her. This act by Françoise recalls one of the themes in existentialism that we treated earlier on—death. As was mentioned, death could serve as a means to an end in certain circumstances and that is what we find applicable in this instance. In order to regain her man, in order to restore the relationship between her and Pierre before the appearance of Xavière on the scene, Françoise decides to murder Xavière. Her action was premeditated and not accidental. In Françoise consideration, it is death that could make a reunion with Pierre possible. Thus, she snuffed out Xavière.

Françoise' case demonstrates that compromising freedom, and accepting what one does not agree with, leads an individual to live an 'inauthentic' life. Besides, as the cases of characters that live 'authentic' life show, it results in much negative impact not only on the individual, but also on those around them. On the contrary, acknowledging the truth, not denying it, ultimately leads to enjoying inner peace with self and the "Other."

4.5 The Use of Human Sexuality as a Tool

Time and again, when women find themselves in unwanted circumstances, they make the conscious choice of using their sexuality to set themselves free from the grips of such unwanted circumstances. A woman, for example, may find her financial resources threatened and resorts to the use of sex as a tool. At other times, it may be the quest for power or position that leads to the use of sexuality as a tool.

In second-wave feminism, body issues are part of the most urgent concerns. Western feminists insist that a woman should have rights over her own body. Pilcher & Whelehan (2004:6) point out that “within feminism and gender studies, the body has occupied a key position in a wide range of debates, including men’s control of women’s bodies as a key means of subordination; critiques of dichotomous thinking; and in debates about essentialism and the theorising of difference and diversity.”

In the novels under scrutiny, there are copiois examples of characters that use their body as a means to an end, in other words they give their body in exchange for what they want. This is especially true when they are faced with daunting challenges relating to financial security or other threats to their general welfare. Examples in the texts will help to buttress this point.

4.5.1 Lucie Belhomme’s Exploitation of Sexuality for Financial Gain

Lucie Belhomme is a woman in *Les mandarins* who believes that with her body and beauty, a woman can get whatever she wants. Although initially poor, Lucie works her way to becoming rich by readily using her body in order to make money. After becoming rich, Lucie, also through the use her body ensures that she never becomes poor again. Lucie is a shameless trickster with no remorse, and de Beauvoir refers to her as one of “de petites arrivistes” [small go-getters]. Knowledge of her background gives insight into her true nature.

As a result of Lucie’s initial poverty, her daughter Josette was never opportune to visit places of interest as other children did while she was growing up. Instead, she was sent to a boarding house where she grew up. She relates her childhood experiences thus:

Je n’ai jamais été à la foire. [. . .] Non. Quand j’étais petite, on était pauvres ; puis maman m’a mise en pension, et quand j’en suis sortie, j’étais une grande personne. (471, Vol.1)

I have never been to the funfair. . . . No. when I was small, we were poor; then my mother put me in the

boarding house; and by the time I came out from there,
I was already a grown person. (*Our translation*)

Fear of becoming poor again is a dominant sentiment that drives Lucie to be a ruthless ‘go-getter.’ That is also why she becomes hardened and is strongly attached to her dressmaking firm which she managed to secure after many years of constant struggle. On an occasion, Lucie’s friend named Claudie explains that Lucie’s crooked nature and lack of tenderness are a result of her life struggles to become rich:

Lucie n’est pas facile à vivre ; vous savez, les femmes
qui en ont bavé trop longtemps avant de réussir,
généralement c’est pas des tendres. (455, Vol.1)

Lucie is not easy to live with, you know, women who
have had a rough time for too long before succeeding
are not tender. (*Our translation*)

Although many years have passed, her daughter Josette still has horrible memories of the deprivations she suffered during her childhood. She is constantly afraid of the possibility of becoming poor again and it is this fear that makes her to accept to do whatever her mother asks of her even when it is contrary to her wishes. For example, she chooses to collaborate with German soldiers and save her mother’s dressmaking firm rather than lose it and become poor again, even though this means sleeping with the soldiers.

On an occasion, Josette’s male friend Henri asks what would make her happy, “Qu’est-ce qu’il faudrait pour que tu sois contente?” [What will it take to make you happy?]. She honestly replies: “N’avoir plus besoin de maman et d’être sûre de ne jamais redevenir pauvre.” [Not needing my mother any longer and being sure of never becoming poor again.] She says that she would be happy if she no longer needs her mother. This is not because she does not love her mother, but because she hates being a tool in her mother’s hands. She earnestly desires to be set free from the grips of her manipulative mother.

Josette further confides in Henri that her mother asks her to lie to people about her real age, and that at her mother’s directions; she visits a beauty house often in order to look

young and match the 'age' that her mother gave her. Her mother's reason for fixing Josette's 'age' is to make Josette more appealing to men. She understands that the younger a woman is, the more men will be interested in her youthfulness and beauty. Thus Lucie ensures that her daughter visits the beauty house every time. Josette also complains to Henri that on her own accord, she never entertains the desire of becoming a beauty model.

But that notwithstanding Josette sees herself labouring to become a beauty model so as to please her mother. She is also forced to sleep with oldmen, some of whom are twice her age, and even more, all in an attempt to please her mother and to maintain their present financial status. She confesses to Henri: "Je n'ai jamais voulu être mannequin : et je n'aime pas les vieux messieurs." [I never wanted to become a model: and I don't love old men]. Her words make Henri to conclude that it is Lucie who chooses lovers for her daughter. "C'était évidemment sa mère qui lui avait choisi ses amants. " [It was evidently her mother who was choosing lovers for her].

Even as she becomes rich; Lucie continues to depend on the female body to exploit men in order to get her way in life. Her relationships with men are exploitative, devoid of love, emotion and human consideration. Before entering into a relationship, Lucie ensures that the men she chooses are those who are not only rich but also influential as this will ensure that these men will be useful to her in different ways. This opinion is well captured in the remarks of Marie-Ange about Lucie:

A son âge elle [Lucie Belhomme] a encore tous les hommes qu'elle veut et elle s'arrange pour mélanger les utiles et les agréables. En ce moment, elle en a trois qui veulent tous les trois l'épouser. [. . .] Chacun croit qu'il est le seul à savoir qu'il y en a deux autres. (309, Vol.1)

At her age she [Lucie Belhomme] still has all the men she wants and she mixes the useful and the pleasant ones. At the moment, she has three of them and each of the three wants to marry her. . . . Each believes he is the only one that knows that there are two others. (*Our translation*)

As evident in the excerpt above, Lucie has at least three lovers, all of whom are ready to marry her, yet she does not give her consent to any. Her choice to remain single portrays the tenet of radical feminism which views marriage to men as a means of subordinating women, and bringing them under male control. Thus her rejection of marriage will allow her more room to exploit as many men as she can, instead of being tied down to just one man. Callous Lucie selects the men according to the potentials she sees in them, and they all render useful service to her. As a result of Lucie's deceit, each of the three men mentioned in the excerpt above believes that he is the only one that knows of the existence of two rivals. As a result, each of the men does his best to serve her interests in a determined effort to outshine the other two.

During the war years for example, unscrupulous Lucie used her young and very beautiful daughter to get the German soldiers to do her bidding. As the war threatened the survival of her dressmaking firm, Lucie resorts to the use of both herself and her daughter to ensure its continued existence. She made this conscious choice rather than sit back and watch the firm liquidated. She confides in Henri what she did:

Personne ne saura jamais ce que j'ai payé pour avoir la maison Amaryllis à moi et pour en faire une grande boîte [. . .] Je ne pouvais la sauver qu'en me servant des Allemands : je me suis servie d'eux et je n'irai pas vous raconter que je le regrette. Evidemment, on n'a rien sans rien ; je les ai reçus à Lyons, j'ai donné des fêtes : enfin, j'ai fait le nécessaire. Ça m'a valu quelques ennuis à la Libération, mais c'est déjà loin, c'est oublié. (309-310, Vol.2)

No one will ever know what I paid to have Amaryllis house by myself and to make it a great firm . . . I was only able to save it by using the Germans: I used them and I am not going to tell you that I regret it. Evidently, nothing goes for nothing. I received them in Lyons, I threw parties; finally I did what was necessary. That brought me some problem with the Liberation, but that was long ago, it is already forgotten. (*Our translation*)

Lucie's Machiavellian spirit can be seen in her ruthless decision to give her daughter Josette to sleep with German soldiers against the young girl's wishes. With her body and her daughter's made available, Lucie was able to ensure the survival of her dressmaking firm. This demonstrates that in some instances, women exercise power by using their body to free themselves from conditions that they find discomfiting especially economic situations. As Lucie notes, she does not regret her actions since she made a conscious choice to engage in those sexual acts, she willingly consented to using sex, considering it as the only means to save herself from serious war conditions which threatened her financial security.

Acquiring or securing financial gain is not the only factor that drives Lucie to use her body and that of her daughter; she also does so when her physical welfare is endangered. A need for such use arises when a secret concerning their past activities with German soldiers was threatened. It happened that when Josette was going out with German soldiers during the war years, she fell in love with one of them. This was much to her mother's displeasure, because in this kind of relationship, love is not tolerated. Moreover, French women were not expected to relate with German Occupiers. Mercier, a man working with Lucie got hold of some passionate love letters that the young German soldier wrote to Josette as well as some pictures they took together.

For three years after the war, Mercier threatens Lucie with blackmail, and she keeps paying him off because if the documents appeared in public, it would mean imprisonment for Lucie and Josette for having collaborated with German soldiers. When Mercier was caught and imprisoned for being an informant to the Gestapo, he sends a message to Lucie, that she should fight to release him or else he would uncover Lucie's activities with German soldiers. If that happens, Lucie and Josette will end up in prison.

Realising that she is in a serious danger, Lucie again arranges to exploit her own child Josette by throwing her into Henri's hands, a man that she considers capable of saving them from the consequences of their dealings with the Germans. She judges Henri Perron to be the right man for the "job" because of his notable activities during the Resistance. Henri is a writer, to some extent, epitomises the fate of writers during the Second World War. During this period, many publishing houses turn down the works of writers, refusing

either to print their work or to stage their play. Meanwhile, three directors have turned a play that Henri had written and wanted to stage. He says, “J’ai écrit une pièce; et il y a déjà trois directeurs qui me l’ont refusé” [I wrote a play; and already three directors have refused staging it].

In an effort to have his play staged, Henri fell into the trap of Lucie Belhomme. It so happened that when Henri complains of his plight, calculating Lucie hears of it, she realizes that this opportunity is just right for her to act in order to drag Henri into her net. She arranges for Vernon, the director of Studio 46, to accept Henri’s play but on the condition that her daughter Josette is included in the play. She is sure that if Josette gets the opportunity to work closely with Henri, Henri will definitely fall in love with her because of Josette’s outstanding beauty. Lucie tells Henri:

J’ai lu votre pièce, elle est magnifique et je suis sûre qu’elle peut faire beaucoup d’argent [. . .] J’en ai parlé à Vernon, le directeur du Studio 46 qui est un grand ami à moi. Il est intéressé. [. . .] Vernon serait disposé à donner sa chance à Josette (453, Vol.1)

I have read your play, it is very magnificent and I am sure that it will make a lot of money: . . . I have spoken about it to Vernon, the director of Studio 46 who is my good friend. He is interested. . . . Vernon will be disposed to give Josette a chance. (*Our translation*)

When Henri agrees to give Josette a major part to play, Lucie invites him to her house and tacitly offered him her very beautiful daughter Josette. Sure enough, Henri falls in love with her at first sight. Regarding that occasion, the account says:

Henri entra dans le salon [de Lucie]; peaux d’ours, tapis, divans de bas, c’était le même silence complice qu’au temps où il rencontrait ici une Josette tacitement offerte. (309, Vol.2)

Henri entered the sitting room [Lucie’s]; bear skins, rug, low divans; it was this same friendly silence at the moment when he met one Josette that was tacitly offered. (*Our translation*)

At the moment Lucie throws Josette at Henri, she is already a very rich woman because she owns a big dressmaking firm. The narrator says of her, “Lucie Belhomme . . . dirige la maison Amaryllis, la grande maison de couture dont tout le monde parle” (421) [Lucie Belhomme is the director of Amaryllis, the big dressmaking firm that everyone talks about]. Besides, the interior décor in her sitting room as described in the excerpt above lends credence to the claim that she has become a rich woman, because in the sitting room, there are pieces of furniture made of bear skins, as well as very expensive rug and divans “peaux d’ours, tapis, divans de bas” [bear skins, rug, and low divans].

Really then, Lucie’s reason for offering Josette to Henri is not monetary, but rather it is in an effort to secure him as a useful ally. She wants Henri to testify falsely in a court of law and cover up her past crimes and those of her daughter Josette. She confesses to Henri how Josette’s action into serious problems because she fell in love with a German soldier during the war. Josette’s carelessness in her dealings with her German lover landed them in trouble because a man named Mercier collected some incriminating documents from her house and presently threatens to expose them if Lucie does not get him out of jail. Lucie relates the story:

Josette ne m’a jamais servie à rien, dit Lucie avec *amertume* ; elle s’est compromise d’une manière parfaitement inutile ; elle est tombée amoureuse d’un capitaine, un beau garçon sentimental et sans aucune influence qui lui a envoyé des épîtres enflammées [. . .] elle les laissait trainer partout, et aussi des photos où ils paraissaient tous deux [. . .] Mercier a vite compris le profit qu’il pourrait en tirer [. . .] Voilà trois ans que je casque, et j’étais prête à continuer. J’ai même offert le gros sac à Mercier pour lui racheter le dossier, mais il est malin, il voyait loin. Il a été indicateur de la Gestapo, et on vient de l’arrêter. Il me fait dire que si je ne le sors pas de là, il nous met dans le bain. (311, Vol.2)

Josette was not useful in any way, says Lucie in a bitter voice; she compromised in a perfectly useless manner; she fell in love with a captain, a handsome and sentimental boy without any influence who sent her passionate letters . . . she left these letters everywhere, and photos where the two of them

paraded . . . Mercier quickly understood the gain he could get from them. It is already three years that I have paid and I was ready to continue. I even offered a huge sum to Mercier to buy back the documents, but he is cunning, he was farsighted. He was an informant of the Gestapo and has just been arrested. He makes me say that if I don't get him out, he will implicate us.
(Our translation)

As can be deduced from her words, Lucie goes as far as controlling Josette's love life. Although some years are already gone, Lucie still speaks with bitterness about Josette's falling in love with the German because love is not tolerated in such exploitative relationships. Lucie's sole preoccupation is to use her child to bring men under her control and thereafter have things done her way. Josette is like a tool in her mother's hands, and Lucie's choice of words makes this very clear. She said, "Josette ne m'a jamais servie à rien" [Josette was not useful to me in any way]. In other words, it is a question of "servir" [to serve, to be of service to] her mother that Josette is for.

