

## Three Women (1924) Ernst Lubitsch (1892-1947)

### OVERVIEW

*Auteur:* Ernst Lubitsch was a German-American film director, producer, writer, and actor. He is famous for urbane comedies of manners. With the growth of his prestige, his films came to be known as having *the Lubitsch touch*. Lubitsch was born in 1892 in Berlin, as the son of Simon Lubitsch, a tailor, and Anna (née) Lindenstaedt. His family was Ashkenazi Jewish. He did not enter his father's tailoring business, and by 1911, he was a member of Max Reinhardt's Deutsches Theater. Lubitsch was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Director three times for *The Patriot* (1928), *The Love Parade* (1929), and *Heaven Can Wait* (1943). In 1946, he received an Honorary Academy Award for his contributions to the art of motion pictures. His best-known works are *Trouble in Paradise* (1932), *Design for Living* (1933), *Ninotchka* (1939), *The Shop Around the Corner* (1940), *To Be or Not to Be* (1942) and *Heaven Can Wait* (1943). Lubitsch died of a heart attack on November 30, 1947, in Hollywood at the age of 55.

*Film:* *Three Women* (German: *Drei Frauen*, also known as *Die Frau, die Freundin und die Dirne* (*The Woman, the Friend and the Harlot*)), is a 1924 American silent drama film. It is Ernst Lubitsch's third American film. It stars May McAvoy, Pauline Frederick, and Marie Prevost. The film is based on the novel *Lillis Ehe* by Yolande Maree (Iolanthe Mares). The story was written by Ernst Lubitsch and Hanns Kraly. Cinematography is by Charles Rosher and Charles Van Enger. Prints of *Three Women* are in the collections of the George Eastman House (Rochester) and Filmmuseum München. The film was shown on television after being transferred onto 16 mm film by Associated Artists Productions in the 1950s. An approximately 70 minutes version, with a new orchestral score by Andrew Earle Simpson, aired on Turner Classic Movies and was released on Blu-ray disc in 2022 by Kino Lorber.

*Historical background:* *Three Women* is based on *Lillis Ehe* by Yolande Maree (Iolanthe Mares). Yolande Maree (1868–1934) was a German writer. She was the author of a series of novels of manner published between 1914 and 1934. Her most successful work was the novel *Lillis Ehe*, which had a circulation of 60,000 copies in 1919. In 1938, Yolande Maree's complete works were included in the list of harmful and undesirable writings formulated by the Nazi regime. Halliwell's Film Guide characterized the film as a "Subtle satirical comedy; not one of the director's masterpieces, but with enough barbs to keep one watching".

### CHARACTERS

*Jeanne Wilton:* 18-year-old girl who is loved by Fred but gets married to a penniless George Lamont.  
*Mabel Wilton:* Jeanne's frivolous mother who is more interested in her  
*Harriet:* A flapper who has an affair with George Lamont while he is married to Jeanne  
*George Lamont:* A penniless Don Juan who targets Mabel Wilton with 3 million dollars  
*John W. Howard:* A fat man who has lent money to George Lamont  
*Fred Colman:* A young medical student who is in love with Jeanne but is too shy to propose to her  
*His mother:* The old mother of Fred who is a wise and lovely woman  
*Fred's Friend:* The enthusiastic and lively friend of Fred who tries to cheer him up in his dark moments

### SYNOPSIS

Mabel Wilton; a frivolous, middle-aged woman who has lost her youth but still tries to look young goes to a party where she meets the penniless Mr. Lamont, a man who is besieged by his creditors. Mr. Lamont soon forges a bond with her and she falls in love with him. Meanwhile, her daughter Jeanne returns from Berkeley where she has been studying. However, Mabel Wilton does not wish to spend time with her

daughter. Mr. Lamont secures money from Mabel Wilton to invest, however, when he sees Jeanne he transfers his affections to her and marries her. Jeanne who sees the world naively and through rosy-colored glasses soon begins to doubt her husband. Mr. Lamont has an affair with the flapper Harriet. One night he attends a cabaret with Harriet while Jeanne stays at home in a depressed situation. Following a fight in the cabaret, Mr. Lamont is brought home wounded which reveals to Jeanne Mr. Lamont's affair with Harriet. Jeanne leaves the house and goes back to the house of her mother. Mabel Wilton realizing the unhappiness of her daughter begs Mr. Lamont to free her daughter, yet he does not accept this. Furthermore, he threatens a scandal and says that he will give Mabel Wilton's love letters for him to the newspapers. In her anger, Mabel Wilton kills him. In the court trial, she explains the whole situation and is acquitted. Jeanne is finally free to marry her sweetheart, a medical doctor called Fred Colman who has always loved her but was too shy to propose to her for a long portion of the film.

## SCENES

### MOTHER

**Mabel Wilton is displeased with her weight** The film begins with a scale device. We see a woman weighing herself. She seems displeased and disappointed with the results that the scale shows. She shakes her head and puts on her clothes. Then she goes to the living room and starts looking herself at the mirror. A servant brings her food, however, she does not want to eat anything. She takes one lemon and chews it in her mouth.



**A charity ball** *The Eastern Red Cross Committee requests the honor of your presence at the Charity Ball. Ball Room of the Waldorf Astoria.* Next, we see a ball scene with many people dancing and entertaining themselves. We see ladies and men riding down the slides. Mr. Lamont, a penniless Don Juan figure enters the scene and is offered flowers by girls. Two ladies talk about someone: 'This is Mr. Lamont!' Ladies look at Mr. Lamont very attentively. Soon, several ladies gather around him and offer him flowers. He gives money to each of the ladies.



**Mr. Lamont is soon besieged by his creditors** A group of men also start talking about him: '...and he doesn't have a cent!' A rather fat man takes out a note about Mr. Lamont in which it is written that he owns several properties heavily mortgaged—cannot offer any reliable collateral. As soon as Mr. Lamont realizes that the men are looking at him, he searches for an escape. He goes up the stairs and rides down the slide. As he reaches the ground, another man comes up to him and asks him: 'My dear fellow, just when do you expect to be in a position to pay what you owe me?' The fat man follows him but he cannot ride down the slide because of his body condition. Soon, men gather around Mr. Lamont who all ask for their borrowed money.



