Notice Board

Conference Reports

The fourth annual conference of the UK Society for Sartrean Studies was held at the Institute of Romance Studies, London on Saturday 26 October 1996. The organisers were pleased to note that those attending included not only academics with an interest in Sartre but also a number of students. The papers covered a wide range of disciplines – literature, politics, philosophy – with each paper placing Sartre in relation to another writer/thinker namely, Nietzsche, Althusser, Genet and de Beauvoir.

The first paper was presented by Jean-François Louette from the Université Stendhal in Grenoble, member of the editorial board of Les Temps Modernes and author of a number of articles and books on Sartre, notably Les Silences de Sartre (1995). His paper ‘Sartre contra Nietzsche: autour des Mouches’ used material from his latest book, Sartre contra Nietzsche: Les Mouches, Huis clos, Les Mots (Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 1996). Having established that Sartre had read Nietzsche both in German and in French, Louette initially explored Sartre’s youthful fascination with Nietzsche, showing how the young Sartre (and Paul Nizan) found in aspects of Nietzsche’s writings, especially in his energy and hedonism, a possible model for leading their lives. In brief, Louette showed how Sartre used Nietzsche to become Sartre. After identifying the reasons for Sartre’s fascination with Nietzsche and points of convergence between the two, (the supremacy of philosophy over science, atheism, anti-humanism), Louette then considered crucial differences between Sartre and Nietzsche which he described as Sartre’s derision for Nietzsche. Louette identified three strategies adopted by Sartre against Nietzsche: his use of irony and the ridiculous in opposition to Nietzsche’s concept of mastery (maîtrise), contingency versus the will to power, (la volonté de puissance) and freedom versus Nietzsche’s belief in eternal recurrence (l’éternel retour). The final part of the paper focused on Les Mouches, (1943) which for Louette encapsulated the synthesis of the tension between Sartre’s fascination with and derision for Nietzsche. As Louette showed, the Nietzschean
dimensions of the play were clearly perceived by the critics of the day and their inclusion was motivated in part by Sartre’s wish to obtain the approval of the German censors. Louette concluded by demonstrating how, in Les Mouches, Sartre used his readings of Nietzsche to attack Petainist ideology.

The second paper was ‘The Intransigence of the Intellectual: Autonomy and Ideology in Althusser and Sartre’, presented by Margaret Majumdar (University of Glamorgan), author of Althusser and the End of Leninism? (Pluto Press, 1995). The text of this paper is to be found earlier in this issue.

Ian Birchall’s paper ‘The Politics of Saint Genet’ was based on a chapter from, Jean Genet: Ten Years On, a collection of writings shortly to be published by Middlesex University Press. Birchall showed that besides containing detailed analyses of Genet’s writings, the 692 page Saint Genet provides extensive reflections on Marxism, psychoanalysis, language, morality and French society and, crucially, is a vital link in the chain of development which took Sartre towards the brand of Marxism he came to espouse. In Saint Genet, Birchall argued, Sartre shows Genet as a victim of the prevailing homophobia of 1950s France and points up the centrality and ambiguity of the theme of oppression in Genet’s work. Birchall demonstrated how Sartre’s theory of oppression was essentially dependent on his notion of freedom and explored this both in relation to Genet, and to Sartre’s critique of the class reductionism of the P.C.F. Although Saint Genet embodies some of Sartre’s reservations about Stalinist Marxism, Birchall also illustrated that it is a Marxist work where concepts of class and property are central to the account of Genet’s childhood. The final part of the paper dealt with Genet as a writer, which Birchall saw as the central concern of the book, and he concluded that Saint Genet is both the recognition of a revolutionary writer and a revolutionary text in its own right.

In their paper, ‘The Absence of Beauvoir’, Edward and Kate Fullbrook drew on material from their book, Simone de Beauvoir: The Remaking of a Twentieth Century Legend, (Harvester, 1993), to argue that the development of what has come to be known as Sartrean philosophy was very much more than has been previously recognised, a product of work by de Beauvoir and Sartre. Indeed, certain ideas which have been credited exclusively to Sartre are, they argued, demonstratively attributable to de Beauvoir. To illustrate this, the speakers focused on the question of absence in the writings of Sartre and de Beauvoir. Working from a detailed textual comparison of Sartre’s war-time literary output and de Beauvoir’s contemporaneous
work on L’Invitée, the Fullbrooks argued that de Beauvoir was, through the writing of her novel, developing a phenomenological account of perceived absence which was far more developed than Sartre’s concept of absence at that time, which they described as ‘surprisingly narrow’. Later, in Being and Nothingness, Sartre offered a far more sophisticated presentation of the phenomenon of absence which the Fullbrooks noted surpassed by a long way anything de Beauvoir ever wrote. Even so, crucially, they argued, this account was profoundly influenced by and indebted to de Beauvoir’s exploration of absence in L’Invitée which Sartre had read during a period of leave in mid-February 1940. However, in seeking to establish the debt that Sartre owed to de Beauvoir in the development of the phenomenon of absence, the speakers emphasised that they were in no sense being critical of Sartre but were simply tracing the development of an idea.

The conference was followed by the Annual General Meeting of the U.K. Society for Sartrean Studies where it was agreed inter alia that a one-day conference would be held next year. In addition, a working party was constituted to plan a two-day conference for 1998 on Sartre, the ‘events’ of May-June 1968, and his influence post-1968. The quality of the journal Sartre Studies International was praised but the need was noted to boost subscriptions in the United Kingdom and especially in North America.