This helps us to understand why Lucie considers it an act of compromise when Josette falls in love with a German soldier, since Lucie's sole interest is ensuring the survival of her dress-making firm; not the wellbeing or interests of her daughter. Lucie laments to Henri that if Josette had strictly obeyed her, there would not have been any evidence of their collaboration with the Germans because in that case, Josette would not have fallen in love, or taken pictures or even exchanged passionate love letters that eventually fell into Mercier's hands.

As has been noted earlier, Lucie has been paying blackmail money to Mercier for some years after the war, in order to keep those revelatory photographs of her and her daughter that are in Mercier's possession hidden. Henri is not aware of these facts about these two women before going into a relationship with Josette. It is only after he comes under Lucie's control by means of having a sexual relationship with her daughter that Lucie opens up and tells him about their ugly situation. At this point, Henri realises that Lucie threw Josette at him so as to co-opt him into helping them out of the situation.

Furthermore, Henri feels badly hurt on realising that Josette does not love him, but had lied to him. He also felt hurt that both Lucie and Josette consider him nothing more than an instrument in helping them out of a difficult situation. His feelings of emptiness and disappointment worsen as he bitterly remembers how Josette lied to him that she has never been in love with any man. He reasons within himself thus:

Elle [Josette] m'a bien eu, imbécile ! pauvre imbécile !
il [Henri] se croyait sûr de son plaisir, de sa tendresse :
imbécile ! Elle ne l'avait jamais considéré qu'un
instrument. (313, Vol.2)

She [Josette] really played me, imbecile! Poor
imbecile! He [Henri] surely believed in her pleasure, in
her tenderness: imbecile! She never considered him
more than an instrument. (*Our translation*)

“Elle m’a bien eu!” [She really played me!] is the key sentence which shows that Henri fully understands the force of the blow that Josette deals him. That is exactly what Josette and her mother do, they set the stage and waited for Henri to fall into their trap, because they consider Henri a useful ‘instrument.’ In order to acquire their ‘instrument,’ they resort to feminine charms. Josette’s feminine charms do for Lucie what bait does for fishermen. A fisherman uses a variety of baits to catch various kinds of fish. Similarly, Lucie and Josette use feminine beauty to bring different sorts of men under their influence, soldiers and civilians alike. Henri painfully realises that Josette was used by Lucie her mother as a means to bring him under her control so as to serve a useful purpose for them. The account continues:

Lucie était une femme de tête, elle voyait loin ; si elle
avait pris en main les intérêts d’Henri, si elle lui avait
jeté Josette dans les bras, ce n’était pas pour assurer la
carrière d’une fille dont elle se foutait bien : c’était pour
s’attacher un allié utile ; et Josette avait joué son jeu.
(313, Vol.2)

Lucie was an intelligent woman, she was envisaging; if
she took Henri’s interests in her hands, if she had
thrown Josette into his hands, it was not in order to aid
the career of a daughter whom she cares nothing about:

it was in order to secure a useful ally, and Josette played her part. (*Our translation*)

Lucie is called “une femme de tête.” In a general sense, “une femme de tête” means, an intelligent woman. But in this context, it goes beyond that. The meaning, as used here, could possibly imply a schemer, a cunning person, a crafty, dubious, or deceitful individual. True to those words, Lucie is an intelligent schemer who, through her schemes, manipulates people and situations to her own advantage. As the account shows, in order to make Henri a useful ‘instrument,’ Lucie pretends to be interested in helping him secure a director who would stage his play, “elle avait pris en main les intérêts d’Henri”(313), [she took Henri’s interests in her hands]. In reality, staging Henri’s play meant nothing to Lucie, she rather sees this as a means to an end—offering Josette to Henri “elle lui avait jeté Josette dans les bras” [she threw Josette into his hands].

Calculating Lucie chooses Henri as the one to serve their selfish interests for two reasons. First, Henri was a member of the Resistance during the German Occupation, and secondly, he is a public figure. Lucie demands that Henri appear before the court of law and claim that Mercier was a double agent. That way, it would appear that while Mercier worked with the resistance, he also was working with the Gestapo. Henri’s testimony would be trustworthy because he was himself a Resistance hero. Secondly, Lucie believes that Henri would agree to bear a false witness in the court because already, he had fallen in love with Josette and could not bear to see her get hurt. Lucie continues:

Vous vous rendez compte de ce que cette histoire représente pour Josette ? Avec le caractère qu’elle a, elle ne reprendra jamais le dessus, elle ouvrira le gaz. (312, Vol.2)

Do you realise what the implication of this story is for Josette? With the type of disposition that she has, she will never come out of this, she will commit suicide. (*Our translation*)

Even in the face of deep hurt, Henri dared not reject to help Josette. Really, as Henri bitterly exclaims, Josette played her role very well “Josette avait joué son jeu.” She repeatedly lied to him in order to allay his suspicions on earlier occasions. Despite Henri’s

burning anger, he agrees to bear false witness in court and so as to save Josette. Apart from helping Josette out of a precarious situation, testifying falsely in the court is the only way that Henri could let himself out of Lucie's net unscathed.

Henri blames himself for failing to listen to his friends who had warned him to beware of Lucie and her daughter. Vincent, for instance, revealed Lucie's compromised past with the Germans during the Occupation to Henri, and told him of the incriminating documents in Mercier's possession. Vincent tells Henri:

Tu ne sais sans doute pas que la mère Belhomme [. . .] a un château en Normandie, elle y a reçu des tas d'officiers allemands, elle couchait avec et vraisemblablement la petite aussi. (484, Vol.2)

No doubt you do not know that Mrs. Belhomme . . . has a castle in Normandy, she received many German officers there, slept with them and likely her small girl did the same. (*Our translation*)

Lucie and her daughter Josette did exactly as Vincent says, and even more, yet Henri dismisses Vincent's words as a mere rumor and asks him: Pourquoi viens-tu me raconter ces ragots? (484, Vol.2), [Why have you come to tell me about this gossip?] However, Vincent insists that it is no mere gossip, because he is very sure of those facts about Lucie and her daughter Josette:

Ce ne sont pas des ragots; il existe un dossier, j'ai des copains qui l'ont vu : des lettres, des photos qu'un gars s'est amusé à recueillir en pensant que ça pourrait lui servir un jour. Ecoute [. . .] je voulais te prévenir que la mère Belhomme est avisée, on l'a à l'œil et ça serait con que tu aies des emmerdements à cause de cette peau. (484, Vol.1)

It is no mere gossip; there is a dossier, I have friends who have seen it: letters and pictures that a boy gathered hoping that one day, it could be useful to him. Listen . . . I want to warn you that Mrs. Belhomme is discreet. She is being watched and it would be foolish if

you are roped into trouble because of this girl. (*Our translation*)

Again, Lucie is here described as a discreet woman by Vincent, “la mère Belhomme est avisée” [Mrs. Belhomme is discreet]. However, the word ‘avisée’ as used in this context, is not a good quality such as wisdom or farsightedness. It rather points to Lucie’s true nature as a scheming, cunning, and deceitful woman. It is her cunning nature that enables her to know which men to exploit for her selfish ends and when to do so. In the present instance, Henri is her target, and with her scheming heart, she succeeds.

On an earlier occasion, Lucie made Josette and Henri visit a famous restaurant called “Les Îles Borromées.” There, she arranged for journalists to take pictures of Josette sitting close to Henri and have them featured in the local newspaper in order to make publicly known the relationship between Josette and Henri. Dubious Lucie realizes that by giving her daughter’s relationship with Henri a widespread publicity, her ulterior motive, which is to co-opt Henri into their plans, would definitely be achieved, because if Henri were to decline helping them willingly, then he would be forced to do it since Henri would not want his image tarnished. This is because were Henri to refuse helping them through giving a false testimony in the court of law, then he would be affected when the news agency would report that Henri’s girlfriend Josette has been convicted. This fact is what made Lucie very sure that Henri would rather help them than face a public disgrace.

Weighing the options before him, Henri, for the sake of his social and political status, rather chose to testify falsely in the court and set both mother and daughter free than face public disgrace which could result if Mercier exposed those documents he had. Henri felt like a fool on realising that Josette and her mother had staged and executed their plans in different ways, all in a careful attempt to implicate him, leaving him with no choice other than to carry out their wicked plans.

The analysis also shows that Henri got into Lucie’s ‘net’ because he sought to gratify his selfish desires with Josette. In the helpless situation that he finds himself, Henri admits that although he strongly feels like slapping Josette for deceiving him, he has no option other than to help her out of the difficult situation. “Il [Henri] avait l’envie de l’insulter

[Josette], de la battre et on lui demander de la sauver (313, Vol.2). [He [Henri] felt like insulting her [Josette], like beating her up, yet he is being asked to save her.

Here again, Lucie's machinations and the use of her daughter's body help her out of an extremely difficult situation. Both in the real and fictive worlds, there are women who use their body to set themselves free from unwanted circumstances, as Lucie's case demonstrates.

Another point is worthy of note here in Lucie's influence on Henri while the sexual relationship between him and Josette lasted. At the initial stage in *Les mandarins*, Henri is presented as a man with moral values that are based on the traditional views of right and wrong. But as the story in the novel unfolds, Henri's association with Lucie begins to rob off on him, because her values are different from his. When he sees himself in the house of Lucie Belhomme one day dining with them, Henri is surprised at his choice of friends and wonders why he keeps their company:

Le soir où il [Henri] se trouva attablé entre Lucie Belhomme et Claudie de Belzunce devant une bouteille de champagne trop sucré, Henri s'étonna brusquement : « Qu'est-ce que je fais ici ? »

The evening that he [Henri] found himself seated between Lucie Belhomme and Claudie de Belzunce before a table with very sweet champagne, Henri was suddenly surprised: "What am I doing here?" (*Our translation*)

Gradually, Henri embraces Lucie's views of moral individualism. Moral individualism is opposed to the traditional view that moral choice should be an objective judgement of what is right and what is wrong. Existentialists claim that there is no rational basis for moral decisions but rather, that individuals must chose their "own way without the aid of universal, objective standards (Dreyfus, 2009).

Having internalised this mental outlook, Henri accepts Lucie's request to bear false witness in order to cover a crime, a thing that he would have rejected without a second thought in the past. The two ladies, Liza and Yvonne, against whom he testified falsely, were involved, together with Henri in the Resistance activities during the German Occupation. They trust Henri, having worked closely with him. This trust moved them to drop their charges against Mercier when they see that Henri testifies in his support. Although they were very sure that Mercier handed them over to the Germans, they still could not reconcile what they were sure of with Henri's testimony, for it was unknown to them that Henri was lying. During the court session, Yvonne speaks up saying:

Le 23 février 1944, à deux heures de l'après-midi, j'avais rendez-vous au pont de l'Alma avec Liza Peloux, ici présente ; au moment où je l'accostais, trois hommes se sont avancés vers nous, deux Allemands et celui-là qui nous a désignées à eux ; il portait un pardessus marron, pas de chapeau, il était rasé comme aujourd'hui. (322,Vol.2)

On 23rd February, 1944, by 2:00 pm in the afternoon, I had an appointment at Alma Bridge with Liza Peloux here present; at the moment that I was meeting her, three men came towards us, two Germans and that man who pointed at us; he was wearing a brown overcoat, without a cap, he was shaved just as he is today. (*Our translation*)

But Henri speaks up in Mercier's defence and falsely testifies saying:

Il y a erreur sur la personne, dit Henri avec fermeté. Le 23 février, à deux heures, Mercier était avec moi à La Souterraine ; nous y étions arrivés ensemble la veille ; des copains devaient nous communiquer le plan des entrepôts que les Américains ont pilonnés trois jours plus tard, et nous avons passé la journée avec eux. (322,Vol.2)

There is an error on the person, says Henri with firmness. On 23rd February, by 2:00pm, Mercier was with me at the underground; we arrived together a day before; some friends were to tell us the plan of the warehouses which the Americans bombarded three

days later, and we spent the day with them. (*Our translation*)

Henri's words deeply affect the two ladies such that the account says:

Elles avaient l'air stupéfaites. Yvonne et Liza s'entre-regardaient avec détresse. Elles étaient aussi sûres de l'identité de Mercier que de la loyauté d'Henri. (323, Vol.2)

They looked stupefied. Yvonne and Liza look at each other in distress. They were so sure of Mercier's identity as well as of Henri's loyalty. (*Our translation*)

So great is their consternation that they end up retracting their claim. When the judge asks "Vous maintenez votre deposition?" (323, Vol.2), [Do you still maintain your claim?] They both replied "Non." [No] What a betrayal of trust on Henri's part! Despite the gravity of what he did, Henri did not feel any regrets because he has fully internalized moral individualism. "Ça ne le [Henri] gênait pas de signer." [he [Henri] did not feel disturbed by signing].

Henri is not alone in accepting the view that it is up to an individual to choose what is right or wrong for himself. His mentor and friend (Dubreuilh) has always mocked his moral uprightness. In order to show him that he is beginning to change, Henri visits Dubreuilh and tells him about the false witness he bore in the court of law in order to save Josette.