**Mabel Wilton encounters Mr. Lamont** Later, the woman we had seen in the first scene called Mabel Wilton runs down the slide. Mr. Lamont helps her get up. The fat man near Mr. Lamont says to him: 'Have you any idea how much wealth is represented by that woman you have just held in your arms?' 'Three million dollars!' After Mr. Lamont learns about this, he stares at Mabel Wilton who turns her back to look behind and also looks at Mr. Lamont with tempting eyes.



**Mr. Lamont cannot take his eyes off the jewelry of Mabel Wilton** However, this does not last long as two young ladies come to greet Mabel Wilton. Soon, the ladies recognize Mr. Lamont and start laughing. Mr. Lamont comes to greet the ladies. As Mr. Lamont talks to the ladies, the diamonds and luxurious objects that Mabel Wilton has on her, capture his eyes. He seems quite impressed by her wealth.



**Mr. Lamont dances with Mabel Wilton** Next, a man starts to play the violin. Mr. Lamont asks her to dance which she accepts. The group of men including the fat man look at the dancing couple with enthusiasm: 'Now perhaps we'll have a chance to recover our money!' They all laugh hysterically at what the fat man said.



**After the ball, Mr. Lamont and Mabel Wilton take the same cab** After the ball has ended, Mr. Lamont and Mabel Wilton come out of the building together. Mr. Lamont tells the attendant to bring his cab but there seems to be no cab that belongs to him. The fat man also comes out of the building and seeing that they have no cab available to them, offers them his cab. Mr. Lamont does not want to use the fat man's cab in the first place but finally accepts the offer. They drive Mabel Wilton to her mansion.



**Mabel Wilton invites both the fat man and Mr. Lamont to her house** When she gets off the cab, she says to both of them: 'Before you go, please do me the favor of accepting a glass of champagne.' The fat man looks very happy and smiles enthusiastically. Mr. Lamont does not want to come to her house but accepts the offer after the fat man insists for long enough.



**They all drink champagne** In Mabel Wilton's house, they drink champagne. After they drink champagne, Mabel Wilton goes to her room to take a look at herself in the mirror. Before she enters the room, she turns her back and looks at Mr. Lamont who smiles at her temptingly. The fat man looks as if he has already fallen asleep.



**Mr. Lamont's romantic advances toward Mabel Wilton** Meanwhile, seeing the fat man is apparently asleep, Mr. Lamont enters Mabel's room. However, the fat man is not asleep and looks at him as he goes inside the room. The fat man starts eating pastries. In the room, Mr. Lamont makes romantic advances toward her and holds her hand. Mabel sees that there is a letter waiting for her. Mr. Lamont asks whether it is a love letter. Mabel laughs and hides the letter.



**Mr. Lamont and the fat man leave after a while** When Mabel and Mr. Lamont come back from the room, the fat man pretends to be asleep. Mr. Lamont wakes him up. Then he sees that the fat man has eaten all the pastries and understands that he was not asleep at all: Next, Mr. Lamont and the fat man leave Mabel Wilton's house.



## DAUGHTER

**Mabel Wilton reads her daughter's letter** Mabel Wilton is smiling in her house until she remembers the letter that she was hiding. She opens the letter which turns out to be a letter that her daughter wrote to her. The letter says: 'My dearest mother, why do you send me no news of yourself? Have you forgotten your little Jeannie? Time goes so slowly for me away from you. In a few days, I'll be 18!' First, she has a wistful look in her eyes. Then she rereads the sentence that her daughter will soon be 18. In fear, she looks at herself in the mirror and examines her aging face.



**A group of Berkeley students gets ready to celebrate the birthday of Jeanne Wilton** We see a beautiful cake that has been prepared for Jeanne. Soon, Jeanne's friends arrive and they all look happy and enthusiastic about Jeanne's birthday. She kisses them all. They look at the presents that lay on the table. One of her friends asks Jeanne: 'And what did you get from your mother?' There appears a sadness on Jeanne's face and her friends are surprised that she did not get anything from her mother. One of her friends flaps the picture of her mother. But Jeanne flaps it back to its original position. Then they all happily gather around the dining table. One of her friends asks Jeanne mischievously: 'Where is Fred anyway?' Then they all laugh about this enthusiastically.



**Fred Colman, medical student, negotiates the purchase of a present** Fred is trying to buy a bracelet. The seller man says that the bracelet is 500 dollars. Fred barely has the money wanted. He also takes out a hand clock that he has to be able to pay the total amount for the bracelet. The seller accepts the hand clock and Fred gets the bracelet.



**It is dance time!** Back in Jeanne's house, her friends are having a lot of fun together. Soon, Fred arrives. He gives Jeanne her present. Jeanne notices that all her friends have turned their backs to give them privacy in a humorous way. Jeanne laughs at this and Fred does not give her the bracelet that he had bought. Her friends run toward Fred, then one of them starts the music box to play music and starts dancing. Soon, everybody starts dancing.



**Fred cannot dare to give Jeanne the bracelet he bought for her** Fred wishes to take Jeanne outside to give her the bracelet he bought for her. They go outside and Fred looks into his pockets for the bracelet. However, he remembers that he forgot his present in his coat. He runs to the house. Meanwhile, a postman arrives and delivers a package to Jeanne. It turns out that her mother Mabel Wilton sent her a bracelet: 'Fred, look at the beautiful bracelet my mother sent me.' Fred looks happily at Jeanne's mother's gift but he is innerly disappointed that his present is not as luxurious as the present that Jeanne's mother sent her. His sadness and disappointment can be seen in his facial expressions.



### **Jeanne's mother does not wish to see her**

Meanwhile, Jeanne reads her mother's letter which says: '—but it's just not possible, my dearest Jeannie, to have you with me right now—' Jeanne crumples the letter out of anger and sadness. She asks Fred what time it is. Then she leaves.



**Jeanne leaves Berkeley to see her mother** Next, we see Jeanne getting on a train, accompanied by her group of friends who are waving goodbye to her. Fred comes from one of the compartments. She asks him: 'Fred, what is it you are trying to tell me?' Fred replies: 'Later when you come back.' They smile at each other and the train leaves. Fred looks after the train with wistful and yearning eyes.