David Drake: Middlesex University

Two sessions of the Sartre Circle took place at the meeting of the Eastern American Philosophical Association, at the end of December 1996 in Atlanta, Georgia. The first was on ‘Bad Faith and Anti-Black Racism’, with Linda Alcoff, Patricia Huntington and Tsenay Serequeberhan. The second on ‘Feminist interpretations of Sartre’, with papers from Linda Bell: ‘Different oppressions’; Helen Heise: ‘Why can’t a woman think more like a man’; Eleonore Holveck: ‘Sartre’s contribution to Beauvoir’.

The Simone de Beauvoir Circle met in Seattle on 5 April 1996 (Pacific Meeting of the American Philosophical Association), and on 10 October 1996 at Washington DC (Meeting of the Society for Phenomenological and Existential Philosophy). The latter, organised by Kristana Arp (Philosophy Dept., Long Island University, Brooklyn, NY 11201), was on: ‘Beauvoir and Sartre: Further controversies’, with papers from Guillermine de Lacoste: ‘Who originated the 1974 notion of abandon in reciprocity: Beauvoir or Sartre?’; Margaret A. Simons: ‘The question of influence: the Adieux
Robert Stone: ‘The dialectical humanism of Beauvoir and Sartre’. Kristana Arp is also the editor of the Simone de Beauvoir Circle Newsletter.

A conference, ‘Simone de Beauvoir, Ten Years On’, organised by Terry Keefe and Tommy Murtagh under the auspices of the American Simone de Beauvoir Society, was held at Trinity College, Dublin, on 6-8 September, 1996. Themes included: Politics, Beauvoir’s Public, Philosophy and Fiction, Autobiography and Feminism. There were speakers from Britain, France, Germany, Sweden, Portugal, the United States and Canada. Many of the papers are to be published in the next annual edition of Simone de Beauvoir Studies. Papers that may be of particular interest to Sartre scholars are those by Ingrid Galster, who analysed Beauvoir’s scripts for Radio Vichy during the Occupation; Margaret Simons, who looked for ‘pre-Sartrean existentialism’ in Beauvoir’s early (unpublished) diaries; and Terry Keefe, who assessed Beauvoir’s early treatment of ‘situation’ in relation to that of Sartre.

News from Sartre Societies


The Ninth Biannual Meeting of the Sartre Society of North America will take place on 3-5 October 1997 at Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia in a format based on round table discussions. Organisers are: Professor Thomas R. Flynn, & Professor Ken Anderson, Dept. of Philosophy, Emory University, Atlanta, GA 30322, USA. Conference topics include: Sartre and Authenticity; Sartre’s Critique of Capitalism; Black Existentialism; Sartre’s Theory of Groups; What is Literature?; Sartre and Psychology; The Family Idiot. Please send three copies of submission (complete papers if possible) and a one-hundred word abstract to Professor Bob Stone, C.W. Post Campus, Long Island University, 720 Northern Boulevard, Brookville, NY 11548-1300 USA. E-mail: rstone@eagle.liunet.edu.

The Fifth Annual Conference of the UK Society for Sartrean Studies will take place at the Institute of Romance Studies (University of London) on Saturday 25 October 1997.
Forthcoming Conferences

A meeting of the Beauvoir Circle on ‘Ethics in Beauvoir’ is to take place at the Pacific Meeting of the American Philosophical Association, 26-29 March 1997, Berkeley, California. The organiser is: Julien Murphy, Philosophy Dept., University of Southern Maine, Portland, ME 04103. Murphy (E-mail: jmurphy@maine.edu) is renewing his call for papers for the volume Rereading the Canon: Feminist Interpretations of Jean-Paul Sartre, to be published by Penn State Press (offers of articles to reach him by 30 June 1997).

The fifth international Simone de Beauvoir conference: ‘Simone de Beauvoir: Witness to a Century’ will be held on 18-20 April 1997 on the campus of the Northern Kentucky University. Please contact Professor Barbara Klaw, Literature and Languages, Northern Kentucky University, Highland Heights, KY 41099 USA. E-mail: klaw@nku.edu

Call for Papers

The Sartre Society of Canada will be meeting at Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada, in conjunction with the Learned Societies Congress on 3-4 June 1997. Contact David Sehl, Dept. of French, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada N2L 3C5. E-mail: dsehl@mach1.wlu.ca

Dr Ingrid Galster is organising a conference in Eichstätt (Germany) in November 1997. The conference will be multi-disciplinary and the languages of the conference will be French and German. The theme will be ‘The Birth of the Sartre Phenomenon’ in the Inter-War Years, the Occupation and the Liberation. For further details, please write to Ingrid Galster, Franz Stoessl Str.10, D-91804 Mönsheim, Germany.

Recent Publications


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Anne-Yvonne Julien, Anne Maurel, Martine Robier and Geneviève Idt, L'écriture de soi, Paris, Belin, 1996. [Idt’s contribution is a study of Les Mots, pp.141-212].


Doctoral Theses

1995


Salam Hawa: ‘Toward a redefinition of freedom and subjectivity in contemporary society’. Univ. of Edinburgh.


Dongeon Lee: ‘Phenomenology, hermeneutics, and existentialism as sources of an inquiry into the meaning of modern architecture’. Ph.D., College of Architecture, Georgia Institute of Technology, 217 pp. DAI 56-11A, 4176.


1996

Suzanne Murphy Derobert: ‘Reading into Beauvoir, Sartre and Robbe-Grillet’. Boston Univ., 147 pp. DAI 57-03A, 1131.

Gail Evelyn Linsenbard: ‘Bad faith and interpersonal relations in Sartre’s Cahiers pour une morale’. Univ. of Colorado, Boulder.


Thomas B. Spademan: ‘Sartre, Marx and legal theory’. Purdue Univ.