J'ai fait un faux témoignage pour sauver Josette qui avait couché avec un Allemand. Vous m'avez si souvent reproché mon moralisme, vous voyez que je suis en progrès . . . Je ne voulais pas que la vie de Josette soit foutue. Si elle avait ouvert le gaz, je ne me le pardonnerais pas. Tandis qu'un Mercier de plus ou de moins sur terre, j'avoue que ça ne m'empêche pas de dormir. (342, Vol.2)

I falsely testified to save Josette who had slept with a German. Often you have reproached me for my

morality. You can see that I am progressing . . . I did not want Josette's life to be wasted. If she gassed herself, I will never forgive myself for it. Whereas I admit that one more Mercier or less in the world, would not rob me of sleep. (*Our translation*)

This action that Henri takes is circumstantial. He is faced with a difficult choice: to testify falsely and save his lover Josette and her mother or refuse to testify and allow them to die. Under these circumstances, Henri chooses the former option. This choice that an individual makes out of his own volition when faced with a situation is what Sartre (1970:4) has in mind when he says "si je considère que tel acte est bon, c'est moi qui choisirai de dire que cet acte est bon plutôt que mauvaise" [if I consider a certain course of action good, it is I who decide to say that it is good or bad].

In the case on hand, it is Henri that is in position to decide what is good and what is bad, depending on the circumstances surrounding the situation. Since he desires to save Josette and he takes action to do so, he needs no considering what the Other would say about his decision. Testifying falsely in order to set Mercier free and save the lives of Lucie and Josette does not bother him, whereas he would never have forgiven himself had his refusal to lie led to the death of Josette and her mother.

4.5.2 Nadine's Use of the Female Sexuality as Power

An example of a character in *Les mandarins* who uses her body as a tool is Nadine, the daughter of Robert and Anne Dubreuilh. Her blunt refusal to restrict her sexual relations to just one man is for different reasons. First, it is observed that Nadine does not like to keep friendship with women. She admits that women bore her "les femmes m'emmerdent" she says [women bore me] but she also realises that men would not have her around them unless she sleeps with them. Thus, in order to keep herself in men's company, Nadine exploits her sexuality, by jumping from one bed to another «Nadine a commencé à [aller]

de lit un lit». [Nadine started to go from one bed to another]. On one occasion, she asks her mother:

Comment veux-tu que j'aie des histoires avec des types si je ne baise pas ? [. . .] Si je veux sortir avec eux il faut que je couche avec, je n'ai pas le choix. Seulement il y en a qui le font plus ou moins souvent, plus ou moins longtemps. (96, Vol.2)

How do you want me to go out with men and not sleep with them? If I want to go out with them then I must sleep with them, I don't have a choice. It is only that there are some who do it more or less often, more or less longer. (*Our translation*)

Sex is classically considered enjoyment. However, Nadine is different because she does not enjoy having sexual relations. The narrator affirms that “pour Nadine, faire l'amour était évidemment une occupation ennuyeuse” (131, Vol.1)[For Nadine, lovemaking was evidently a boring experience]. Nadine rather considers making love a means of exploiting men. In other words, as Tyson (1999:27) notes, Nadine “use[s] sex to *purchase* something [she] want[s] from [her] mate[s].” One day, she laments to her mother concerning her relationship with one of her male lovers called Lambert:

Oh! Il [Lambert] demande plus que tu ne crois. [. . .] D'abord tous les soirs il demande à coucher avec moi : ça m'assomme. Tu ne rends pas compte : si je refuse ça fait tout un drame. [. . .] Par-dessus le marché, si je ne prenais pas mes précautions, il me ferait un gosse à tous coups. (95, Vol.2)

Oh! He [Lambert] asks for more than you think. . . . First of all, every night he asks that I sleep with him: that bores me to death. You don't know: If I refuse it would create a scene. . . . Above all, if I am not careful, he will get me impregnated all the time. (*Our translation*)

The relationships that Nadine goes into are usually characterised by mutual exploitation. This is because even though she finds the sexual act to be a boring experience, Nadine offers sex to men in order to be in their company, while the men, on their part, enjoy having sex with Nadine thus resulting in mutual exploitation.

A significant point that is worthy of note here is the fact that Nadine controls conception. One can reach this conclusion by using what she tells her mother. “Par-dessus le marché, si je ne prenais pas mes précautions, [Lambert] me ferait un gosse à tous coups.”(95, Vol.2) [Above all, if I am not careful, [Lambert] will get me impregnated all the time]. Radical Feminism projects that women, and not men, should control conception. That is what we find Nadine doing here. She is the one in control, not the many sexual partners that she has. She does not leave herself at the mercy of those men; rather she has a firm control of her reproductive powers.

Nadine also uses her body as a means of wielding power over men when she tries to seduce Henri in order for him to take her along to Portugal. Henri resists, due to the good relationship that exists between Nadine’s father Dubreuilh and himself. But Nadine gets Henri drunk and makes love to him while he was still under the influence of alcohol. The following morning, Henri wakes up in a hotel room and finds Nadine sleeping by his side. Nadine confesses to him that she got him drunk by giving him a fortified brand of alcohol. She narrates her actions thus:

Ton champagne, il était coupé de marc, à soixante-dix.
C’est un truc dont je me sers souvent avec les
américains quand j’ai besoin qu’ils soient saouls [. . .]
C’est le seul moyen de t’avoir. (90, Vol.1)

Your champagne was mixed with marc up to seventy
percent. It is a trick which I often use with Americans
when I want them to get drunk. It is the only means to
get at you. (*Our translation*)

Nadine is unabashed and ruthless in her dealings with men as her encounter with Henri shows. This is seen in her description of what she does to Henri, “C’est un truc dont je me sers souvent avec les américains quand j’ai besoin qu’ils soient saouls” (90, Vol.1), [It is a

trick which I often use with Americans when I want them to get drunk]. Her confession shows that Henri is not her first victim; she has been getting men drunk by giving them champagne that is laden with alcohol. She shows that she is a trickster. Besides, she says, “C’est le seul moyen de t’avoir,”(90,Vol.1), [It is the only means to get at you]. Normally, it is the male that uses the word “avoir” [to have] in describing their sexual acts with women. However, by using the word “avoir,” Nadine, in effect, implies that she assumes the position of the “taker” not the “giver” as it is often the case in male/female sexual relationships. Nadine’s diction implies that her action is like raping Henri, thereby proving that she has an upper hand, because while Henri remained drunk, Nadine was in control. Thus, Henri wakes up and can hardly remember anything that transpired between both of them on that night.

To show that she is firmly in control, she purposefully tantalises him with her naked body and subsequently withdraws when Henri reaches out and tries to make love to her. She causes Henri psychological hurt when she postpones the gratification of Henri’s sexual desires to another day. She reaffirms her opinion thus: “Tu as été gentil mais je n’aime pas recommencer, pas le même jour” (90,Vol.1),[You were pleasant, but I do not want to start all over again, not on the same day]. Her aim is to leave Henri unsatisfied, so that it will be easier to make him do her bidding.

Nadine’s response to Henri in not allowing him to make love to her shows that her sexuality gives her the upper hand and that she is also highly manipulative. Nadine knows that with her body, she can get Henri to do whatever she desires because the use of her body is a sure means of wielding power over Henri. This is evident from what she tells Henri:

Quand on couche avec quelqu’un ça brise la glace; on est bien mieux ensemble qu’avant. [. . .] je voulais que tu me trouves gentille. [. . .] Je veux que tu me trouves assez gentille pour m’emmener au Portugal. (91,Vol.1)

When one sleeps with someone it breaks the ice; people get closer together than they were before. . . . I wanted

you to find me pleasant. . . . I want you to find me pleasant enough to take me to Portugal]. (*Our translation*)

According to Nadine, her sole intention of sleeping with Henri is to have her way and demonstrate to Henri that she can wield her power over him through the use of her body. As it turns out, this is a very effective strategy for Nadine because Henri ends up taking her along to Portugal.

It can be argued that the war context is conducive to exploitative sex. This is much in consonance with what de Beauvoir (1976:430) says that “on sait qu’il y a recrudescence de la prostitution pendant les guerres et dans les crises qui les suivent” [we know that there is an upsurge of prostitution during wars and the post war crises]. Largely, this is due to many deprivations that people go through during such difficult times. As the account in *Les mandarins* shows, those living in Paris either by choice or by circumstance suffered during the four years of German Occupation. Food, fuel and electricity were scarce. Permission had to be obtained from occupying authorities in order to drive around the city, to work, see relatives or even send letters as well as to procure wood for burning during winter. Curfews were imposed on the residents of Paris and breaching them could lead to serious punishment. Under these difficult circumstances, Nadine’s mother tries all in her power to provide food for her family. Her mother’s efforts notwithstanding, Nadine throws herself at an American soldier in order to obtain abundant food supply.

Remarque que pour ça [pourvoir à nos besoins], maman était formidable ; elle se tapait des quatre-vingts kilomètres à vélo pour nous ramener un kilo de champignons ou un bout de charogne ; mais ça ne m’empêchait pas. Le premier américain qui m’a foutu sa caisse de rations dans les bras, j’étais folle. (92, Vol.1)

Take note that in that [catering for our needs] mother was formidable; she would ride some eighty kilometres on bike to bring us a kilo of mushrooms or a piece of carrion; but that did not prevent me. I fell madly in love with the first American [soldier] who gave me his rations. (*Our translation*)

There are other times too, when Nadine sleeps with many men for psychological reasons. For example, when her lover Diego dies, Nadine loses control, and in order to get over her grief and regain her psychological balance, Nadine sleeps with different men. In this instance, having sex with different men enables her to find her solace thus, having a cathartic effect on her.

Nadine a commencé à chercher et à fuir Diego de lit un lit(100, Vol.1)

Nadine started to try to get over Diego by jumping from one bed to another. (*Our translation*)

Since her lover Diego was among the Jewish victims who were deported and sent to concentration camps where they eventually die, Nadine decides to get over Diego's death by sexually exploiting the soldiers that were responsible for such hate crimes.

On another occasion, Nadine also uses her body as a punitive tool against one of her male friends named Lambert. After Lambert wronged her, Nadine sleeps with a soldier named Joly in order to punish and wound Lambert's male pride, She has no affection whatsoever for this man, yet she uses her affair with the man to hurt Lambert because Lambert is intolerant of multiple sexual partners. Speaking to her mother, Nadine says:

- Il va y avoir des étincelles ! a-t-elle ajouté d'une voix jubilante : j'ai revu Joly et nous avons recouché ensemble. Tu imagines la gueule de Lambert quand je vais lui raconter ça !
- Nadine ! ne le lui raconte pas. [. .] Tu as fabriqué cette histoire exprès pour le blesser en la lui racontant
- Évidemment, j'ai voulu le punir ; il le mérite bien.
- Alors tu dois comprendre que Lambert ne supportera jamais que tu l'aies trompé ; tu vas lui faire une peine affreuse et gâcher irrémédiablement toute votre histoire.

- There are going to be sparks! she added in a happy voice: I saw Joly and we recommenced sleeping together. You can imagine how Lambert will yell when I narrate this to him!
- Nadine! Do not tell him about it . . . You deliberately made this happen in order to hurt him by telling him of it.
- Evidently, I wanted to punish him; he well deserves it.

- Then you must understand that Lambert can never accept the fact that you cheated on him; you will cause him very serious pain and totally spoil your relationship with him. (*Our translation*)

Pain is another issue in this relationship because it turns out that Nadine's unfaithfulness brings Lambert serious emotional pain and this abruptly leads to the breakup of their relationship. Just as Nadine's mother says concerning the response of Lambert that "Lambert ne supportera jamais que tu l'aies trompé ; tu vas lui faire une peine affreuse et gâcher irrémédiablement toute votre histoire," [Lambert can never accept the fact that you cheated on him; you will cause him very serious pain and totally spoil your relationship with him], the relationship between Nadine and Lambert came to an end as soon as he learns of Nadine's unfaithfulness to him. The thought of sharing his lover with another man was unbearable.

After Nadine breaks up with Lambert, she becomes depressed, but in her dogged determination, she looks for a way to reconcile with Henri. She succeeds by striking up a sexual relationship with Henri again. Following this, the assertive and calculating Nadine traps Henri with pregnancy for obvious social advantages. Due to her bad disposition towards men, she knows that no man will willingly agree to marry her because she always exploits them. Men who sleep with her could sense that they do not have control over her because of her strong and forceful personality. Nadine knows it so and admits it when she says: "aucun homme ne sera assez con pour m'épouser. Ils aiment bien coucher avec moi après ça bonsoir" [No man will be stupid enough to marry me. They like sleeping with me very well but nothing beyond that]. For this reason, Nadine decides to trap Henri by getting pregnant for him, considering the fact that Henri has the means to care for her needs. The following is the conversation that takes place between Nadine and her mother concerning the unplanned pregnancy:

- Je suis enceinte.
- Tu l'as fait exprès ?
- Et après ? dit-elle. C'est un crime de vouloir un enfant ?
- Et il [Henri] est d'accord ?
- Il ne sait encore rien.
- Mais il souhaitait un enfant ?
- Elle hésitait : Je ne lui ai pas demandé

- Je veux dire : tu comptes le marier ?
- Ça le regarde. (364,Vol.2)

- I am pregnant.
- Did you do it intentionally?
- And so what? Is it a crime to want a child?
- Is that okay with him [Henri]?
- He does not know of it yet
- But does he want a child?
- She hesitated:I did not ask him.
- I mean: do you intend to marry him?
- That is his business. (*Our translation*)

Here, it can be argued that Nadine uses manipulative measures to force Henri's hand in marriage by becoming pregnant for Henri without seeking his consent. She switches on and off, from one man to another, and sometimes back to her former male friends for obvious social advantages. With an unplanned pregnancy, she is sure that Henri would marry her because failure to do so would spoil his reputation and put his social status at stake. Besides, her marriage to Henri would mean freedom from the control of her parents with whom she has constant quarrels due to her permissive lifestyle.

As the account shows, Henri becomes Nadine's victim again for a second time, because even though he is aware that Nadine's pregnancy is a calculated attempt to force him into marriage with her, he eventually decides, against his will, to marry her.

Henri était certain qu'elle [Nadine] avait machiné sa grossesse, en trichant sur les dates, pour lui forcer la main. (431,Vol.2)

Henri was sure that she [Nadine] planned the pregnancy by cheating with dates, in order to force him to marry her. (*Our translation*)

Nadine here traps Henri with pregnancy because of obvious social advantages. She succeeds at it because Henri was forced to marry her in order to avoid public disgrace. The fear of the 'Other' constrains Henri's freedom, thereby forcing him to act in an inauthentic

way. Thus, as the study shows, Nadine, although finds sexual intercourse boring, engages in it for obvious advantages which range from keeping company with men to going for a vacation abroad, to getting herself married off to a man whom she considers financially responsible to cater for her needs. Once again, Nadine is seen playing out the role of women who exchange sex for material, financial gain or for a comfortable lifestyle.