**Mr. Lamont wants Mabel Wilton to authorize him to invest her one hundred thousand dollars** Mabel Wilton is speaking to Mr. Lamont on the phone. Next, we see a piece of a document that Mr. Lamont wants her to sign: 'and Mrs. Mabel Wilton hereby authorizes Mr. George Lamont to invest the said *one hundred thousand dollars* for her in such a manner as he deems suitable.' Mabel Wilton looks very pleased after her telephone talk comes to an end.



### **Mabel Wilton prepares the house for Mr. Lamont's arrival**

Then she gives two tickets to her servants: 'Kitty, here are two tickets for the matinee at the Lexington. Take Nora with you. You may have the afternoon off.' After the servants leave, she burns incense. Then she looks at herself in the mirror. There is a sign of disapproval and dislike on her face. She turns off the lights and closes the curtains to create a darker atmosphere.



### **Mabel Wilton tries to get romantically closer to Mr. Lamont**

Mr. Lamont arrives at Mabel Wilton's house. Mabel Wilton looks very shy and charming. She possibly expects Mr. Lamont to approach her romantically but Mr. Lamont has other plans in his mind. He turns on the lights and says: 'Here's the proposition: it's a superb deal. In a very short time, it's sure to double whatever you put in it.' She smiles and says to him that there will be time to talk about this. Then she puts her head on his shoulders. At this moment, the bell rings. First, Mabel does not want to open the door but because it rings insistently, she goes to open it.



### **Mabel Wilton who is shocked by the arrival of Jeanne, introduces her to Mr. Lamont**

Meanwhile, Jeanne has arrived in the city. When she opens the door, she is shocked to see her daughter in front of her. Soon, Mr. Lamont comes out of the room and tells her that the contract only awaits her signature. Mabel Wilton introduces to him her daughter Jeanne. Mr. Lamont seems quite impressed by her youth and beauty. Next, Mabel Wilton signs the document that Mr. Lamont had brought for her. Mabel Wilton is not happy that Jeanne came home. After Mr. Lamont leaves, Jeanne hugs her mother who, however, does not seem very pleased that she came home: 'Why have you come without my permission?' After hearing these cruel remarks, tears fill up in Jeanne's eyes.



**Mr. Lamont helps Jeanne with her suitcases** Meanwhile, Mr. Lamont carries her suitcases up the stairs and stumbles upon her. He carries the suitcases to her room, then he leaves. Jeanne looks at him from the window pane.



**With a frivolous mother, engrossed in her pleasures, Jeanne feels more alone than she had at Berkeley** We see Jeanne sitting by herself at the dinner table. She asks the servant who brought her dinner about the whereabouts of her mother. The servant says: 'Madame is dining in town tonight.' Jeanne looks very sad to have heard this.



**The fat man is after his lent money** Mr. Lamont is talking to the fat man. The fat man is in pursuit of the money that rightly belongs to him: 'I know that you have received a considerable sum from Mrs. Wilton. What are you waiting for to pay me?' Mr. Lamont assures him that he will soon pay his money. The fat man replies: 'All right. But no disbursements before you pay me! My patience won't last much longer!'



**Mabel Wilton cares more about her appearance and does not wish to spend time with her daughter** Meanwhile, Mabel Wilton is getting ready for Mr. Lamont. She powders herself. Then she puts on perfume. Jeanne feels that she is being neglected: 'Mother dear, haven't you a few moments to you can spend with me?' Her mother hugs her but then she sees the clock. Mabel Wilton is not truly interested in her



daughter. As she is being hugged, Jeanne says to her mother: 'Please, please, mother, stay home with me tonight—or take me with you—it would make me so happy.' However, Mabel Wilton has other plans and does not want to spend time with her daughter. Jeanne sits on a sofa in utter disappointment. She accidentally sits on the coat her mother is supposed to wear that night. So, Mabel Wilton quickly takes the coat to her hands and straightens it. As she does so, she says to Jeanne: 'My little Jeannie—a girl of your age should organize her life herself and not be tied to her mother's apron strings.' Jeanne looks like she cannot believe what her mother told her. She finally understands that her mother does not truly care about her. She gives her the perfume bottle that her mother has been searching for. Then she leaves abruptly. Her mother looks sad that she said the things she did.

**Mr. Lamont changes his plans and offers Jeanne company** Jeanne goes outside with tears in her eyes. Mr. Lamont who is about to get off his car sees her. He follows her with the car and then gets off it, and pretends to have accidentally stumbled upon her. He asks her: 'May I place my car at your convenience?' Jeanne does not seem willing to accept his offer. He insists further: 'Do allow me to offer you company tonight— you seem so lonely and sad.'



**Mr. Lamont lies to Mabel Wilton** Meanwhile, Jeanne's mother Mabel Wilton is worried about why Mr. Lamont has not arrived yet. Mr. Lamont calls her and says on the telephone: 'A very urgent matter—absolutely impossible to go with you tonight—please do excuse me.' As Mabel Wilton sits at the dinner table, the servant tells her that Jeanne went out two hours ago.



**Jeanne spends the evening with Mr. Lamont** Jeanne is spending the evening with Mr. Lamont. He offers her a drink. However, Jeanne has a sad and melancholic look on her face and does not seem to be interested in what Mr. Lamont has to say. Mr. Lamont: 'How well I understand! I too, am alone in the world.' This time Jeanne looks at him with wide-opened eyes. He offers her to come to his place: 'We can have such pleasant evenings together.' Jeanne's face brightens.



**The fat man sees Mr. Lamont dining with Jeanne** In the intervening period, the fat man is dining with two ladies. He looks at the bill. Apparently, the bill is more than he had expected. As they leave, the fat man recognizes Mr. Lamont drinking with Jeanne. He thinks to himself: 'He's going to blow the money he's had from her on other women again!'



