

ABSTRACTS

Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Memory Troubles: Remembering the Occupation in Simone de Beauvoir's *Les Mandarins**

Critics generally agree that Beauvoir's novel *Les Mandarins*, which won the Prix Goncourt in 1954, is an important work of historical fiction, chronicling the lives and loves of left-wing intellectuals in Paris during the years following World War II. In this essay I argue that *Les Mandarins* is as much about the war as about the postwar, and that its meaning for contemporary readers was deeply linked (even if not in a fully recognized way) to memories of the troubled period of the Occupation. I develop the concept of "ambivalent memory," as it refers in particular to two of the most problematic aspects of that period: the role of the Vichy government in the persecution of Jews, and the ambiguities and disagreements concerning the Resistance. More generally, the novel raises questions about memory and its inevitable obverse, forgetting. It is from our own contemporary perspective, heavily informed by concerns over memory and World War II, that this aspect of *Les Mandarins* comes to the fore.

Keywords: Nazi Occupation, Simone de Beauvoir, French Resistance, Holocaust, memory studies

Judith Coffin, *Beauvoir, Kinsey, and Mid-Century Sex*

This essay considers the near simultaneity of *The Second Sex* and Alfred C. Kinsey's reports on sexual behavior. It shows how reviewers in both France and the United States paired the studies; it asks how that pairing shaped the reception of *The Second Sex*; and it situates the studies in their larger historical context—a moment in which sexuality commanded new and much broader attention. An ever-widening number of disciplines, institutions, sectors of mass culture, and representatives of an expanding consumer economy (from studies of the authoritarian personality or juvenile delinquency to advertising) insisted that sexuality was key to their concerns and enterprises. The ways in which sexuality might be understood multiplied—to the point where an all-encompassing notion of "sex" collapsed, giving way, eventually, to a plurality of terms: sexuality, sex roles, and gender.

Keywords: Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, Kinsey, history of sexuality

Judith Surkis, Ethics and Violence: Simone de Beauvoir, Djamila Boupacha, and the Algerian War

This article situates Simone de Beauvoir's involvement in the case of Djamila Boupacha, an FLN militant who was tortured by the French Army in 1960, in the context of the repeated revelations of torture in course of the Algerian War. Drawing on Beauvoir's writings on ethics and other contemporary denunciations of torture, the essay illuminates how Beauvoir worked to overcome widespread public "indifference." By focusing public attention on the Army's sexually degrading treatment of Boupacha, Beauvoir figured torture as a source of feminine and feminizing national shame.

Keywords: torture, Algerian War, sexual violence, Simone de Beauvoir, Djamila Boupacha

Christie McDonald, The Death of Maternity? Simone de Beauvoir's *A Very Easy Death*

Contrasting the view of motherhood in Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* with the description of her mother's illness and death in *A Very Easy Death*, this essay examines the revelation of feelings previously unexplored in the relationship to her mother. Faced with a life-shattering experience, Beauvoir revisits issues not only about motherhood and maternity from her philosophical and sociological study, but her own feelings about her mother and disturbing ways in which doctors and families withheld knowledge from the dying in the mid-twentieth century.

Keywords: motherhood, maternity, existentialist philosophy, autobiography, illness, death

Alice Jardine, What Feminism?

"What Feminism?" is an extended reflection upon several generations of readers of Simone de Beauvoir, including those readers the author herself has been, from the early 1960s to the present. Of particular interest are the serious readers of Beauvoir since her death in 1986, as opposed to the many detractors who have worked hard to tarnish Beauvoir's productive influence. Among the many groups of such serious readers there are, for example, the social theorist feminists such as Susan Buck Morss; the postcolonial/transnational feminist philosophers such as Chandra Mohanty; the poststructuralist-inspired feminist writers such as Teresa Brennan; and the queer/trans readers such as Judith Butler. What we learn from them is that, going forward, the important thing is to keep excavating the deep structures of Beauvoir's thought so as to forge new pathways for new generations to address the obviously gendered and more than sobering global crises of the twenty-first century.

Keywords: feminism, readers, generations, femininity, Deirdre Bair

Sally Marthaler, *La course au centre: Policy Convergence and Partisanship in France, 1981-2002*

Policy convergence between the political parties and the perception among voters that there is little to choose between left and right may be factors in the declining levels of partisanship observed in many advanced industrial democracies, including France, where these conditions emerged in the 1980s. Drawing on both quantitative and qualitative data, this article analyzes changes in the actual and perceived level of convergence between the mainstream parties in France from 1981 to 2002. It finds evidence of increasing policy convergence over the period as a result of a combination of endogenous and exogenous factors. It concludes that left-right ideological labels are still important to voters, even though they too have moved to the center, and that many of them want to see a clear dividing-line between the parties. The blurring of the boundaries between left and right and the “reversibility” of the mainstream parties has also enhanced the appeal of alternative and extremist parties.

Keywords: policy convergence, voters, political parties, left-right ideology, France

Sarah Waters, *Globalization, the Confédération paysanne, and Symbolic Resistance*

The Confédération paysanne can be described as a marginal farmers’ union that represents the vested interests of a tiny minority and that seems to swim against a tide of socio-economic change. At a time when France is increasingly integrated into a global economy, it calls for greater protectionism, a massive increase in state subsidies, and a closure of borders to trade. Yet, far from being dismissed as marginal or anachronistic, the Confédération, at the height of its influence, was hailed as a symbol of the “general interest” and gained the enthusiastic support of a majority of French citizens. In this essay, the author suggests that the success of the Confédération had little to do with conventional political or institutional patterns but was derived instead from its “symbolic power” and its capacity to transform its own cause into a metaphor for opposition to globalization. At a time of profound crisis, the Confédération was able to capture one of the nation’s most enduring myths, laying claim to a whole symbolic universe linked to peasant farming. Whilst such symbolism is hardly new in the French context, the Confédération’s particular skill was to counterpose this against a dominant image of neo-liberal globalization. It posited peasant farming as an antidote to all the evils of a globalizing world, one in which identity is reaffirmed, tradition is preserved and social bonds are restored.

Keywords: Confédération paysanne, globalization, symbolic power, Pierre Bourdieu, José Bové