4.6.1 Other Examples of Exploitative Relationships and Authentic Living

In *Les mandarins* as well as in *Le sang des autres*, for instance, some characters that are presented are not bound or controlled by conventionally acceptable societal norms that demand sexual fidelity. Rather, the author creates her literary characters in a way that enabled them to exercise their freedom to the full without others being overly critical of their actions. Thus, there are characters that have multiple sexual partners yet are not ashamed to own up to it, even when others try to speak down on them.

Marie-Ange, a young journalist, has multiple sexual partners, this resulting from her ability to exercise her personal freedom. In the presence of other people, a man called Louis who frowns at sexual freedom exposes Marie-Ange saying:

Regardez-moi cette chose disait-il [Louis] en désignant Marie-Ange, ça couche avec tout le monde, et ça se peint la figure, ça montre ses jambes, ça se rembourre les seins et ça se met à jouer les Saintes Vierges. (126, Vol.2)

Look at this thing he said [Louis] pointing at Marie-Ange, she sleeps with everyone, and she paints her face, she shows her legs, she pads her breasts and pretends to be Saint Virgin. (*Our translation*)

Marie-Ange expresses her existential authenticity in this instance because she chooses this way of life for herself. She asserts her freedom by telling Louis that she has the right over her own body and as such will use it in a way that pleases her, a statement that is both existentialist and feminist:

J'ai quand même le droit de coucher avec qui ça me plait. Regardez-moi ce type qui se prend pour Nietzsche parce qu'il engueule une femme ! (126, Vol.2)

I do have the right to sleep with whoever I want. Look at this man that thinks he is Nietzsche because he is quarrelling with a woman. (*Our translation*)

Because she chooses this way of life for herself, Marie-Ange remains unperturbed by Louis' verbal attacks. Jean-Paul Sartre describes such people who do not pretend as living authentic life. As the existential theory puts it, individuals are free to choose what course to follow in life and they must be committed to them. But when a person lacks commitment or fails to accept responsibility for their actions, this is known as an inauthentic life.

4.6.2 Lucile and Exploitative Sex

Lucile de Saint Charmont in *Les belles images* is a character who thinks that a woman should set herself free from the grips of poverty through the use of her body. This view is what Chesler (2003:128) expresses when she says that “women aggressively compete against each other, sexually, for men and for the resources men have. Poor women have tried to use their youthful beauty in order to marry “up.”

This aggressive competition “for men and for their resources” described by Chesler is what Lucile resorts to doing in the face of harsh economic pressure. Although she is married and lives with her husband and children, Lucile goes for Gilbert Mortier, a rich business man and takes him as her lover. In Lucile's case, however, she is not interested in getting married to Gilbert but rather competes with Gilbert's wife for his attention and wealth. In her consideration, Gilbert is a quick and easy way to make money and free herself and her family from the grips of poverty.

4.6.3 Exploitation of the Male Sexuality for Fame and Prestige

Both in the real and in the fictive worlds, the human sexuality is exploited for different reasons. With a close observation, it is noticed that such exploitation is not strictly a women's affair. Men, just like women, sometimes do resort to the use of their bodies as a means to an end. A male character in *L'invité* named Guimiot is a typical example.

Guimiot uses his body to ensure a speedy advancement in the drama industry. Ambitious Guimiot seeks out sexual partners that would be useful to him in his ascent on the ladder to fame and prestige. His physical appearance helps him to achieve this because Guimiot is a very handsome and attractive young man. Immediately he realizes that Elizabeth is the younger sister of Pierre Labrousse, the owner of the drama firm, he flirts outrageously with Elizabeth who in turn asks him outright to sleep with her. Much to her surprise, Elizabeth later discovers that Guimiot is not really interested in her as a person, because he is more of a homosexual than a heterosexual. Rather, he runs after Elizabeth in hopes of getting close to her brother Pierre Labrousse. In the account, Elizabeth says of Guimiot:

Une petite tapette, double d'un gogolo, voilà ce qu'était Guimiot. Il m'a courru après parce que j'étais la sœur de Labrousse. (108,109)

A homosexual and a double gigolo, that that's what Guimiot was. He ran after me because I was Labrousse's sister. (*Our translation*)

Through his actions, as Guimiot demonstrates here, sex, sometimes, can be exploitative or strictly for selfish reasons. After playing a little part that he is assigned, Guimiot tells Elizabeth 'Mes amis ont dit que c'était dommage que je n'aie qu'un si petit rôle. Vous ne pensez pas que M. Labrousse pourrait au moins me confier une doublure?' [My friends said it was a pity that I only had a small role. Don't you think that Mr. Labrousse can give me a stuntman?]. The relationship between Guimiot and Elizabeth is exploitative in nature because it is in an effort to increase the roles he gets that Guimiot resorts to the use of his body, going as far as sleeping with a woman, although a homosexual.

In yet another instance, Guimiot attempts to use his sexuality to draw the attention of Ramblin. Ramblin is a rich young man in the theatre industry. Guimiot, being a go-getter, tries to woo him for obvious financial advantages. "Guimiot regardait Ramblin comme

quelqu'un de riche et d'influent et il lui faisait une cour indiscrete(329) [Guimiot considers Ramblin as rich and influential and was flirting with him indiscreetly]. This demonstrates that men and women can, and do use their sexuality as a tool or as a means to an end, when they consider it necessary.

4.6.4 Prostitution as a Choice

Earlier in the study, there are characters presented who resort to prostituting themselves due to difficult circumstances. The present case is much different from that in that the individual involved has a lot of options from which to choose, yet refuses to do so. This brings to mind Sartre words that when an individual refuses to make a choice, that in itself is also a choice "ne pas choisir, c'est encore choisir," [refusing to choose is still a choice].

When Xavière in *L'invitée* is invited to come and live with Françoise in Paris, Françoise suggests that she acquires some skill or learn a trade in order that she can become gainfully employed and support herself financially. Françoise mentions different trades and asks which of them appeals most to Xavière. Surprisingly, Xavière turns Françoise down. She bluntly refuses to learn a trade; she rather believes what her aunt told her as she was growing up that she is good at nothing. This view becomes engrained in Xavière such that she sees herself as unfit and not capable of learning trades that will enable her earn a living and cater for her own upkeep. The conversation between Françoise and Xavière goes on like this:

- Pourquoi ne suivez-vous pas des cours de sténodactylo comme je vous l'avais conseillé ?
- Je ne serais pas capable dit-elle.
- Bien sûr que si, ce n'est pas difficile, dit Françoise
- Ma tante a encore essayé de m'apprendre à tricoter [. . .] et ma dernière chaussette a été un désastre. Elle a raison : on ne fera jamais rien de moi.

- Why not learn short-hand typing as I already suggested to you?
- I would not be able to do so she replied
- Sure, you can, it is not difficult Françoise said.
- My aunty tried to teach me knitting . . . and the last socks were a disaster. She was right: I am good at nothing.

Convinced that she is good at nothing, Xavière insists that in order to be able to fend for herself, she would rather become a prostitute than learn a trade. She asks: “Qu’est-ce que je peux faire? Je pourrai essayer d’être une grue” (21), [What can I do? I would try to become a prostitute]. Here it is observed that for Xavière, having no trade does not appear to pose a problem for her because she is willingly to offer men her body in order to ensure her survival, thereby using her sexuality as a tool. In the case of Xavière, prostitution is not the last resort, but rather the very first option. Due to this view, she does not as much as attempt to become financially independent but hopes to depend on men for her continued survival.

Apart from using her sexuality to earn a living, Xavière also plans to use it to punish a man, just like Nadine in *Les mandarins* does. She tells Françoise of her plans to punish a man who owns a bar by seducing him. The account below shows the discussion between Françoise and Xavière:

- Le patron est un grand brun.
- Je voudrais séduire un homme comme ça.
- Qu’en feriez-vous ?
- Je le ferais souffrir. (228)
- The patron is a tall man
- I would love to seduce a man like that
- Why would you do so?
- I would make him suffer. (*Our translation*)

In Xavière’s view, her sexuality can be manipulated and used as a punitive tool for those whom she does not approve of. Although the novel never specifies where Xavière eventually ends up punishing the above-mentioned patron, it does tell of another instance where she does so to a character named Pierre.

Pierre takes an interest in Xavière and tries to woo her. Along the line, they quarrel, and with Pierre’s efforts, they make up again. It is after the reconciliation that Xavière decides to hurt Pierre. Immediately they parted, although on a friendly note, Xavière calls a man named Gerbert to her house and makes love to him. She does this in an attempt to punish

Pierre and also to reduce her love for him since she still nurses feelings of love and tenderness for him. The account says:

Xavière était coupable envers Pierre, elle l'avait blessé jusqu'au fond de l'âme. Tu n'imagines pas comme elle avait été tendre avec moi. . . Elle a couché avec Gerbert uniquement par un retour de haine, pour ôter toute valeur à notre réconciliation, pour me duper, pour se venger. Elle n'a pas manqué son coup, mais ça lui coûtera cher ! Je te jure que je lui rendrai la monnaie de sa pièce. (401)

Xavière has wronged Pierre; she crushed him to the depth of his heart. You can't imagine how tender she was with me . . . She slept with Gerbert solely because her hatred for me returned, in order to remove every vestige of our reconciliation, in order to dupe me, to avenge. She did not miss her target, but that will cost her a lot! I swear to you that I will pay her back in her own coin. (*Our translation*)

The key sentence the passage above is “Elle a couché avec Gerbert uniquement . . . pour se venger” [She slept with Gerbert solely . . . to avenge]. In the conversation, Pierre shows that he well understands that Xavière used her sexuality to punish him. From the passage also, it is easily discernable that Xavière succeeds in causing Pierre great pain because Pierre felt extremely hurt by her actions, “Xavière était coupable envers Pierre, elle l'avait blessé jusqu'au fond de l'âme” [Xavière has wronged Pierre; she crushed him to the depth of his heart]. Xavière's actions crushed Pierre's spirits, and in his anger Pierre vows to repay Xavière in her own coin.

It is therefore safe to conclude that other than enjoying sex with her friends; Xavière equally considers sex as a weapon for punishment and also as a potential means of livelihood when she eventually opts for prostitution.

4.7 Intolerance of Multiple Partners in Sexual Relationships

Generally, people in the selected novels do not demand exclusive adherence or loyalty from their mates/sexual partners. Since they do not expect fidelity, they do not become jealous when they find their mate giving attention to another person. For example, we see an instance in *Les mandarins* where Anne tells her husband Robert before going to sleep with Scriassine. We also saw how the relationship between Henri and Paule flourished when Henri narrated his sexual affairs with other women to Paule and how the relationship degenerated when Henri resorts to lies, hiding his affairs from Paule.

However, there are characters in the selected novels, though very few, who are intolerant of multiple sexual partners. These ones demand that their partners remain faithful to them, be it that they are in a marital or non-marital relationship. Any sexual relationship outside their immediate union poses a threat to their relationship as they find multiple sexual partners unbearable. One of such individuals in *Les mandarins* is Lambert.

Lambert belongs to the category of characters that abhor having multiple sexual partners. Lambert is a young and rich bourgeois, whose mother died leaving him great wealth. His girlfriend Rosa remains faithful to Lambert because he demands fidelity. Being a Jew, Rosa is deported during the years of German Occupation to a labour camp where she dies.

Lambert later becomes Nadine's lover, but, unlike Lambert, Nadine detests sexual fidelity. Therefore, their relationship starts off on an unequal footing because they do not share the same values on sexuality. For sometime, Nadine remains faithful in order to please her boyfriend Lambert. But when Lambert hurts her, she decides to avenge herself on Lambert who had caused her emotional hurt. She goes off and sleeps with another man, a thing that Lambert detests. A quarrel ensues between them and Lambert in his anger asks Nadine:

- Comment oses-tu? toi!
 - Tais-toi
 - Je ne veux plus te revoir, jamais. Plus jamais ! (107, Vol.2)

 - How could you? You!
 - Shut up!
 - I don't want to see you again, never. Never again!
- (Our translation)

A high level of intolerance for multiple sexual partners on Lambert's part leads to the end of the relationship between him and Nadine. He could not put up with the reality that he would share Nadine with another man. So wounded was his male pride that in his anger, he writes an article in a local newspaper insulting Nadine and her father. In reaction, Nadine goes in search of Lambert, finds him and settles a big slap on his face. She relates the incident to her parents:

J'ai été à Paris et je vous ai vengés : j'ai giflé Lambert. Je suis montée à *L'Espoir*. Lambert a eu l'air soufflé, il a bafouillé des choses mais je ne l'ai pas laissé parler. « J'ai une vieille dette envers toi », je lui ai dit : « Je suis contente que tu m'aies donné l'occasion de te rembourser. » et je lui ai balancé ma main au figure. (458, Vol.2)

I was at Paris today and I avenged you: I slapped Lambert. I went to *L'Espoir*. Lambert was looking blown-up, he muttered some things but I didn't let him speak. "I owe you an old debt", I told him: "I am happy that you gave me the opportunity to pay you back" and I landed my hand on his face. (*Our translation*)

Claude is another man in *L'invitée*, who hates to share his partners with other men because he has no tolerance for multiple sexual partners. Claude himself, is not faithful to his partners, yet he expects sexual fidelity from them. In addition to his wife Suzanne, he is in a non-marital relationship with Elizabeth. Elizabeth considers sexual fidelity as slavery and so seeks sexual pleasure with different men. Immediately she meets a man that she finds attractive, she sleeps with him. "Dès qu'un type lui plaisait, Elisabeth parlait de coucher avec lui," (57) [As soon as Elizabeth finds a man that pleases her, she talks of sleeping with him]. Elisabeth speaks with Françoise, openly condemning sexual fidelity:

C'est ridicule, la fidélité sexuelle, ça conduit à un véritable esclavage. Je ne comprends pas que tu acceptes ça pour ta part. (58)

It is ridiculous, sexual fidelity, it leads to real slavery. I do not understand why you, on your part accept it

This view of sexual liberality that Elizabeth has is in direct opposition to Claude's stand. This is because although he has different sexual partners, Claude wants them all for himself. Thus, when Elizabeth takes Guimiot as her lover and tells Claude about it, Claude becomes extremely angry with Elizabeth. He could not put up with the idea that another man shares Elizabeth with him and that ended their relationship. He asks her:

- Tu couches avec un type ? Qui est-ce ?
- Guimiot, le coureur nu de premier acte.
- Quand as-tu fait sa connaissance ?
- Il y a une dizaine de jours. Il est tombé follement amoureux de moi.
- Tu m'as menti pendant dix jours, dit Claude. Tu m'as dit des choses ce soir qui rendent même l'amitié impossible entre nous. (101, 105)

- You slept with a man? Who is it?
- Guimiot, the naked runner of the first act.
- When did you know him?
- Ten days ago. He fell madly in love with me.
- You lied to me for ten days, said Claude. This evening you have told me things that make even friendship between us impossible. (*Our translation*)

As can be seen from Claude's words, Elizabeth has irremediably offended him. His pain is discernable from his words. Both of them can no longer continue as lovers; even ordinary friendship between him and Elizabeth has been rendered impossible because her action. The account continues:

Il [Claude] était platement jaloux ; elle l'avait blessé dans son orgueil de mâle et il voulait la torturer. (105)

He [Claude] was extremely jealous; she has hurt his male pride and he wanted to torture her. (*Our translation*)

Elizabeth deeply hurts Claude's male pride because Claude abhors sharing 'his woman' with another; yet that is exactly what Elizabeth hates, that a man should expect her to remain faithful to him. The blow is too much on Claude that rather than swallow his pride and make up with her, he says: "Je m'en vais," [I am leaving]. And he left, thereby putting a final stop to his relationship with Elizabeth.