**The next morning, the fat man visits the house of Mabel Wilton** The fat man is in the house of Mabel Wilton. They all seem very nervous. The fat man finally speaks what is on his mind: 'It doesn't seem to me that Lamont is using your money for serious investments. His personal fortune is nonexistent—there are no other funds available to him to squander on women.' Mabel Wilton laughs to his face, but her hands are tightly made into a fist which shows us her anger and disappointment. Jeanne enters the room. The fat man recognizes that Jeanne is the very woman whom he saw near Mr. Lamont the other night. The fat man decides that he shouldn't be involved in this situation: 'Now—I am not absolutely certain that it was he that I saw last night.' Then he suddenly leaves.



**The fat man runs into Mr. Lamont** On his way back, he runs into Mr. Lamont who asks him what he is doing there. The fat man says that he simply stopped in for a visit. Next, Jeanne comes out of the house. The fat man talks about her to Mr. Lamont: 'You know that she has in trust, half her mother's fortune?'



**Mr. Lamont lies once again to Mabel Wilton** Mr. Lamont leaves him and enters Mabel Wilton's house. He kisses her hand. Then he lies to her: 'That urgent matter last night lasted a long time. Most annoying of all is that for some time these meetings are going to have to keep me from you much more often.' Mabel Wilton smiles and leaves for a short while.



**Mr. Lamont tears up the letter Fred sent Jeanne** In the meantime, Mr. Lamont looks at her letters. One of these letters is for Jeanne. He sees that the sender is Fred Colman from Berkeley, California. He opens and reads the letter which says: '...passed my exam and I'm going to get my medical degree. I've been offered an internship in New York. I'm coming in a few months and hope to be able to ask you what I didn't dare ask before you left.' Mr. Lamont tears up the letter. Mabel Wilton comes back to the room. She looks into his eyes and says to him: 'You work too much, my dear.'



**Fred looks at a picture of Jeanne** We see Fred looking at a photo of Jeanne. As he is looking at her photo, her mother comes near him. He puts her picture in the mirror.



**Mabel Wilton realizes that Mr. Lamont has an affair with another woman** Jeanne is looking at herself in the mirror, preparing to go somewhere. Next, we see Mr. Lamont who says to his servant that he is not in to anyone other than Miss Wilton. However, soon, Mabel Wilton comes to see him. She behaves in a shy way toward him again. Mr. Lamont says that he must be off to a meeting. As Mabel Wilton is about to leave, she sees the servant bringing bottles to the dinner table. She understands that he is going to have dinner with some other woman. She gets infuriated, takes his case, and throws it to the ground in anger. At this moment, Jeanne rings the bells of the house. Mabel Wilton runs toward the door which Mr. Lamont tries to stop her from doing. She exclaims: 'I want to see the woman you're expecting.' Nevertheless, he pulls her and takes her to another room so she does not see that the woman he has been expecting is her daughter. Jeanne enters the house as Mabel Wilton leaves it. She hugs Mr. Lamont. As Mabel Wilton is leaving, she recognizes that the coat laying on the entrance sofa belongs to Jeanne. She knocks on the door with all her strength: 'Jeanie! Jeanie! Open—hurry!' Jeannie runs toward the door, opens it, and sees her mother. Mabel Wilton understands that her daughter has an affair with Mr. Lamont.



**Mrs. Wilton decides to be a better mother from then on** They hug each other. Mrs. Wilton says to her: 'Don't cry anymore my darling—it's all my fault—I swear to you I'll be a better mother from now on.' Jeanne looks like she is about to faint. First, her mother does not understand what is wrong.



**Mabel Wilton accepts her daughter's marriage to Mr. Lamont** Then she catches the glance of Mr. Lamont who looks at the ground with a shameful look on his face. She runs after Mr. Lamont. She is almost about to faint as she understands that Jeanne and Mr. Lamont are in a relationship. Mr. Lamont says to her: 'I can't see why you should have any objection to our marriage.' Mabel Wilton is devastated but she accepts their marriage in the end.



**Mabel Wilton thinks that for Jeanne the essential thing is to be happy** Jeanne comes to visit her mother. She has a gift that she has brought with her. It is a picture frame of Mr. Lamont, her husband. Then she hugs her mother. Her mother smells the scent of Mr. Lamont which disturbs her but she tries not to show her true feelings to her daughter so as not to upset her. Jeanne shows her a new piece of jewelry she has. Mabel Wilton says to her: 'The essential thing is that you be happy.' Next, a servant comes to say that a young man is waiting for Jeanne.





**Fred is encouraged by his mother to visit Jeanne in person**

Fred is in his house, nervously looking through the telephone book to make a call to Jeanne. His mother comes up to him and says that his father did not propose by telephone. She brings him his coat and hat and sends him off to Jeanne's house.



**Fred confesses his love for Jeanne**

Jeanne goes to the living room and sees Fred waiting for her. She shakes his hand. Fred says to her: 'I have a lot of work to do here—I too am—very happy—yes, I—I hope to be married soon.' Jeanne shakes his hand once again, not knowing that Fred is about to propose to her. She asks him: 'And who is the lucky girl, Fred?' Fred looks and smiles at her. Jeanne finally understands that Fred has always loved her. Fred tries to hold her hand but she pushes him away. Then he sees the ring that she's wearing and understands that she's married. Fred looks shocked. He turns his back and we see that he takes out a napkin from one of his pockets. Then he puts it back into his pocket. We can infer that he has shed a tear or two. Then he turns back and says to Jeanne: 'The essential is that you are happy' which is the same sentence her mother had said to her. Then he leaves.



**Fred returns home**

Fred's mother is waiting for her son to come back. When Fred comes, his face looks numb and expressionless. He tells his mother what happened. His mother hugs and consoles him.



**Mr. Lamont talks to a woman named Harriet and does not have enough time for his wife**

Mr. Lamont talks on the phone with a woman called Harriet. He says to her that he will be with her in an hour. After his phone talk, Jeanne enters the room. He kisses her. She says to him: 'George...I have to confess something to you...' However, Mr. Lamont does not have enough time for her and leaves the room. Jeanne realizes that he forgot his briefcase. She gives him his briefcase. Mr. Lamont pretends to take it, yet he drops the briefcase into a chest afterward.



