

## THE VITALITY OF BEAUVOIR SCHOLARSHIP

LECARME-TABONE, Éliane; JEANNELLE, Jean-Louis (eds.). **Simone de Beauvoir, Cahiers de L'Herne**. Paris: Éditions de L'Herne, 2012.

Christine Daigle \*

In the introduction to the volume Beauvoir and Sartre: *The Riddle of Influence*, Jacob Golomb and I highlighted the disparity in the number of publications on Beauvoir and those on Sartre. In 2007, the bibliographical search for "Beauvoir" in the Philosopher's Index yielded 149 journal entries published between 1950 and 2007. We attributed this disparity to the fact that Beauvoir's original contributions had been eclipsed by Sartre's giant shadow. When I performed this search again on December 1st, 2013, the numbers reflected a renewed interest in Beauvoir. Indeed, the number of journal entries has gone up to 251. This means that within 7 years, 102 articles that address Beauvoir have been published. These articles are published in important venues and continue to secure Beauvoir's position in the philosophical canon. In addition, special issues of journals, such as the one published by *Sapere Aude* at the end of 2012, continue to explore the wealth of Beauvoirian themes that deserve our attention and may have been neglected or are simply in need of re-examination.

Aside from the triggering effect the 2008 centenary may have had, I think the publication of the Beauvoir Series at the University of Illinois Press, edited by Margaret A. Simons, starting with the volume *Philosophical Writings* in 2004, has been instrumental in this "revival." The series aims to provide English-speaking readers with the wealth of previously untranslated and often unpublished essays written by Beauvoir. Moving beyond

---

\* Professor of Philosophy and Chancellor's Chair for Research Excellence at Brock University, Canada. Doctorate in philosophy from Université de Montréal in Canada. Selected Publications: Jean-Paul Sartre (Routledge, 2009); *Le Nihilisme est-il un humanisme? Étude sur Nietzsche et Sartre* (Presses de l'Université Laval, 2005); *Nietzsche and Phenomenology. Power, Life, Subjectivity* (co-eds.) with Élodie Boubilil Studies in Continental Thought Series, (Indiana University Press- forthcoming spring/summer 2013); *Beauvoir and Sartre. The Riddle of Influence*. (co-eds.) with Jacob Golomb. (Indiana University Press, 2009).

*Philosophical Writings*, the series now comprises the volumes: *Diary of a Philosophy Student: Volume 1* (2006), *Wartime Diary* (2008), *"The Useless Mouths" and Other Literary Writings* (2011), and *Political Writings* (2012). In addition, Simons has indicated to me that the volume *Feminist Writings* is forthcoming and furthermore, that work is being currently done on the second volume of the *Diary of a Philosophy Student*. This is all very exciting. Also of note, in 2009 the new and unabridged translation of *The Second Sex* was published in 2009. There has been some debate about the new translation but regardless of some criticisms, it is important to note that it is the first time that English-speaking readers have access to the whole text. This publication has attracted significant renewed attention to Beauvoir's seminal work as well as to her whole corpus; this is all good news.

Important books, monographs, and edited volumes, have been published by key Beauvoir scholars since the turn of the century. Works by Kristana Arp, Nancy Bauer, Penelope Deutscher, Ingrid Galster, Emily R. Grosholz, Sara Heinämaa, Michel Kail, Sonia Kruks, Éliane Lecarme-Tabone, Shannon Mussett, Margaret A. Simons, Sylvia Stoller, and myself have tackled different themes in Beauvoir's works ranging from literature and philosophy to political engagement and gender theory. All take Beauvoir seriously as a major thinker who offers a complex and rich body of work that stands in need of scholarly inquiry. All Beauvoirians thereby agree implicitly with Michel Kail who claims that we no longer need to be convinced that Beauvoir was a philosopher<sup>1</sup>. We can agree because the groundwork has been done to establish Beauvoir as such. The journal entries and books published show that scholars are now busy thinking through her original philosophy.

Despite this conviction, in the Francophone world we are still waiting for Beauvoir's entry into the prestigious Pléiade collection. It is astonishing that her works are not published in it yet<sup>2</sup>. However, the publication at the end of 2012 of a *Cahier de l'Herne* on Beauvoir is indicative that the interest in her contributions, both literary and philosophical, is vibrant in Europe as well. This publication is a welcome addition to the two special issues of *Les Temps modernes* published in 2002 and 2008 both of which were dedicated to Beauvoir. *The Cahiers de l'Herne* is a very prestigious series. I was very proud to

---

<sup>1</sup> Michel Kail, *Simone de Beauvoir philosophe*, Paris: PUF, 2006, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> In her introduction to her edited volume on *The Second Sex*, Ingrid Galster argues that such a publication is necessary for the good continuation of Beauvoir scholarship. See Galster, Ingrid (ed.), *Simone de Beauvoir: Le Deuxième sexe. Le livre fondateur du féminisme moderne en situation*, Paris: Honoré Champion, 2004.

contribute a piece to the *Cahier Beauvoir*. This Cahier is an important collection of articles and various documents, interviews, and letters, some of which were published for the first time. I am convinced that this publication will have the same effect in Europe as the Beauvoir Series has had in the English-speaking world. It may even lead to a Pléiade publication.

In the Anglophone world, research on Beauvoir gives no indication of slowing down. Reputable university presses are dedicating efforts to publishing work done on Beauvoir. As previously mentioned, Illinois University Press has published the Beauvoir Series. Indiana University Press and SUNY have also published *Beauvoir scholarship*. As I write this commentary, a *Blackwell Companion to Simone de Beauvoir* is in preparation under the editorship of Nancy Bauer and Laura Hengehold. They are gathering essays from a wide range of Beauvoir scholars and the volume promises to tackle a broad array of topics, thus illuminating the multi-faceted contributions of Beauvoir herself. The Blackwell Companion series has published authoritative volumes. However, the publication at the end of 2012 of a Cahier de on a good number of key philosophers from the Western tradition, although none have been published on a woman philosopher. Therefore, it is great news that Blackwell is going ahead with this project and the result will no doubt be excellent, thanks to Bauer's and Hengehold's editorship.

This quick review of recent and on-going scholarship on Beauvoir ought to give the reader a sense of the vibrancy of Beauvoir scholarship today. Exciting work has been and continues to be done. This means that we will carry on our engagement with Beauvoir and her commentators in a lively fashion. Her oeuvre certainly deserves no less.