It is interesting to note that Claude does not suffer Elizabeth's infidelity alone; rather it is mutual. Elizabeth still loves Claude, therefore, when she learns that Claude is unwilling to forgive her infidelity, and that any form of friendship between them is impossible, she weeps bitterly. She becomes overwhelmed by a feelings of suffering, desperation and emptiness:

Soudain Elizabeth eut un éblouissement de souffrance; elle vit son atelier vide, où aucun coup de téléphone ne serait plus entendu, le casier vide dans la loge, le restaurant vide, les routes vides. C'était impossible, elle ne voulait pas le [Claude] perdre [. . .] elle avait besoin de lui pour vivre ; elle accepterait n'importe quoi pour le garder. (103)

Suddenly Elizabeth had a dazzle of suffering; she sees her studio empty, where no telephone call would be heard, empty pigeonhole in the lodge, empty restaurant, empty roads. it was impossible, she did not want to lose him [Claude] . . . she needed him to stay alive; she would accept anything to keep him. (*Our translation*)

Elizabeth imagines how empty life would become for her without Claude as her lover. She envisages total emptiness: in her studio, on the roads, in the restaurant—everywhere. Out of desperation, she is willing to do anything in order for Claude to remain his lover. As the excerpt above shows, both Claude and Elizabeth suffer from Claude's toleration of no rivalry.

Claude's brutality can also be seen in his dealings with his wife Suzanne. Unlike Elizabeth though, Suzanne is ready to accept whatever Claude does. It is for this reason that she is considered a victim of male oppression in the novel. The narrator says of her "Suzanne appartenait à la race des victimes; elle acceptait n'importe quoi de Claude" [Suzanne belongs to the race of victims; she accepts all manner of treatments from Claude].

As the analysis clearly shows, characters engage in sexual activities for a number of reasons. These include for material gain as Nadine does in order to get food during the war when provisions are scarce. It could also serve as a form of psychological relief as it happened to Nadine when she loses her boyfriend Diego in death. At other times,

engaging in sexual activities served as a punitive measure, as Nadine's case with Joly demonstrates. As the study demonstrates, Nadine is not the only character that uses sex as a punitive tool, Xavière in *L'invitée* does the same thing to Pierre when she makes love to Gerbert. Nadine likewise uses sex to break the 'ice' between her and men as she did with Henri when she wanted Henri to take her to Portugal. Lucie and her daughter Josette also do this to secure their financial status, and to get themselves out of difficult situations. Others go into relationships for the acquisition of fame and prestige as in the case of Guimiot. All these instances lend credence to our claim that virtually all their desires and wants are met when characters resort to the use of their body. Thus, as the study shows, men and women who exchange sex do so for different reasons, thereby illustrating the point that existential freedom allows the individual to make their own choices, thereby resulting in an 'authentic' lifestyle.

CHAPTER FIVE

NARRATING INFIDELITY AND DOUBLE STANDARDS IN MARITAL RELATIONSHIPS IN SELECTED NOVELS OF DE BEAUVOIR

5.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapter, attention was given to non-marital relationships and the different ways partners exercise their existential freedom within their relationships. It is observed that while the majority of characters frown at sexual fidelity and accept to live freely without marital commitment, a few, though, demand that their partners remain faithful to them even though they are not in marital relationships with their partners. In this chapter, the focus is on infidelity and double standards in marital relationships, and the moral, social and psychological implications for the characters in the selected works.

5.2 Double Standards in Issues of Fidelity

In recent times, the concept of double standards, according to Pilcher and Whelehan (2004:34), “is associated with the analysis of social rules and established conventions of behavior, especially as it relates to sexual culture.” Double standards of sexuality mean that men are judged differently from women because of their sex. In part, the implication of double standard of sexuality for women as Pilcher and Whelehan further note is that “sexual behaviours judged inappropriate in a woman, for which she may incur social disapproval from members of the society where she lives, or for which she may be punished may be regarded as appropriate for a man or even praiseworthy.”

There is a number of evidence in the selected novels on the existence of double standards of sexuality. In *Les belles images*, Gilbert Mortier enjoys the freedom made possible by double standards of sexuality. Although married to Marie-Claire, Gilbert takes Lucile de Saint-Charmont as a lover. Gilbert’s infidelity does not go unnoticed because together, the two of them would visit public places and go on tours yet, he is adored by many people, his friends and relatives alike. Their knowledge of his adulterous lifestyle does not make him subject of criticism by anyone. Even when he leaves Lucile de Saint-Charmont for Dominique Langlois, this does not affect his image in the social arena.

When Gilbert throws a dinner party, his friends and well wishers all honour his invitation. His invitees include Laurence and Marthe, the two daughters of his lover Dominique as well as their husbands Jean-Charles and Hubert. His acceptability by all those around him extends even to Laurence, the daughter of his lover Dominique.

However, married women in *Les belles images*, do not enjoy the same freedom that the men enjoy of taking lovers although married as a result of the existence of a double standards of sexuality. Thus, the few married women that dare to have lovers shroud such relationships in secrecy. This can be illustrated using three female characters in the text, namely, Laurence, Lucile de Saint-Charmont and Dominique Langlois.

For example, Laurence lives with her husband and children but keeps a lover named Lucien. When she starts working as an artist, additional opportunities open up for her to see Lucien because they share the same office at their place of work. They do all they can

to keep their relationship a secret, and pretending when in the presence of people in order for it not to be known that they are lovers.

Thus, while Gilbert Mortier enjoys security from the double standards on sexuality which allows him to flaunt his extramarital relationships, Laurence on the other hand, tries to shroud the relationship she has with Lucien in secrecy. This is because any knowledge of the union will result in shame and public disgrace. Laurence is aware that once her husband has knowledge of the existence of this clandestine relationship, it will mean the end of her marriage, a thing that she does not want. As a result, Laurence only goes to spend the night at Lucien's when her husband travels for business.

Time and again, Lucien asks Laurence to leave her husband and become his completely, but she never agreed. Even though Laurence's husband Jean-Charles never knew of this relationship between Lucien and his wife, guilt was eating Laurence away thereby robbing her of a clean conscience. Laurence admits: "J'ai une liaison qui me pese," [I have a relationship that is weighing me down]. The saying of Jean-Paul Sartre that "L'Enfer c'est les autres," [Hell is other people], is much applicable here. There are restrictions from the "Other" to the freedom of the self that is the individual. The society where Laurence finds herself allows and even admires men who have sexual affairs outside marriage but condemns women who do so. The consequences of extra-marital relationships can be grievous for women because they are expected to remain faithful to their husbands. The fact that Laurence is not meeting up to what is expected of her by her society restricts her freedom.

Consequently, when her children become older, Laurence decides to put a stop to her clandestine relationship in order to avoid a scandal. Although she still loves Lucien and desires that the relationship continue, she is also afraid that her children have become old enough to sense when their mother does not spend the nights at home. On the night that Laurence tells Lucien of her intention to end their relationship, their conversation goes thus:

Ç'a été une parfait soirée, dit-elle.

Il sursaut :

---Pourquoi dis-tu : ç'a été ?

---Deux heures du matin. Mon chéri, il va falloir que je rentre.
 ---Comment ? tu ne restes pas dormir ici ?
 ---Les enfants sont trop grandes, ça devient dangereux.
 ---Oh ! je t'en prie
 ---Non.
 ---Alors quoi ? tu ne passeras aucune de ces nuits avec moi.
 ---Imagine que mes filles se rendent compte. Le risque est trop grand. (62)

This was a perfect evening, she said.

He shudders:

---Why do you say: this was?
 ---It's 2.00am. My dear, it is time I went home.
 ---How? Are you not going to sleep here?
 ---The children are too big, it is becoming dangerous.
 ---Oh! I beg you.
 ---No.
 ---Then what? You are not going to spend any of these nights with me.
 ---Imagine that my children find out. The risk is too high. (*Our translation*)

The essential reason for putting an end to the relationship with Lucien is that Laurence fears the consequences of breaking societal standards. Thus, one can say that for Laurence, "hell is others." It becomes safe to conclude that while men such as Gilbert are free to take as many lovers as they want without being criticized, or to remain single if they so desire and still be accorded respect and dignity in the society, women are completely shut out of all these 'freedoms.' Simply put, double standards of sexuality continually exert forces that undermine women's self-confidence and assertiveness. This is because women are condemned if found unfaithful; they are robbed of dignity and respect if they remain single for a long time and then they are denied many other 'privileges' that men enjoy. These and other imbalances that are gender-related are well exemplified in the selected novels.

Another area that reflects societal double standards is the ageing process (Pilcher & Whelehan 2004:34). Ageing reduces physical beauty and attractiveness, the qualities for which women are valued, yet ageing poses no threat to men whose evaluation is based on what they are able to do economically. Thus, on realising that their partners are growing old and becoming less attractive, men go for younger women. Young women on their part, accept older men as lovers because of their financial buoyancy. This is well exemplified in the case of Gilbert Mortier in *L'invitée*. Gilbert Mortier is a fifty six year-old man with fifty one year old Dominique as his lover. Due to Dominique's advancing age, Gilbert

abandons her for a beautiful young girl of nineteen years named Patricia. He speaks with Laurence, telling her of his intentions:

- Je suis amoureux d'une jeune fille.
- Comment ça ?
- Amoureux. Comme : amour. D'une jeune fille de dix-neuf ans. Ce n'est pas si rare, aujourd'hui, qu'une fille de dix-neuf ans aime un homme qui en a plus de cinquante.
- Alors?
- Alors nous allons nous marier. (46)

- I am in love with a young girl.
- How is that?
- In love. As in: love. With a young girl of nineteen. It is not so rare, these days, for a girl of nineteen to be in love with a man of over fifty years.
- So?
- So we are getting married.
(*Our translation*)

Gilbert's choice of words highlights that it is not uncommon to see a young girl fall in love with a much older man. "Ce n'est pas si rare, aujourd'hui, qu'une fille de dix-neuf ans aime un homme qui en a plus de cinquante [It is not so rare, these days, for a girl of nineteen to be in love with a man of over fifty years]. The reason for this is that he wants Laurence to understand that her mother Dominique is no longer young enough for his taste and standards so he continues:

Votre mère a du ressort. Elle se rend très bien compte qu'une femme de cinquante-et-un ans est plus âgée qu'un homme de cinquante-six. (47)

Your mother has the means. She very well knows that a woman of fifty one years is far older than a man of fifty six. (*Our translation*)

Gilbert projects the point that at fifty one years, Dominique is 'older' than he is, although being fifty six already. Gilbert's actions are not without consequences. His infidelity and

betrayal cause Dominique much pain and a feeling of emptiness. Her daughter Laurence tries to console her but she weeps uncontrollably because the breakup will also result in social disadvantages for her. Dominique tells Laurence:

Tu ne connais pas encore la vie. Socialement une femme n'est rien sans un homme. Même avec un nom une femme sans homme, c'est une demi-ratée, une espèce d'épave [. . .] Je vois bien comment les gens me regardent: crois-moi ce n'est plus du tout comme avant. (142-43)

You do not yet understand what life is. Socially a woman is nothing without a man. Even with a name a woman without a man, is a half-failure, a kind of wreckage . . . I can well see how people are looking at me: believe me it is no longer the way it used to be. (*Our translation*)

Dominique's concerns are legitimate. She realises that things will no longer be the same for her now that she is without a man. Dominique also realises that Gilbert is not easily replaceable because of his wealth and social status. She refers to other men who showed interest in her as "de petits arrivistes" [small go-getters]. Gilbert's social status means so much to Dominique that she swears to get him back at all cost. She says:

Je le reprendrai. D'une manière ou d'une autre. [. . .] Il était ma dernière chance, comprends-tu ? A cinquante-et-un ans on ne refait pas la vie. Je le reprendrai! De gré ou de force. [. . .] Si je trouve un moyen de faire pression sur lui [. . .] Je ne serai pas une femme plaquée. (51)

I will get him back. In one way or another. . . . He was my last chance, do you understand? At fifty one years one cannot start life all over again. I will get him back! Willingly or by force. . . . If I can find a way to put pressure on him. . . . I will not be a jilted woman. (*Our translation*)

In her desperation, Dominique uses the expression "Je le reprendrai" [I will get him back] as if Gilbert were a property that can be acquired. She repeatedly uses these words. Her use of this technique is significant because by repeating these key words, she emphasizes the point that she is firmly resolved to get Gilbert back. Furthermore, when Dominique says "de gré ou de force" [willingly or by force] it reveals her ruthless doggedness in wanting to regain her relationship with Gilbert. Furthermore, her words that "socialement une femme n'est rien sans un homme" [socially a woman is nothing without a man] shows that what Dominique values most in her relationship with Gilbert are his social and financial status.