**Jeanne begins to grow uneasy over the reasons her husband gave for his absences**

We see Jeanne and Mr. Lamont. Mr. Lamont seems not to be interested in what his wife is saying. Jeanne, however, looks worried: 'Will this conference take a long time?' Jeanne hugs him, yet he seems more concerned with his manicure than anything else. Jeanne looks disappointed because of his indifference. She takes out one of his coats for him. Mr. Lamont says: 'I don't have to dress for the affair tonight.'



**Fred's friend invites him to a party**

Fred is having breakfast with her mother. One of Fred's friends comes to his house and greets them enthusiastically and happily: 'We're getting up a party. Come along! It'll do you good, Fred!' Fred does not seem very willing but in the end, he accepts to go.



**Harriet, a flapper, is impatiently waiting for Mr. Lamont**

Next, we see Harriet smoking and waiting for Mr. Lamont. She seems impatient. Soon, Mr. Lamont arrives. After greeting Harriet, he goes to another room to change his clothes.



**At the Monkey Bar, New York's favorite spot for intimate entertainment**

Fred and Fred's friend arrive at the party. Fred's girlfriends seem very interested in talking to her but he behaves rather reservedly. Then he hears the sound of laughter of a woman who turns out to be Harriet. Harriet is having dinner and entertaining herself in the company of Mr. Lamont.



**Jeanne is depressed and frustrated** Meanwhile, Jeanne is at home looking frustrated and depressed.



**Mr. Lamont fights with a man whom he is jealous of**

Mr. Lamont dances with Harriet. They seem to be very close to each other. Then they play different games such as trying to catch some object being suspended from above. As Harriet is jumping to reach the objects, she accidentally falls near a man sitting close to her. She asks the man to lift her so she can reach the objects. The man helps her get the objects. However, Mr. Lamont sees the man lifting her and gets jealous. He starts fighting with the man. The man takes a bottle laying on the ground and hits Mr. Lamont's head with full force. Mr. Lamont loses consciousness.



**Fred attends to Mr. Lamont** He is taken to a sofa and Fred's friend calls him to have a look at Mr. Lamont's condition. Harriet asks Fred whether he would be able to take Mr. Lamont home. Fred nods his head. As they put Mr. Lamont in a car, Harriet talks to Fred who gives her his card.



**Jeanne asks Fred to tell the truth about her husband**

A servant wakes Jeanne up. Jeanne runs to her husband but realizes that he wears different clothes than the ones he wore at home before going to the meeting. She goes to talk to the doctor. Fred and Jeanne are both shocked to see each other. She asks Fred to explain what happened to her husband. Fred tells her to ask her husband herself: 'He can tell you about it better than I can.' Jeanne insists: 'Fred, if you still love me—tell me the truth—I beg of you!'



**Jeanne does not want to listen to Mr. Lamont's excuses**

Meanwhile, Mr. Lamont regains consciousness. He sees Jeanne and Fred hugging each other and behaves aggressively toward Fred who pushes him away to the sofa. Fred shakes hands with Jeanne and leaves. Jeanne tells her husband: 'I want to know exactly what happened.' Mr. Lamont tries to kiss her hand but she pushes him away. Jeanne seems irritated by his drunkenness, goes to her room, and closes the door. Mr. Lamont knocks on the door but she does not open it.



**Jeanne goes to her mother's house** Toward the morning, Jeanne leaves the house and goes to her mother's house. She explains what happened to her mother and asks her: 'Mother! Did you believe him to be capable of that?' Mabel Wilton shakes her head from side to side meaning no.



**Jeanne comes to visit Fred and his mother** Fred and his mother, forgetting their sorrow, think of nothing else but to comfort Jeanne.



**Mabel Wilton asks Mr. Lamont to free her daughter**

Mabel Wilton visits Mr. Lamont: 'I think that after what's happened you will give my daughter her immediate freedom.' He says no while smiling: 'You will appear against me? I have a feeling that might be more embarrassing for you.' He takes out her love letters. He threatens her that Jeanne will learn about her love for Mr. Lamont. She begs him not to do that. Mr. Lamont shakes his head while saying no: 'Why should we quarrel when we could get along so well together? I don't want to let you go.' Meanwhile, Jeanne has arrived in Mr. Lamont's office and hears from behind the door what he is saying to her mother.



**Mabel Wilton kills Mr. Lamont** Mr. Lamont and Mabel Wilton begin to fight. We see from the shadows reflected on the wall that they are fighting and that Mabel Wilton has a gun in her hand. In her anger, she shoots Mr. Lamont. At that moment, Jeanne opens the door and sees her dead husband.



**Jeanne is free** Mabel says to her daughter: 'Now you are free.' Jeanne collects her mother's love letters from the ground and tears them up. The mother and the daughter hug each other.



**The trial of Mabel Wilton** Next, we see the trial of Mabel Wilton. She says in the court: 'I do not regret the act I committed. My only remorse is for having been a negligent and frivolous mother. For that, I deserve punishment.' Meanwhile, Fred is near Jeanne, trying to comfort her during the trial. Mabel Wilton is found not guilty in the end. Jeanne hugs her mother.



**Jeanne is united with her sweetheart Fred** We see Jeanne saying goodbye to her mother and entering her apartment. She hugs Fred with whom she is now together. They kiss each other while Fred's mother happily orders the decorative objects for the newlywed couple.



## CHARACTER ANALYSIS

### Jeanne Wilton

Jeanne is one of the three main women in the film. She is soon to be 18 at the beginning of the film. She lives and studies in Berkeley while her mother is a resident of New York City. She is loved by her friends. The drama that she finds herself in teaches her that the way she sees the world that is through rose-colored glasses, is not a complete picture of it.

*Naive:* Jeanne is a naive person. We see her at the beginning of the film celebrating her 18th birthday with her friends who are all enthusiastic and fond of her. She sees the world through rose-colored glasses and believes the world to be a good place. However, throughout the film, the series of events that happen show her that the world is not as good a place as she thought it to be. Her first disappointment is that regarding her mother who does not want to spend time with her. This comes as a shock to her and begins to shatter her naive worldview. Later on, after she marries Mr. Lamont and her marriage progresses, Jeanne begins to grow uneasy over the reasons her husband gives for his absences. Thus her naïveté is transformed into a healthy skepticism. She is nevertheless utterly disappointed when Mr. Lamont cheats on her with a flapper called Harriet. Through these events, she realizes that the world consists not only of good people and events but also bad people, disappointment, and sadness.

