

Review Section

SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR. **CAHIER DE L'HERNE**, 2012.

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L'Herne Beauvoir



The review section of the periodical *Sapere Aude*, with great honor offers, in the present number, studies on the texts that compose the *Cahier de L'Herne*, published at the end of 2012, divulged and made available at the beginning of 2013, in homage to Simone de Beauvoir. It is a publication directed at a reading public qualified to recognize what in

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Simone de Beauvoir has always been her main characteristic, her specific vocation as a writer, as Sylvie Le Bon de Beauvoir defines it. In this *Cahier*, a rather large number of original documents, unpublished or of difficult access, of Beauvoir's, who was still in her early phase in literary and philosophical writing, is gathered here, besides writings of scholars from various fields of knowledge.

We are dealing with a varied collection in terms of textual genres. As their editors, Jean-Louis Jeannelle and Éliane Lecarme-Tabone, note, the collection is a successful attempt to dissipate dissensions on the feminist and philosophical contents in Simone de Beauvoir's work, as well as the impossible situation of rivalry between her and Sartre. If the French critics regard Beauvoir merely as a memorialist and novelist, here new interpretive perspectives propose ethical and theoretical molds through which her work can now be read. Nevertheless, the historiographical writing, which comes to the fore with *La Force de l'âge*, a work of *Memoirs* published in 1960, was forgotten for many years in France. It was necessary for scholars of the English language, especially American and British, to rediscover Beauvoir's writings so that a new look at the person, the life, and the profound work of such an interesting woman could once again be revived.

Articles regularly proposed by the periodical *Simone de Beauvoir Studies* and lectures by the *Simone de Beauvoir Society*, thanks to the continued efforts of Yolanda A. Patterson and Liliane Lazar, as well as scholars from every continent that have gathered around them for several years, have emphasized a temporal continuum with echoes coming especially from the US. Large international *colloquia* in Europe, which brought together scholars of various nationalities, such as *Le Cinquantenaire du Deuxième Sexe*, organized by Christine Delphy and Sylvie Chaperon in Paris in 1999, and the colloquium *(Re)découvrir l'œuvre de Simone de Beauvoir*, organized by Julia Kristeva also in Paris in 2008, and the symposium that took place in Tübingen, *Simone de Beauvoir cent ans après sa naissance*, organized by Thomas Stauder also in 2008, are proof of the circulating perspectives on, and interests in, her life and work. Nor can one forget the continued effort of Sylvie Le Bon de Beauvoir as curator of Simone de Beauvoir's work, caring for the new editions and translations.

From the *Cahier de L'Herne* in question come unpublished texts of Beauvoir and several others on Beauvoir, specifically on her thought, literature and philosophy. The

themes treated here vary between studies on the early literary essays and *the Student Diaries* (*Cahiers de jeunesse*), correspondence, and especially her works of *Memoirs*, which dialectically mix, in the conception of Ursula Tidd, personal recollections and the collective and historical memory of the post-war period. In these works, Beauvoir reveals to her readers “different versions of a life taken up in the torment of history” (TIDD, 2012, p.241) and can, with great conviction, be bold enough to say “I was there,” as Cécile Decousu notes.

This presence in the world does not occur only from a historical point of view, but also from a subjective one, by the scope given to writing as a form of manifestation of life. Philosophy arises as “necessary but not sufficient” in the face of subjective experience and the questions of life (DECOUSU, 2012, p.251). Fiction is converted into a more adequate space for expression and communication and the simple classification of literary genres is shown to be insufficient in the face of the imperatives of writing. Integrations, interactions, ideas, and dialogical planes for the approach to existence create varied modulations of interpretations.

Concentrated in the first part of the *Cahier* are the inaugural studies that are organized, categorized, and analyzed by means of documents that were gradually discovered at the end of the 1980s and currently are in the care of research centers. In 1989, *the Student Diaries* (*Cahiers de jeunesse*) were being acquired by the *BNF* (*Bibliothèque nationale de France*) and, in 2008, some manuscripts were bought by the *Musée des Lettres et des Manuscrits de Paris*. Among the studies are those written by Sylvie Le Bon de Beauvoir, related to *Writings of youth* (*Les œuvres de jeunesse*), and those by Annabelle M. G., on *the Student Diaries* (*Cahiers de jeunesse*). On some of the fragments or outlines of novels (*ébauches de roman*) that Beauvoir had referred to in her autobiographical work *Mémoires d'une jeune fille rangée* (*Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*), published in 1958, with the description of her first twenty years under the rigorous education of a typical bourgeois family of the beginning of the twentieth century. The four essays analyzed there, “Anne”, “Combat”, “Hélène or le malentendu” and “Madeleine” make up an interesting group belonging partly to the *MLM* of Paris, since 2008, and partly to the *BNF*, in whose archives it is found mixed with part of the novel *Départ* (LE BON DE BEAUVOIR, 2012, p.41).

According to Sylvie Le Bon de Beauvoir, a quantity of manuscripts returned to Simone de Beauvoir's archives after being passed from hand to hand and by way of "obscure tribulations" (*en d'obscures tribulations*). Many of the youthful works were kept in Sartre's apartment (*entreposées chez Sartre*), situated on the 4th floor of Rue Bonaparte, No. 42, which was destroyed in the attack by OAS (*l'Organisation de l'armée secrète*), in 1962. With the apartment remaining open and unprotected for several days, the manuscripts and documents stored there reappeared in several places and at various times, in Orleans, in Paris, and even in the US, according to the report in the *Cahier* (LE BON DE BEAUVOIR, 2012, p.40).