The word 'socialement' [socially] is of great importance here. It shows that Dominique's fears do not stem from within, but rather from without. Her deep-seated fears following Gilbert's abandonment are as a result of socially constructed standards which insist that a woman must have a man otherwise she would be considered "une demi ratée" [a half-failure]. With Gilbert as her last chance, Dominique has a burning desire, and is determined to fight and regain Gilbert, because she refuses to be regarded as an abandoned woman, "une femme plaquée", [a jilted woman].

Dominique understands that advancing age is a factor militating against her, and this is evident in her words: "A cinquante-et-un ans on ne refait pas la vie" [At fifty one years one cannot start life all over again]. In this context, starting life all over again for Dominique would mean having to look for another man who would assure her security, respect, and prominence in society. Finding a man that belongs to Gilbert's social class or that equals his financial worth would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, yet these two factors are of utmost importance to Dominique because earlier on, she left her husband in search of wealth and prominence. Now that Gilbert is gone, the social and financial stability that he brought her as a lover are all gone with him, leaving her feeling empty and abandoned.

Besides, people within the society that Dominique finds herself do not have respect for women who are single. She expresses her fears to Laurence who advises her to accept other men in Gilbert's stead:

Remplace-le tout de suite : il y a assez de types qui te font cour [. . .] Pars en voyage ; montre-leur que tu peux te passer de lui. C'est un salaud, tu as raison. Débrouilles-toi pour l'oublier. (51)

Replace him immediately: there are enough men who will court you. . . . Go on a trip; show them that you can do without him. He is a bastard, you are right. Sort yourself out and forget him. (*Our translation*)

Engaging in other activities such as travelling to places of interest would help Dominique get over the breakup, and this is what her daughter advises her to do. But Dominique's fear and unwillingness to stay without a wealthy and prominent man shows how deeply traditional gender roles can affect women. Dominique has internalized these traditional gender roles to an extent that she sees the breakup with Gilbert as an irremediable doom. Speaking about the patriarchal ideology that requires that an 'ideal' woman keeps both a career and a home, Tyson (1999:89) opines that "the woman on the pedestal is the woman who successfully juggles a career and a family, which means she looks great at the office and over the breakfast table, and she's never too tired to work to fix dinner, clean house" In other words, to be a successful woman, one must have both a career and a family.

With Gilbert, Dominique has attained the societal height that she much desires, because when she became Gilbert's lover, she got a job in the radio as a presenter with Gilbert's help. Thus, having both a man and a career, Dominique could get whatever she wanted. Together with Gilbert, she would go to parties, eat in the best restaurants in town, and visit other cities as well as countries of the world. All these achievements make her feel fulfilled. Hubert says of Dominique: "c'est grâce à Gilbert qu'elle [Dominique] est devenue cette femme tellement sûre d'elle." [It is with Gilbert's help that she [Dominique] became this woman that is so sure of herself].

However, with the breakup, Dominique loses all that mattered to her. The loss of what gives her a sense of security makes her feel as one standing on quick sand. She further laments:

Je te l'ai dit déjà, une femme sans homme, socialement c'est une déclassée; c'est équivoque. Je sais que déjà on m'attribue des gigolos; et d'ailleurs il y en a qui se proposent. (178)

I have already told you, a woman without a man, is a relegated woman socially, it is equivocal. I know that already people will send gigolos to me and besides there are some who are already proposing. (*Our translation*)

Dominique fears all that society attributes to a woman without a man. She hates to become socially relegated. All of this befalls Dominique for the reason that she is advancing in years, a factor that no human has control over; yet the society subjects women to suffering through the existence of double standards. Indeed, double standards are oppressive to all women.

Gilbert, on the other hand, is free of any feeling of insecurity resulting from the breakup of his relationship with Dominique since men are not judged by the same standards with women. In societies with double standards, such as this one, women are expected to have their men whereas, that is not the case with men. This is another negative effect of double standards for women.

This is evident in the case of Monsieur Langlois. After Dominique leaves her husband and becomes Gilbert's lover, Monsieur Langlois does not suffer any form of social disadvantage, because he still enjoys respect from his friends and neighbours and people still invite him to their parties and he honoured those invitations without any feelings of inferiority. No negative comments were passed for his singleness; neither did anyone look down on him. Thus, the analysis makes it obvious that while double standards have multiple disadvantages for women, none exists for men in all the texts under scrutiny, rather double standards favour men, or gives them an edge over women in different areas of life.

Double standards are felt as far as employment or profession is concerned. The way that the job a woman performs in a given organisation is regarded is quite different from that performed by a man. For example, a female artist named Elizabeth in *Les mandarins* is looked down upon by virtue of her being a woman. Her works of art are not held in high value during arts exhibition, even though they appear as fine as those produced by her male counterparts, because of the fact that she is a woman.

An important point to note in de Beauvoir's works is that she does not blame only the men as being responsible for double sexual standards. She equally blames the women because their acceptance of the prevailing patriarchal ideology greatly contributes to their oppression. Some women accept and resign themselves to the inauthentic roles that patriarchy assigns to them.

As is highlighted in the selected texts through the characters analysed, whether a man is married or not, whether he has lovers or not, people accord him the same measure of dignity, honor and respect as his married counterparts. But that is not the case with women because as it is expressed in Dominique's words, "une femme sans homme, socialement c'est une déclassée" [a woman without a man, is a relegated woman socially] demonstrating that issues which border on double standards touch different aspects of life.

5.3 Sexual Liberality within Marital Relationships

Although there are a few cases where partners that are in a sexual relationship demand exclusive loyalty from each other, there are many more instances where partners are free to have as many partners/lovers as they like with the knowledge of their partners. Thus, there are characters in the novels that have several sexual partners at a time.

In *Les mandarins*, there are instances where married people, for example, allow their partners to seek sexual pleasure and fulfilment outside their union. On an occasion, an American named Scriassine invites Anne to his hotel and with her husband's consent Anne goes to meet him. Scriassine asks Anne if she has ever cheated on her husband. He says:

C'est drôle; dans le milieu où vous vivez, toutes les femmes sont affranchies : et vous, on se demande si vous avez jamais trompé votre mari. (117, Vol.1)

It is funny; in the place where you live, all the women are emancipated: and you, one wonders if you have ever been unfaithful to your husband. (*Our translation*)

Taken aback, Anne replies Scriassine:

Trompé: quel mot affreux! Nous sommes libres, Robert et moi et nous ne cachons rien. (117,Vol.1)

Unfaithful: what a horrible word! We are free, Robert and I, and we hide nothing from each other.
(*Our translation*)

The way Scriassine puts the question to Anne suggests that Scriassine and Anne are not the only ones that share this view of exercising sexual freedom. Through his question, Scriassine implies that all emancipated women should live freely. The emancipation that Scriassine talks about includes freedom to have the rights over one's own body. Since this view is upheld by many in the society, people who consider themselves emancipated, both male and female accept the prevalent view thereby exercising their freedom to the full.

Anne however tells Scriassine about the difference between her and the husband regarding their sexual exploits with others. While Robert can have affairs without feeling emotionally attached to his partners, Anne only accepts those with whom she can continue as friends because for Anne casual love affairs eventually becomes deep over time. In her words:

Sur ce point j'étais très différente de Robert; ça lui [à Robert] paraissait normal de ramasser dans un bar une jolie putain et de passer une heure avec elle. Moi je n'aurais jamais accepté pour amants des hommes dont je n'aurais pas pu faire des amis et mon amitié était exigeante. (117-118,Vol.1)

On this point I was very different from Robert, it would appear normal to him [to Robert] to take a beautiful prostitute from a bar and spend an hour with her. Me, I would never accept as lovers men who I would be

unable to make friends with, and my friendship is demanding. (*Our translation*)

Scriassinetakes Anne to his room and makes love to her.

Anne Dubreuilh has another male lover (Lewis Brogan), whom she meets during a conference organised in New York. She proposes and returns to see him. Anne expects that Lewis would invite her to his house but he does not. She lacks the courage we see with Nadine in *Les mandarins* and Hélène in *Le sang des autres* who both court the men they want. She frankly admits that there are women who would boldly court a man, “Sans doute y avait-il des femmes qui auraient su dire tout de suite « Allons chez vous ». Nadine l’aurait dit,” (32), [No doubt there were women who would say right away “Let us go to your place.” Nadine would say so]. But she ends up telling Lewis outspokenly that she wants to accompany him to his house because her sole purpose of coming back to Chicago was to be with him. This boldness initiated the relationship.

Lewis’ actions in not taking steps to initiate their relationship seem deliberate. This is Lewis’ way of wielding power over Anne, making her to recognize that as the man, is in control. Anne feels very much at home when she finally finds herself alone with Lewis.

Il était nu, j’étais nue, et je n’éprouvais aucune gêne : son regard ne pouvait pas me blesser ; il ne me jugeait pas, [. . .] Son désir me transfigurait. C’était si miraculeux que je n’ai pas pensé à mesurer mon temps ni mon plaisir. (39, Vol.2)

He was naked, I was naked, and I did not feel uneasy: his look did not upset me, he was not judging me, His desire transformed me. It was so miraculous that I did not think of measuring my time or my pleasure.
(*Our translation*)

One striking expression here is: “je n’éprouvais aucune gêne” (39), [I did not feel uneasy at all]. This is in contrast to the relationship between Laurence and Lucien. Laurence is unable to enjoy her relationship with Lucien because there are restrictions from the “Other” to their existential freedom. Obviously, this is not the case with Anne and Lewis.

Anne's husband is aware of the relationship his wife has with Lewis and consents to it. But that is not the case with Laurence who continually has to keep her relationship with Lucien secret.

In the relationship between Anne and Lewis, the goal of both partners is to have as much pleasure as they possibly can. Also, this kind of relationship is characterised by the absence of any restraint that could mar their sexual pleasure. Anne says of Lewis: "il ne me jugeait pas," (32, Vol.2), [he was not judging me]. In existentialist theory, it is the "others" make one to feel guilty of engaging in some act. But when an individual enjoys doing what he likes, not minding what "others" would say or feel, he said to be authentic. This is what Anne does, and as a result, she feels at ease when engaging in extra-marital relations with Lewis or other men.

Both parties in this relationship have the freedom to do all they could to realise pleasure, and just as Anne puts it, Lewis' desire for her body transformed her. This is only achievable because she did not feel any uneasiness around Lewis or feel as if he was judging her. Thus, one may safely conclude that infidelity in extra-marital relations does not appear to have negative consequences on all the characters from the existentialist point of view.

After Anne's departure, Lewis feels as if a part of him has died. So strong is his attachment to Anne that he is no longer able to bring women to come and pass the night with him. In his letters to Anne, Lewis tells Anne how troubled he became after she left for France:

Est-ce que je vais continuer à vous aimer chaque jour de plus en plus ? C'est un drôle de tour que vous m'avez joué. Je ne peux plus ramener chez moi des femmes d'une nuit. Celles à qui j'aurais pu donner un petit bout de mon cœur, je n'ai plus rien à leur offrir. (179, Vol.2)

Am I going to continue loving you more and more by the day? It is a funny game that you played me. I can no longer bring women to my house. Those to whom I would have given a little part of my heart, I have nothing at all to offer them now. (*Our translation*)

There are dangers in this type of relationship where lovers are separated from each other both by geographical space and by time. One of such dangers is jealousy. While one party is away, the other becomes jealous, wondering with whom his partner may be spending nights, or as in the case of Lewis and Anne, both parties become jealous. With the passage of time, jealousy could lead to yet another danger—feelings of insecurity. In a relationship where security is lacking, both partners suffer emotional distance. Instead of the bond of friendship between them becoming closer and strengthened, it rather wanes and weakens. Such feelings of insecurity may well make a party to feel that his/her partner is less committed to their relationship.

Lewis had these negative feelings while Anne was away and so did Anne. As a result of this, Lewis tells Anne how he had spent months waiting for her return.”Anne! toutes les nuits je vous ai attendue.” [Anne! All the nights I waited for you]. Lewis proposes to Anne: “Vous êtes mariée. Mais vous pouvez divorcer. Nous pouvons vivre ensemble sans être mariés. Vous êtes ma femme, ma seule femme.” (245, Vol.2), [You are married. But you can divorce. We can live together without getting married. You are my wife, my only wife.] Anne turns down the offer. This depresses Lewis and in his depressed state, he decides to stop loving her.

Bent on executing his plans, Lewis devises a means to lessen his love for Anne. He deploys *avoidance*, which is a self-defence mechanism in psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysts have identified different forms of defences, including selective perception, selective memory, denial, avoidance, and displacement among others (Tyson 1999:18). Avoidance, involves staying away from people or situations that are liable to make us feel hurt or anxious by stirring up repressed experience or emotion. In order to repress his feelings of love and affection for Anne, Lewis takes her to stay with a family in New York.

In the third year, Anne goes to see Lewis in America, but realizes on the very first day of her arrival that things have changed between them because the relationship lacks its former warmth. *Avoidance*, time and geographical distance all contributed to the waning of their love. Lewis confesses his feelings to her.

Je tiens toujours à vous, beaucoup ; j'ai beaucoup d'affection pour vous, mais ce n'est plus de l'amour [. . .] Je vous ai attendée sans impatience, cette année. Oui, une femme c'est agréable; on cause, on couche ensemble, et puis elle repart: il n'y a pas de quoi perdre la tête. (383,Vol.2)

I still feel attached to you, a lot; I have a lot of affection for you; but it is no longer love. . . . I did not wait for you impatiently, this year. Yes a woman is likeable, you talk with her, make love with her, and then she leaves again: there is nothing in that over which a person should lose his head. (*Our translation*)

The point illustrated here is that love grows when it is nurtured and dies when it is neglected. Lewis still feels attached to Anne but he no longer loves her, although his affection for Anne does not cease completely, Anne could sense that he no longer loves her. And that is what Lewis himself admits; he no longer has strong feelings of love for her. This made him wait for Anne's return "sans impatience,"[without impatience]. In other words, he was not in eager expectation of Anne's coming.