*Good-natured:* Jeanne is a good-natured person. Her good and kind nature can be first observed in the way she interacts with her friends at her birthday party. She is an enthusiastic, happy, cheerful, and lively girl. Her good-natured character is observed when one of her friends flips the picture of her mother because she did not send Jeanne any presents. Jeanne, however, flips the picture to its original place showing her respect and love for her mother.

### Mabel Wilton

Mabel Wilton is the second of the three main women in the film. She is Jeanne's mother. She is a middle-aged woman who is self-obsessed. This characteristic becomes detrimental to her relationship with her daughter. However, she also goes through character development in the course of the film and transforms into a strong, fierce, and loving woman.

*Self-absorbed:* At the beginning of the film, we see Mabel Wilton as a self-centered or self-obsessed woman. The first scene shows us her weighing herself and visibly displeased with her weight. She looks at the mirror frequently and is obsessed with her aging. Therefore she tries to look younger than she is. She tries to present herself as young to Mr. Lamont as can be seen in her arranging the lights, turning them off before Mr. Lamont arrives in her house. Her self-absorption is also witnessed when she breaks Jeanne's heart by cruelly asking her why she has come to her house without her permission.

*Loving:* She loves her daughter Jeanne in her own way. Her love for her becomes first visible when she reads the letter that her daughter sent her. There is a clear sadness and a wistful look in her eyes which shows us that she missed her daughter. However, Jeanne also reminds her of her own aging and getting old for which she resents her. Nevertheless, as the film progresses, her character transforms and her loving side becomes more apparent. Her love toward Jeanne is best exemplified in this sentence that she utters to her: 'The essential thing is that you be happy.'

*Needy:* Mabel Wilton is a character desperate for love. That is the reason she falls for Mr. Lamont as she has no one in her life apart from her daughter who studies in a faraway city. Her need for love results in her authorizing Mr. Lamont to invest 100,000 dollars of hers.

*Strong:* Even though she is deceived by Mr. Lamont because of her need for love, as soon as she understands that Mr. Lamont has an affair with another woman; she shows her strong, independent, and fierce side. She also tries to protect her daughter from Mr. Lamont and finally understands the wrongs she has made. She is a strong woman as she courageously asks Mr. Lamont to free her daughter and even kills him when he mocks her and threatens to give her love letters to him to the newspapers.

### **Harriet**

Harriet is the third of the three main women in the film. She is a flapper, that is, 'a fashionable young woman intent on enjoying herself and flouting conventional standards of behavior'. She is first seen approaching the end of the film and has a casual affair with Mr. Lamont. She is a frivolous yet independent figure who is not afraid to defy the social norms of the day.

*Frivolous:* Harriet is a frivolous woman. She is more interested in having fun and a good time than anything else. Her playfulness and fun-loving character are best seen when she is catching the objects being hung from above in a carefree manner. It can be said that she is interested in non-serious, unimportant, but perhaps more fun and entertaining matter.

*Independent:* Harriet is an independent woman. The first scene where we see her is when she is smoking as if she does not have a care in the world. She is impatient and eager to have fun. She laughs freely and loudly at parties which shows us that she does not care about proper etiquette which was expected of women during the 1920s.

### **George Lamont**

George Lamont is one of the main characters in the film. He has affairs with all the three women in the film. He is an opportunistic, deceitful, and greedy person who is ready to do anything to get what his heart desires, whether money or love. Even though he has a lot of success considering he is a penniless Don Juan, he gets shot by his former lover and mother-in-law Mabel Wilton at the end of the film.

*Opportunistic:* George Lamont uses Mabel Wilton's neediness and hunger for love as a way to gain wealth for himself. She makes romantic advances toward Mabel Wilton not because he is interested in her as a person but because he has his eyes on her 3 million dollar fortune. However, when he sees Jeanne, he transfers his affection to her. The first time he sees her, he helps carry her suitcase to secure a good place in her eyes.

*Deceitful:* He presents a facade as if he is rich or powerful. In truth, he is a penniless Don Juan. One example of this characteristic is when he gives money to the girls who present him with flowers. He carries money with himself but only to show off and lives his life by borrowing money from other people. Moreover, he lies frequently. First, he starts lying to Mabel Wilton about not being able to spend his time with her. He tries to excuse himself by saying that some urgent matters await him but the truth is that he meets Jeanne who is his next prey. He lies blatantly about how his meetings are going to have to keep him from seeing Mabel Wilton. Furthermore, he also tears Fred's letter to Jeanne so Jeanne does not

have any interest in anyone also other than himself. His conniving nature is thus frequently emphasized throughout different scenes in the film.

*Greedy:* When Mr. Lamont first finds out that Mabel Wilton has a considerable fortune, he starts making romantic advances toward her. Furthermore, he cannot take his eyes off the jewelry that she carries. His greed is both for money and women. As soon as he sees Jeanne, he directs all his attention and affection to her. He offers Jeanne company in her saddest and darkest moments. However, his acts are all foreplanned as he pretends to have accidentally stumbled upon her which shows once again to us his deceitful nature. However, after he marries Jeanne, he soon begins to grow bored with her. Thus he begins to talk to a woman named Harriet, a flapper.

### **John W. Howard**

John W. Howard is one of the side characters in the film. He is a fat man who is mostly seen in her interactions with Mr. Lamont and Mabel Wilton. He is a glutton, moreover, a gossipy, and opportunistic man.

*Glutton:* When Mabel Wilton invites him and Mr. Lamont to her house, he accepts this invitation very eagerly. When he is alone in the main room and Mr. Lamont and Mabel Wilton are in another room; he eats pastries which provides the film with comic relief but also shows that greed can take many different forms depending on the person, whether the greed be related to wealth, love, or food.