Now from the nine-hundred pages of the *intimate diary* (*le journal intime*), written almost daily, covering the years 1926 to 1930, that is, when Simone de Beauvoir was between eighteen and twenty-two years old, an unexpected image that challenges the reader and the very author of her *Mémoires* emerges in the perception of her vulnerability (GOLAY, 2012, p.72). In it, one finds a portrait of a young woman fascinated by the literary question, which is contrasted to the image of a rather cold intellectual of great rational gifts that emerges throughout her works. According to Annabelle Martin Golay, the young Beauvoir "is a Mystic of reading" and the *Diaries* allow us a glimpse of both the birth of a vocation and her singular ability to refuse to distinguish the life of books and the life of the world (*la vie dans les livres et la vie dans le monde*). Literature is considered by her not as *technique* but as an apprehension of the world, a "continued initiation" (*une initiation continuée*) (GOLAY, 2012, p.73).

The letters and correspondence are also an interesting topic in the *Cahier*, composed of various types: a) letters to friends, like Olga Kosackiewicz, Jacques-Laurent Bost and, especially Violette Leduc, in which life and literary analyses are mixed; b) missives to intellectuals who are not always in agreement with her, like the one with polished irony addressed to François Mauriac, as well as letters received from others, like the one from Jean Cocteau, discussing his style and theoretical position; c) letters received from intellectual friends, like Merleau-Ponty, or celebrities like Iris Murdoch, Brigitte Bardot and Claude Chabrol, among others; d) the correspondence with Sartre during her visit to the US in 1948, and with Nelson Algren, with unpublished letters sent from Paris in 1947. Apropos the correspondence with the latter author, it is the literary dimension that seems

most noteworthy in it, according to Catherine Poisson; literature is both a construction of self and of the self and the other. And in the correspondence with Sartre, what one perceives is a literary-erotic relation of the two writers who corresponded during and after the war, who both inspired one another and exchanged values and masculine and feminine roles in a true experience of alterity (POISSON, 2012, p.119-121).

Besides the many studies that provide innovating perspectives, discussing the life and works of Beauvoir, including her relations, her reading, and the rereading of her fictional works, those dedicated to the works of *Memoirs* deserve special attention. It is in the autobiography, as Stemmer, Simonet-Tenant and Roy note, that life, war, and the oeuvre are combined in her writings on herself, in a self-portrait in which “life becomes effectively true when it can be narrated like a novel, read like a novel” (STEMMER, 2012, p.194/196). The entire oeuvre is then transformed into compound of combinations that will reveal the different forms of experience, and her life, like that of Penelope, is reshaped into an infinite work.

Some authors, such as Chaperon, Halimi, Shwarzer and Lazar, emphasize the debate on the feminist issue and women's right to defense. They focus the debate on the possible analogies with doctrines and experiences of that time, as well as the temporal changes assimilated by Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*, perceived as a nucleus around which diverse feminist politics are formulated in France from the 1950s to the 1980s.

For their part, Daigle, Vintges and Abramovici discuss the philosophical contributions of Simone de Beauvoir. Inspired by great names such as Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger, Bergson, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre himself, Beauvoir makes use of them in a quite individual and original way, allowing her to think about the historical oppression of women, and, through the sexed body, borrowed from the work of Merleau-Ponty, to explain that sexual difference is an essential aspect to be considered in phenomenological analysis (DAIGLE, 2012, p.307). Her philosophical independence is then established and her valuing of moral theories show up the degree of ambiguity camouflaged by tradition.

What this issue of *Sapere Aude* offers from this magistral *Cahier de L'Herne* are individual examinations of some the texts published here. We wanted to gather as a special homage to Beauvoir, a heterogeneous group of scholars on the relation between philosophy and literature. From Europe, Sylvie Le Bon de Beauvoir (Paris, France) greatly honors us

with her participation, with the intention of, on one hand, highlight the documentary value of the texts collected by *Cahier* and, on the other hand, of converting our readers into admirers of the fabulous work of Simone de Beauvoir. Erika Ruonakoski (University of Helsinki, Finland) calls attention to the value of the philosophical novel, in which freedom and intersubjectivity are combined, as seen in the writings of Beauvoir herself on the "Anciens et nouveaux héros". From Canada, Christine Daigle (Brock University) confirms the paradigmatic position of Beauvoir in the philosophical field, emphasizing her originality. On the other side of the Atlantic, the Brazilian scholars who analyze the documents and studies published herein do so from varied perspectives. We thank very much the participation of Barbosa (FMD. Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Minas Gerais, Brazil), Bordini (Faculdade de Letras. UFPR, Brazil.), Brandão (Faculdade de Letras, UFPR, Brazil), Bastos de Nascimento (FMD. Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Minas Gerais, Brazil), Sartori (Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Minas Gerais, Brazil), and Teixeira Santos (FAJE-Brazil) in this reviews section. On discussing the texts that compose the edition of *L'Herne*, the authors emphasize what they consider most important in the theses advanced by Beauvoir and students of her work.

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