Lewis sees no point in remaining in love with a woman who simply visits, chats and makes love with him and thereafter is gone for many months. Lewis requires more apart from what Anne could give during her presence. He needs a woman who would love him enough to be able to live with him, a woman who would sacrifice her marriage for him. He feels Anne is not committed to him Anne, on the other hand, feels terribly sad that despite all the efforts she makes in leaving her family in France and coming to America to be with Lewis, she is not appreciated. This marks the beginning of their separation, at least emotionally speaking. This case shows that short-term relationships eventually leave one insecure, alone, and, perhaps, afflicted.

Still In *Les Mandarins*, Vernon the director of Studio 46 is married to Juliette yet he keeps many male lovers. His wife is never happy of her husband's homosexual relations, and so in order to earn his wife's favour, he obeys her and does whatever she asks him to do. Claudie says of him "Vernon obéit au doigt et à l'œil à sa femme afin de se faire

pardonner ses amitiés masculines.” [Vernon obeys his wife implicitly in order to be forgiven his union with his male friends].

At a glance, questions about beauty and the high value that is placed on a woman’s outward appearance may appear to be superficial. However, when examined closely, it becomes obvious that these are important issues in Radical Feminism. This is because when women are driven by the desire to look like the enticingly captivating images of an ‘ideal’ woman as often presented on the media, they will go out of their way, anxiously seeking cosmetic surgery – a thing that feminists view as self-mutilation-- in order to acquire such looks.

Besides, this could also lead women to pursue at a great expense the latest fashion in order to look their best. Ironically, societal standards of such ‘ideal’ looks that women should have are not set by women themselves, but rather by men. Thus, when women struggle to meet up with such standards, they still are, in effect, subjecting themselves to the dictates of men. Walters (2005:108) explains that “protests at the Miss America contest in Atlantic City in November 1968 and in 1969, when feminists mockingly crowned a sheep” demonstrates that feminists do not appreciate it when men try to commodify the female body.

Dissatisfaction about the way she looks, maybe not possessing certain features that are considered ‘feminine’ is another disadvantage that could result when a woman fails to meet up with the standards set by men of how an ‘ideal’ woman should look. Examples from the selected novels portray how frustrated a woman can become if she lacks such looks. This and other aspects of feminist view on body issues are here addressed.

A character in *Les mandarins* named Nadine, does not have a right attitude regarding her appearance. She is not satisfied with her appearance and this dissatisfaction is a result of having unconsciously internalized the patriarchal ideology that “females must be beautiful, sweet, and young if they are to be worthy of romantic admiration” (Tyson 1999:87). However, because Nadine lacks these features that are considered necessary for women, especially those living in patriarchal cultures, she decides to throw herself at just any man that comes her way. Thus, it happens that at eighteen, she is described as a girl

who goes from French to American beds. «Nadine, a dix-huit ans, en dépit de ses vagabondages dans des lits français et américains, elle semblait encore en plein âge ingrate” (18,Vol.1), [Nadine at eighteen years, despite her roaming from French to American beds, she still looks quite young].

Looking at Nadine through the male lens, Henri describes her as ugly because she looks much like her father, and she lacks the feminine look:

Elle [Nadine] n'était pas jolie, elle ressemblait trop à son père et c'était gênant de retrouver ce visage bourru au-dessus d'un corps de jeune fille ; les yeux étaient bleus comme ceux d'Anne mais si froids qu'ils semblaient à la fois usés et puérils (27, Vol.1)

She [Nadine] was not beautiful, she looked so much like her father and it is discomforting to find this dejected-looking face above the body of a young girl; her eyes were blue like those of Anne but looked so cold as if they were worn-out and childish.(Our translation)

5.4 Consideration for the Freedom of Self and of the “Other”

It should be reiterated that, in existentialist theory, true freedom of an individual also involves that of others. In *Le sang des autres*, we find Jean Blomart, a Resistance leader in an ethical dilemma. People want him to sanction further attacks of sabotage against the occupying Nazi forces. Although Jean understands that such acts would essentially lead to a weakening of the German hold on France, he also understands that acts of sabotage would result in German reprisals against the French population. Before he reaches a decision, he flashes his mind back to how his choices in the past have affected others. One of them resulted in the death of his colleague named Jacques. Jean blames himself for the death of Jacques, the younger brother of his friend Marcel because he, Jean, was the one who introduced him communism, and it was while Jacques was on a communist mission that he was killed. Jean bitterly remembers the incident:

Un coup de feu, puis un autre : Jacques était mort.
J'avais mis un revolver entre ses mains, et il était mort.
Il est arrivé malheur à Jacques.(146)

One gunshot, then another: Jacques was dead. I handed him a revolver, and he died. Jacques was harmed. (*Our translation*)

Jean never shifts the blame to Jacques or the people that kill him for he see things clearly and regrets the part he has played. Based on this experience, Jean bluntly refuses to further make a choice that would result in the death of others. Thus, while some individuals clamour that Jean give his consent for the sabotage, Jean strongly upholds his existentialist view, arguing that it is morally wrong for him to make decisions that would bring about the death of others. He believes that people should make their own decisions and thereafter face the consequences of such decisions. He says :

Derrière les Pyrénées, les travailleurs d'Espagne tombaient sous les balles fascistes, mais pouvais-je racheter leur sang au prix des vies françaises, au prix d'une seule vie qui ne fût pas la mienne? Les juifs crevaient comme des mouches dans les camps de concentration, mais avais-je le droit d'échanger leurs cadavres contre les corps innocents des paysans de France? (155)

Behind the Pyrenees, Spanish workers are falling under fascist bullets, but can I redeem their blood at the cost of French lives, at the cost of a life that is not mine? The Jews are dying like flies in the concentration camps, but do I have the right to exchange their corpses with the body of innocent French peasants?(*Our translation*)

Although his heart goes out to those suffering under the Nazi regime, Jean deems it unfit to repurchase them with the blood of others. The words that Jean uses to corroborate his argument show how strong his conviction is. Words such as “mais pouvais-je racheter leur sang . . . au prix d'une seule vie qui ne fût pas la mienne?”(155), [but can I redeem their blood . . . at the cost of a life that is not mine?], reveal Jean's certitude that he would not use his existential freedom to make a choice that would affect others negatively. His next words “mais avais-je le droit d'échanger leurs cadavres contre les corps innocents des paysans de France?” (155), [but do I have the right to exchange their corpses with the body of innocent French peasants?], plainly reveal that Jean is convinced beyond all

reasonable doubt that as an individual, he lacks the right and moral justification to send people to go and die in war.

His reason is obvious. Such a decision would cut short the life of others. However, Jean also admits that he can give his own life for others. Since he owns his life, he is in full control of it and can do whatever he wishes with it, but that is not the case when the lives of others are involved. Thus, when we put into consideration what Jean further says on the issue, we arrive at the conclusion that although Jean is unwilling to sacrifice the lives of others, he is willing to give his own. He further says:

Je pouvais payer avec mon corps, avec mon sang; mais
les autres hommes n'étaient pas une monnaie à mon
usage...(155)

I can pay with my body, with my blood; but other men
are not money at my disposal. (*Our translation*)

He would rather give his own life in order to save others than sacrifice the life of his fellow Frenchmen.

Apart from the instance that has just been discussed, there are other instances in the novel that show characters' readiness to assume responsibility for their actions. For example, while the Resistance lasted during the German Occupation of France, members of the Resistance usually make attacks during the night. Jean's lover Héléne decides to join Jean and his friends in launching such nocturnal attacks. During one of such expeditions, Héléne is struck a deadly blow.

Jean blames himself for the injury that Helene gets while on the mission, saying, "Mon seul amour...c'est par ma faute" [My only love . . . it is due to my fault]. But Héléne disagrees with him because, according to her, her going on that mission is a decision she made by herself, she was not coerced into it. Thus, she refuses to accept that Jean is at fault. She rather accepts the full responsibility for what happened to her. She says:

Où est la faute? C'est moi qui ai voulu y aller...Tu
n'avait pas le droit de décider pour moi. N'aie
surtout pas de remords...Il ne faut pas en avoir. J'ai
fait ce que j'ai voulu. Tu étais tout juste une pierre.

Des pierres, il en faut pour faire des routes, sans ça comment pourrait-on choisir un chemin? (307)

Where does your fault lie? I am the one who wanted to go . . . You do not have the right to choose for me. Do not feel regrets . . . There is no need to do so. I did what I wanted to do. You were just a stone. Stones are needed to make roads, without that how can one choose a road?(*Our translation*)

From the time she becomes injured till she died, Helene blames no one else but herself. She is fully convinced that an individual is responsible for all the actions he or she takes. It is this conviction that moves H el ene to courageously accept the full responsibility for her decision to join the Resistance, even in the face of death. Although Jean blames himself, feeling that he contributed to exposing H el ene to danger on that night, Helene relieves Jean of any feelings of guilt by accepting *full* responsibility for her actions. It is this readiness to accept the consequences of one's decisions and actions that existentialists advocate.

5.4 Intra-gender Conflict and Oppression

Unlike male violence which poses a serious threat to human life, female violence and aggression are often subtle and less visible, yet chronic and with far-reaching effects. Female-female oppression is a serious issue because as Chesler (2003:36) states "the primary targets of women's aggression, hostility, violence and cruelty are other women . . . a woman can make life hell, on a moment-by-moment basis, for any other woman whom she envies, fears, or with whom she must compete for resources."

Among other things that they do to oppress fellow women, women may "engage in any of the following behaviors; constant criticism . . . physical beatings; obsessive sexual surveillance and repression; collaboration in the physical or sexual abuse of a daughter by an adult male" (Chesler: 2003:240). There are cases of intra-gender conflict in the selected novels, where women oppress fellow women, and usually, it is the older or more influential women that oppress the younger and weaker ones. In *Les belles images*, for example, Lucile de Saint Charmont the mother of Patricia, a young girl of 19, is a poor woman who uses her daughter to get money from rich men. When she sees the opportunity, she arranges for her daughter Patricia to become Gilbert Mortier's lover.

Gilbert Mortier is a very wealthy business man and Lucile ends up coercing her daughter to marry him, although Gilbert is about three times Patricia's age. Gilbert's financial status is a strong force that makes Lucile to oppress her daughter and forces her wishes on her daughter. In the novel we read:

Patricia . . . toute en blanc au bal des debs ; une ravissante dinde, fauchée, que sa mère jette dans des bras riches(47)

Patricia . . . all in white in debutantes' dance hall; a beautiful, penniless girl that her mother throws into rich men's hands.(*Our translation*)

As can be easily deduced from the excerpt above, the mother is responsible for Patricia's sexual oppression, that of going from one rich man to another. Of course, if Patricia were doing this of her own volition, the existentialists and radical feminists would not condemn her because her actions would be considered an exercise of existential freedom. However, as the text shows, it is her mother that pushes her to men "sa mère [la] jette dans des bras riches" (47), [her mother throws [her] into rich men's hands], this is not only oppressive to Patricia and robs her of her existential freedom, but also results in her living an inauthentic life, following the dictates of her mother, and denied the freedom of "becoming a self."

Two other examples of intra-gender conflicts exist in *Les belles images* between Marie-Claire and Dominique, and also between Dominique and Patricia. The first is the one between Marie-Claire and Dominique. As noted earlier, Gilbert is married to Marie-Claire, but then he takes a woman named Lucile de Saint-Charmont as his lover. During this relationship with Lucile, Gilbert continues to live with his wife Marie-Claire. After some time though, Gilbert abandons Lucile and becomes Dominique's lover. Dominique's intention is to get married to Gilbert. Thus, she ensures that Gilbert not only leaves his lover Lucile, but also abandons his wife Marie-Claire and moves in with Dominique. Due to her possessive and domineering personality, Dominique succeeds in winning Gilbert over.

However, Marie-Claire, embittered by Dominique's oppressive and exploitative moves and intentions frustrates Dominique's plans of getting married to Gilbert by refusing to divorce Gilbert. The conflict between the two women results in their causing emotional and psychological hurt to each other. Dominique complains to Laurence that despite all her efforts to ensure that Gilbert marries her, Marie-Claire's refusal to divorce Gilbert has made marriage with him impossible. This is explicit from what she says to her daughter Laurence:

Gilbert . . . C'est pour le garder que je me tue à sortir . . .
. . . Cette salope de Marie-Claire. Elle refuse obstinément le divorce : pour le plaisir de m'emmerder. (16)

Gilbert . . . It is because of him that I go out too often . . .
. . . this bitch Marie-Claire has obstinately refused a divorce: for the sole purpose of getting me into trouble. (*Our translation*)

What she says to her daughter Laurence shows that she is fully aware that Marie-Claire's refusal is to spite her. "Elle refuse obstinément le divorce : pour le plaisir de m'emmerder" (16), [she has obstinately refused a divorce: for the sole purpose of getting me into trouble]. On the other hand, Marie-Claire is resentful towards Dominique since Dominique is responsible for Gilbert's abandoning her and moving out of their matrimonial home. Also, it was at the onset of Gilbert's relationship with Dominique that Gilbert began to ask his wife Marie-Claire consistently for a divorce, with the intention of marrying Dominique. Thus Marie-Claire decides to use this opportunity to hurt Dominique for taking over her husband completely. The narrator says:

Marie-Claire dit sûrement: cette salope de Dominique.
Au temps de Lucile de Saint-Charmont, Gilbert habitait encore avec sa femme, la question ne se posait même pas puisque Lucile avait un mari, des enfants. Dominique l'avait [Gilbert] obligé à se séparer de Marie-Claire. (16, 17)

Marie-Claire certainly says: this bitch Dominique. During the time of Lucile de Saint-Charmont, Gilbert was still living with his wife, which was not even an issue since Lucile had a husband and children. Dominique obliged him [Gilbert] to separate from Marie-Claire. (*Our translation*)

For causing the separation between her and the husband, Marie-Claire vows to avenge Dominique for her cruel act by refusing to grant Gilbert a divorce, thereby making marriage between Gilbert and Dominique impossible.