*Gossipy:* John is a gossipy man. He starts talking about Mabel Wilton when Mabel and George Lamont first bump into each other. His words are: 'Have you any idea how much wealth is represented by that woman you have just held in your arms?' 'Three million dollars!' This shows us that he likes to gossip about people's fortunes. John also goes to Mabel Wilton to report his seeing Mr. Lamont with a woman to inform her. But as he understands that the woman he saw with Mr. Lamont is Mabel Wilton's daughter, he takes a step back and decides to leave the place. He also gossips about Jeanne to Mr. Lamont by saying: 'You know that she has in trust, half her mother's fortune?' which is yet another example of his gossipy nature.

*Opportunistic:* John's opportunistic nature can be seen as he jumps at the opportunity to drink a glass of champagne in Mabel Wilton's house.

### **Fred Colman**

Fred Colman is a medical student at Berkeley and is a friend of Jeanne. He has feelings for her but throughout the film, he is not courageous enough to propose to her. He is a loving and patient individual who is also of a shy nature.

*Loving:* Fred is a loving person. He loves Jeanne and his love for her can be seen in the way he keeps a photo of her and looks at her picture. There is nothing he cannot do for her but he is too shy to confess his love for her.

*Shy:* He cannot give Jeanne the bracelet that he bought for her. He is too shy to explain his feelings to her. When he is alone with Jeanne as she is sitting on a bank, Jeanne receives a luxurious bracelet as a present from her mother. Seeing this luxurious bracelet, he realizes that the gift he bought for her does not look as good as her mother's gift. Therefore, he cannot give her the bracelet. Even at the train station as Jeanne is about to leave, he cannot confess his love for her and postpones his love confession. Only through her mother's encouragement does he dare to go to Jeanne to talk to her. After he finds out about her marriage, he tells her the same sentence Mabel Wilton told Jeanne: 'The essential thing is that you be happy.' This sentence shows us how much he loves Jeanne as even though she is not married to him, he still wants her to be happy and content with her life.

### **Fred's friend**

Fred's friend is also a friend of Jeanne from Berkeley. He plays a minor role in the film, nevertheless, his enthusiasm makes the film entertaining.

*Enthusiastic:* Fred's friend's enthusiasm is visible during the birthday celebrations of Jeanne. He dances, is happy, and is full of life. He brings happiness and brightness to his friends' lives. Moreover, he also invites Fred to a party when Fred is in a very dark period of his life after he has learned that Jeanne is married to another man. It can thus be said that he is the kind of person who tries to console his friends and cheer them up in their sad moments.

## THEMES

### JUSTICE

**Revenge** Revenge is 'any form of personal, retaliatory action against an individual for some alleged or perceived harm or injustice'. In *Three Women*, Mabel Wilton takes revenge on Mr. Lamont by killing him at the end of the film. There are various reasons for her killing him. It can be said that even though this act of hers seems impulsive, it is rather a result of excruciating, unpleasant emotions, and feelings that have accumulated over time in Mabel Wilton's psyche. First of all, Mr. Lamont cheated on Mabel Wilton by starting to have an affair with her daughter. Although he pretended to be romantically interested in Mabel Wilton, this was all a facade that he presented to get part of her wealth. Secondly, he also cheated on Jeanne by having an affair with Harriet. Moreover, he has lied and deceived many people throughout the film, including Mabel Wilton and Jeanne. His predatory attitude has caused emotional damage to the people he interacted with. The last straw in the series of unpleasant events was when Mr. Lamont refused to free Jeanne and threatened Mabel Wilton with giving her love letters to him to the newspapers to publish. All these accumulative wrongdoings of his resulted in Mabel Wilton shooting Mr. Lamont. As she says in the trial '[she does] not regret the act [she] committed. [Her] only remorse is for having been a negligent and frivolous mother'. And she thinks she only deserves punishment because she has been a bad mother. Thus, it can be said that from her point of view, her act of killing was justified. Yet, it is clear that it is not a compassionate act either. To sum up, we can say that various reasons were motivating Mabel Wilton to commit the crime she did and the revenge she took on Mr. Lamont.

### RELATIONSHIP

**Marriage** Marriage is a legally recognized institution that establishes rights and obligations between them. Marriage is an important topic in the film. We become witness to two kinds of marriages in the film, first, that between Jeanne and Mr. Lamont; and second, that between Jeanne and Fred. Regarding the first marriage, it can be said that Mr. Lamont marries Jeanne in a predatory way. He sees Jeanne in a lonely and sad state and finds it easy to manipulate her by presenting a facade of a caring man. As their marriage progresses, his indifference slowly begins to show itself. He quickly becomes bored of Jeanne and his greed directs him to search for other sources of supply, such as the flapper Harriet. Thus, the marriage between Jeanne and Mr. Lamont is characterized by deceit, lies, and cheating. On the other hand, Jeanne's second marriage with Fred is utterly different as it is based on true love, commitment, and respect. Therefore, it can be said that the film uses a juxtaposition of two very different kinds of marriages, one imperfect and nonfunctional, the other perfect.

**Friendship** Friendship is a relationship of mutual affection between people, including choosing to be with one another, enjoying time spent together, and being able to engage in a positive and supportive role with one another. Friendship holds an important role in *Three Women*. We witness the strong affection between Jeanne and her friends from Berkeley. Jeanne's birthday party is one of the scenes where we can see the strong bond between Jeanne and her friends. As they come to her house, they all look so enthusiastic, happy, and lively that it can be said they exemplify *joie de vivre*, which is a cheerful enjoyment of life, or an exultation of spirit. Another side of friendship is that friends help each other out in their dark periods or moments. One example of this is Fred being invited by his friend to a party after he has found out that Jeanne is married to another man. This invitation shows us that his friend truly cares for Fred and tries to cheer him up. Thus, friendship can be said to be a significant theme of *Three Women* which exalts the spirits of the people.

**Loyalty/Betrayal** Loyalty signifies a person's devotion or sentiment of attachment to a person. It is characterized by faithfulness. Betrayal, on the other hand, is the breaking of a presumptive trust, or confidence that produces moral and psychological conflict within a relationship amongst individuals. The themes of loyalty and betrayal are important throughout the film. After Mr. Lamont marries Jeanne, he very soon grows bored of her and betrays her by having an affair with the flapper Harriet. He is thus not loyal in his marriage and does not fulfill his duties and is irresponsible. In contrast to Mr. Lamont, Fred represents the loyal figure who is always devoted to one person, that is, Jeanne. Fred has always loved Jeanne and even after he finds out that Jeanne is married, he does not start searching for other possible partners as Jeanne is his true love. So, the concepts of loyalty and betrayal are addressed through the acts and behavior of Mr. Lamont and Fred.