Marie-Claire does not stop at that but further avenges Dominique when she willingly agrees to divorce Gilbert in order to enable him to marry a young girl of 19 named Patricia. Ordinarily, Marie-Claire would not have consented that her husband marries another wife, but she does this for two obvious reasons. The first and more important reason is that she considers this a very effective way to avenge Dominique and cause her much pain and heartache. The second is that she loves Patricia and wants Patricia to be happy:

Marie-Claire accepte le divorce. Elle connaît Patricia et l'aime beaucoup . . . Marie-Claire accepte le divorce ; bien sur, elle est trop heureuse de jouer un sale tour à Dominique. (46, 47)

Marie-Claire accepts the divorce. She knows Patricia and loves her so much . . . Marie-Claire accepts the divorce; surely she is very happy to pay Dominique back in her own coin. (*Our translation*)

Surely, Marie-Claire succeeds in wrecking damage to Dominique's relationship with Gilbert because on hearing the news that Marie-Claire accepts to divorce Gilbert so that he could thereafter marry Patricia, Dominique laments:

Toute ma vie j'ai lutté. Et cette petite conasse, la voilà à vingt ans la femme d'un des hommes les plus riches de France. Elle sera encore jeune quand il crèvera en lui laissant la moitié de sa fortune... Toute ma vie j'ai été humiliée... Avec Gilbert je me sentais protégée; en paix, après tant d'années... Etre vieille c'est, déjà

affreux. Mais je me disais que Gilbert serait toujours
là. Et puis non. Vieillée et seule: c'est atroce.
(114,115)

All my life I have struggled. And this small damn
fool, at twenty years is already the wife of one of the
richest men in France. She would still be young by
the time he dies, leaving her half of his fortune . . .
All my life I have been humiliated . . . With Gilbert I
felt protected; in peace, after so many years . . .
Growing old is bad enough. But I was telling myself
that Gilbert would always be there, but now, he is no
more. Old and alone: this is horrifying. (*Our
translation*)

The conflict between Marie-Claire and Dominique results in Dominique's loss of Gilbert, a man with whom she has envisaged growing old together. Marie-Claire's action shatters all Dominique's hopes for a secure and happy future. She describes her feelings thus: "Avec Gilbert je me sentais protégée; en paix" [With Gilbert I felt protected; in peace]. However, she loses all of this due to the breakup with Gilbert.

Provoked by Marie-Claire's vengeance, Dominique launches an attack on Patricia, the young girl that Gilbert intends to marry. The reason for the ensuing aggression and conflict between Dominique and Patricia is well captured in the words of Chesler (2003:128): "women aggressively compete against each other, sexually, for men and for the resources men have." Dominique says that she will avenge at all costs, "En tout cas je me vengerai" [I will avenge]. Dominique thinks of a way she could hurt Patricia emotionally, hoping that this would make her reject marrying Gilbert, but Dominique is wrong!

In a letter, Dominique tells Patricia that Gilbert has had affairs with her mother (Patricia's mother). Patricia shows the letter to her mother and to Gilbert. Angered by Dominique's letter, Gilbert goes and beats Dominique up, resulting in feelings of shame and guilt for Gilbert, Lucile de Saint-Charmont and Patricia, but more pain and loneliness for Dominique.

These instances demonstrate that intra-gender conflicts can bring about distressing consequences for characters. From the other instances that are analysed in this chapter, it is evident that when the idea of sexual freedom is mutual, both partners enjoy the freedom without causing needless pain or hurt on their partners. Finally, the chapter also highlights the negative effects of double standards in male/female relationships on women.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

The study explores the exercise of freedom and choice in human relationships, particularly sexuality, in the four novels selected for the study. There exist different forms of relationships, marital, extra-marital, and mother-daughter, where freedom in the context of love and passion is manifested differently from character to character and from situation to situation. Choices that characters make in the face of different situations, regardless of their sexual orientation, whether they are heterosexuals, homosexuals, or bisexuals demonstrate the level of their sexual commitment to their partners.

A critical analysis of the selected novels of Simone de Beauvoir reveals that sexuality is represented “in a manner particularly reflective of man’s problematic interpersonal relations, especially relations between men and women and between the society and the individual” (Mooney, 2008:276). There is a high degree of tolerance for multiple sexual partners in different forms of relationships, and these include heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual relationships.

The novels demonstrate the different reasons for which characters go into relationships with others. In some instances, characters are out in search of sexual pleasure. For others, they initiate sexual relationships with wealthy people in order to realise material gain or to meet up with set societal standards. Still, for some others, when they go into sexual relationships, it is a means to attain fame and prestige in their chosen profession or career. Therefore, egoism and exploitation are basic to human relationships that are portrayed from one end of the novels to another.

Depending on what reasons they have for going into relationships, it is observed that when characters have selfish interests as their objective, it results in oppression and exploitation. While in some relationships there is one-sided exploitation, where one of the partners enjoys full advantages and self-fulfilment to the detriment of their partner, there are also examples of relationships of partners that are mutually exploitative.

In *Les mandarins*, for instance, Henri is both an exploiter and an exploited. He is the exploiter in his dealings with Paule for he deals ruthlessly with her, subjecting her to different forms of maltreatment. Paule, on her part, rather than accept and acknowledge the painful truth that Henri is no longer in love with her, denies the fact and resorts to hiding in “*la mauvaise foi*” bad faith. However, living an “inauthentic life” for many years under Henri’s fierce and constant oppression eventually leads to Paule’s loss of emotional and psychological balance. On the other hand, Henri is exploited by three different women in the novel.

First, he is exploited by Nadine when she gets him drunk and forces her love on him. Nadine also exploits Henri when, for obvious social advantages, she deliberately becomes pregnant for him without seeking his consent.

Furthermore, Lucie and Josette Belhomme both cheat and exploit Henri when they make him believe that Lucie is interested in his literary production and would help him to arrange for a director to stage his play. Lucie gets that done but in the process, gets Henri under her control as he becomes an ally—a useful one at that—because as Lucie usually says “*Evidemment, on n’a rien sans rien*” [Evidently, nothing goes for nothing]. Thus,

while Henri got his play staged with Lucie's help, Lucie secures Henri as a useful ally that would resolve their issue with German soldiers.

Lucie's daughter Josette also aids her mother in deceiving Henri because she leads him into a relationship with her, thereby getting Henri into her mother's trap. These instances demonstrate that in most male/female relationships where there are oppression and exploitation, women suffer from pain. These include but are not limited to emotional and psychological pain.

However, for characters that are in non-exploitative relationships, there is a free flow of communication. Such true relationships preserve the 'Other' in his/her own uniqueness, none of the people involved in such relationships constitute an obstacle to their partners' self-fulfilment. In the interpersonal relationships that are dialogic, that is mutual, none is overly possessive of the other but they rather enjoy some distance. Characters who enjoy this kind of relationship relate all their sexual exploits outside their immediate relationship to each other. This is because, apart from the freedom of an individual, existential freedom, as postulated by Sartre, also involves the freedom of another. In other words, the freedom of an individual should not be an obstacle to the freedom of another individual. If on the other hand, the freedom of an individual hinders that of another, or if a partner is dominating or possessive, then there is indeed no freedom in that relationship.

Consequent on the foregoing, individuals who enjoy true existential relationships are able to enjoy their uniqueness, although having relationships with others at the same time. A couple in *Les mandarins*, Robert and Anne Dubreuilh, enjoy this kind of freedom in their marital relationship. Both partners seek sexual pleasure in extramarital relationships and freely relate their experiences to each other without any feelings of shame or guilt.

On the contrary, possessive love relations are frustrating as the lover becomes an object of that love. The relationship swings between love and hate and the desire to possess and be possessed. Thus, such sexual and interpersonal relations become contradictory, and in some cases oppressive and exploitative such as the one between Françoise and Xavière in *L'invitée*, as well as that between Paule and Henri in *Les mandarins*.

Still in this study, a reversal of role is revealed in the area of courtship. On different occasions, women are seen taking the first step to initiate a sexual relationship either with people of the opposite or same sex. Nadine is a good example; she goes for and gets whoever she wants. Helene in *Le sang des autres* is another brave female character that initiates courtship, thus rejecting and subverting set standards of patriarchal system.

Another feature discovered in the course of the study is that among characters that go into sexual relationships, there exist the tolerant and the intolerant ones, male and female alike. In the first category, individuals are tolerant of multiple sexual partners, and as a result, they do not demand fidelity of their partners. Thus, partners are free to pursue sexual pleasure within and outside the marriage. The same is applicable to those who are simply cohabiting without legalizing their union. In so many instances, as the study demonstrates, sexual partners are aware of their partners' sexual exploits outside their immediate union but do not feel bothered by such knowledge. Robert and Anne Dubreuilh and Pierre and Françoise belong to this group.

On the contrary, characters in the second group demand fidelity of each other because they do not tolerate any rivalry toward their partners, whether they are in a marital or non-marital relationship. They demand that the affection of their sexual partners exclusively be for them. Their having no tolerance for multiple sexual partners makes them different from the first group. Any sexual relations outside their immediate union pose a great danger to their relationship. Lambert in *Les mandarins*, Claude in *L'invitée* and Paul in *Le sang des autres* belong to this group. As the analysis shows, their degree of intolerance is so high such that immediately they discover that their partners have other lovers besides them; they quickly abandoned such 'unfaithful' partners.

Another issue that limited characters' exercise of freedom to choose, and that poses a problem for them in the novels is double standards of sexuality. Due to these double standards, where men are judged differently from women, characters resort to living an 'inauthentic life,' the reason is because what they desire to do is against what the society expects of them. For instance, in *Les belles images*, Laurence, against her will, puts an end to an extramarital relationship she has with Lucien for fear that the clandestine relationship might be discovered. On the contrary, male characters like Gilbert in the same

novel are seen enjoying their sexual freedom to the full. They take as many lovers as they want with the knowledge of their wives, yet, they suffer no negative consequences -- a feat that is impossible for women living in the same society.

Thus, it becomes safe to conclude that men 'enjoy' a measure of freedom from which women are completely shut out. Furthermore, men are free to remain single if they so desire and still be accorded respect and dignity, but that is not the case with women who are punished if found unfaithful, robbed of security and respect if they remain single for a long time and are denied many other 'privileges' that men enjoy. It is for this reason that Dominique in *Les belles images* says "une femme sans homme, c'est une demi-ratée. Une femme sans homme, socialement c'est une déclassée" (178), [a woman without a man is a half-failure. A woman without a man is a relegated woman socially]. Simply put, double standards continually exert forces that undermine women's self-confidence and assertiveness. These and other imbalances that are gender-related are well exemplified in the selected novels.

Unlike the conclusions reached from previous studies, where Simone de Beauvoir is traditionally accepted as the precursor and proponent of modern French Feminism, the present study shows the author **not** to be as radically feminist as she is often made to be. Rather, the study presents the author as more of an existentialist writer and philosopher, whose foremost ethics of freedom and choice run as a thread through all the four works that were analysed. Furthermore, the study highlights de Beauvoir's great insight into the exercise of freedom in human relationships. De Beauvoir prescribes freedom for the entire human reality—men and women—to exist more authentically as free beings. The analysis is replete with examples that support these findings.

Also, in this study, it is found that Simone de Beauvoir invests her time writing on issues that affect everyone in the society rather than focus her attention on gender issues only, in so doing, she mirrors the good and ugly sides of the society. This is a major characteristic of a committed writer -- to be deeply concerned with man in his society. By embedding in her works the preoccupations of her society, de Beauvoir succeeds in demonstrating the close rapport between literature, life and society. The pictures painted in her works well represent the real world since there is no society that is free of both facets—the good and

the bad. In his book *Culture, Tradition and Society in the West African Novel*, Emmanuel Obiechina (2000:265), cited by Orjinta (2006:163), says:

The imperfections of human nature are mirrored in the imperfections of society. That is why it is difficult to write a satisfactory novel glorifying a social system of idolizing characters.

Among the vices found in the society that de Beauvoir condemns in her novels is intra-gender oppression, a case where women oppress their fellow women. *Les belles images, and les mandarins*, two of the novels under scrutiny, according to Simons (1986:176), “express a moral condemnation of the women responsible for the smothering socialization of the young girls in their charge.” This is well illustrated in the analysis by the use of two female characters, Lucile de Saint-Charmont and Lucie Belhomme, both of whom coerced their daughters into prostitution for obvious material gain. By presenting both women in this light, de Beauvoir shows that she wants to create a society free of oppression and injustice.

Also, this study shows that de Beauvoir strongly “defended sexual freedom and viewed sexuality not as a biological imperative, but as a social fact” (Tidd, 2004:43). By means of the novels that form the basis of this work, de Beauvoir points to the fact that exercising freedom without consideration for ‘Others’ result in little or no lasting happiness both for the individual and for those with whom they relate.

The two literary theories used in the study, namely, Existentialism and Radical Feminism; greatly contribute to achieving the desired objectives that are stated at the outset of the work. As a result, the study adds to the body of works in French studies in Nigerian scholarship and promotes the recognition of de Beauvoir as a renowned French philosopher and writer that deserves much attention in scholarship. It is therefore based on these and other facts earlier stated that further studies are recommended on both the writer and her literary productions. When more studies are aimed in this direction, it would go a long way in demonstrating that although man is free as existentialists say, the exercise of

such freedom should put into consideration the welfare and interests of “Others,” without which there would be chaos and anarchy in the human society.

In conclusion, the study has demonstrated that freedom to choose enables humans to have fulfilling relationships with others as it does not impose uniformity of norm. An individual is therefore free to choose what religion to practice, which social group to belong to, with whom to form relationships among others, but must accept responsibility for the choice. However, humans in general are constrained by the society whether or not they want it so. The author, Simone de Beauvoir was frank in this regard by presenting authentic as well as inauthentic relationships in order to show that there are always constraints to freedom in human relationships.

One thing of relevance to our Nigerian situation is that people do not exercise their freedom nor do they own up and accept responsibility for their actions. There is more of inauthentic living than authentic living. The study therefore serves as an eye-opener to Nigerians to twentieth-century society in France as far as social relationships are concerned.

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