**Love** Love refers to a feeling of a strong attraction and emotional attachment between people. There are different kinds of love exemplified in the film. One kind is that of motherly love which Mabel Wilton shows toward her daughter Jeanne. At the beginning of the film, she neglects Jeanne and is self-absorbed. But as the film progresses, she becomes aware of her mistakes and transforms into a protective mother for whom there is nothing she cannot do for her daughter. Another kind of love is that between Fred and Jeanne which is the classic, romantic love. The love between Fred and Jeanne is characterized by commitment, respect, devotion, and faithfulness. In contrast with that, it can be said that the pseudo-love that characterizes the marriage of Mr. Lamont and Jeanne is unlike the love between Fred and Jeanne. Jeanne marries Mr. Lamont not because Mr. Lamont has a true love for her but rather because he preys upon her in her darkest moments and exploits her vulnerabilities such as loneliness and disappointment with her mother.

## PSYCHOLOGY

**Sadness** Sadness characterizes a type of emotional pain that is associated with feelings of despair, disappointment, helplessness, and sorrow; and it can be witnessed in various characters and scenes in the film. First of all, Jeanne becomes truly sad when she realizes that her mother does not want to spend time with her. Mabel Wilton seems to have more worthwhile things to do, such as taking excessive and exclusive care of herself, making sure that she has a youthful appearance all the time, and trying to get romantically close to Mr. Lamont. Seeing her mother does not welcome her in her house, Jeanne becomes desperate and hopeless. That way, she also becomes prey to the predatory behavior of Mr. Lamont who tries to exploit her weaknesses as can be seen when he says to her: 'Do allow me to offer you company tonight— you seem so lonely and sad.' Another character in whom we can observe the emotion of sadness is Fred Colman. He is an introverted and shy man. When he finds out that Jeanne has been married for some time to another man, he becomes devastated. His whole world breaks apart as he has a deep love for Jeanne. Nevertheless, his mother and his friend from Berkeley help him cheer himself up a bit and move away from melancholia associated with the feelings of loss. The third character in whom we observe sadness is Mabel Wilton. She is a strong and independent character, nevertheless, when she understands the gravity of her cruel behavior toward her daughter and how much she hurt her, she becomes truly sad and regretful for her actions.

**Regret** Regret is the emotion of wishing one had made a different decision in the past. The self-recrimination which comes with regret is thought to spur corrective action and adaptation. Regret can be seen in *Three Women* most in Mabel Wilton. Jeanne's mother regrets how much of a bad mother she has been. She has neglected her daughter and behaved rather indifferently and cruelly toward her. Her indifference and neglectful behavior caused her to seek shelter in Mr. Lamont, a deceitful and dishonest Don Juan. As Mabel Wilton understands how much damage her actions caused in Jeanne's psyche, she feels deep regret and this regret spurs her to change her behavior, go through character development, and transform into a protective and strong woman and mother. As she says in court, she does not regret having killed Mr. Lamont, only that she has been a negligent and frivolous mother.

**Anger** Anger, wrath, or rage; is an intense emotional state associated with a strong uncomfortable, and non-cooperative response to a perceived provocation, hurt, or threat. Anger is not an emotion we see in the film up until the very end of the film where Mabel Wilton finally shoots Mr. Lamont. As explained



above in the 'revenge' section, Mabel Wilton's extreme anger comes to fruition not suddenly or without reason, but because of a series of events involving Mr. Lamont and his greedy, opportunistic, deceitful, cruel, and bad behavior. After it is found out that Mr. Lamont has cheated on Jeanne with a flapper called Harriet, Mabel Wilton thinks it is only right that Mr. Lamont should free her daughter and their marriage should come to an end. However, Mr. Lamont has other plans in his mind and threatens to publish Mabel Wilton's love letters to him. His brazen-faced and shameless behavior causes a fit of intense anger in Mabel Wilton which results in her shooting him.

## FLAWS

**Greed** Greed is an uncontrolled longing for an increase in the acquisition of material gain, be it food, money, land, or other possessions; or social value, such as status, or power. Greed as a form of flaw is seen in *Three Women* in the characters of Mr. Lamont and John W. Howard, or the fat man. Mr. Lamont has an excessive greed for money and wealth which might bring him further power and status. Other than money and wealth, he also is greedy for women. John W. Howard has another kind of greed, namely that for food as can be seen in his fat figure and his excessive love for eating. Greed is generally seen as a bad quality and Mr. Lamont is punished for his excessive greed at the end of the film by being shot by the protective and fierce mother figure, Mabel Wilton.

## CHANGE

**Transience** Transience means that things do not last and change over time. *Three Women* has many instances where the concept of transience can be observed. First of all, the transient things that are shown in the film are emotions, feelings, and relationships. These changes can be seen in the relationship between Jeanne and her mother. Mabel Wilton is a self-absorbed and uncaring character at the beginning of the film. However, she eventually understands her mistakes and transforms into a protective and caring parent or mother. This shows us that people can learn from their mistakes and undo their wrongs. Transience is also observed in Mr. Lamont's relationship with women. He first diverts his attention and affection to Mabel Wilton, aiming to increase his wealth in the process. Later on, when he meets Jeanne and is impressed by her charm and youth, he transfers his affection to her. After he has married Jeanne, he soon grows bored of her and starts having an affair with Harriet, the third woman in the film. These relationship changes underlie the transitoriness of the nature of relationships. It seems that the only stable thing in *Three Women* is Fred's love for Jeanne. Jeanne's affections also change throughout the film. Firstly, she naively falls in love with Mr. Lamont as he preys upon her when she is in a lonely and unhappy state. Yet, she soon sees his real face which is full of deceit, lies, and cheating. At the end of the film, we see that she falls in love with Fred. Thus, the changes in Jeanne's emotions, feelings, and affections are another example of the concept of transience.