

ÉTAT PRÉSENT SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR STUDIES

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In 2008, the centenary year of Simone de Beauvoir's birth, the renaissance in Beauvoir studies which began in the 1990s continues apace. Today, with a recent wave of new readings of her work, Beauvoir's status as an original philosopher and writer is consolidated. Until the mid-1990s, however, responses to her work were somewhat ambivalent. Such vicissitudes in its reception have been related to the nature of Beauvoir's philosophical collaboration with Jean-Paul Sartre, the role of women in intellectual history and philosophy more generally, and to the status of *Le Deuxième Sexe* — the text for which Beauvoir is still best known. The critical fortunes of her pioneering 1949 study of women have inevitably been linked to evolving wider debates concerning sex and gender in the respective fields of French and Anglo-American feminist theory and, importantly, to how post-1968 feminist debates in France have been constructed and have circulated within Anglo-American feminism. Materialist feminist Christine Delphy argued trenchantly in 1995 that 'French feminism' was largely an ideological invention by Anglophone scholars and one which had emerged from distorted representations of feminist activity in France as being predominantly concerned with psychoanalytic and linguistic approaches to sexual difference.¹ In Delphy's view, this had artificially conflated French feminist theory with Jacques Lacan, Sigmund Freud, Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cixous, Jacques Derrida and Luce Irigaray and neglected an important body of work by materialist feminists in France which developed in part from Beauvoir's thought.² Toril Moi's 1987 anthology *French Feminist Thought* included essays by Beauvoir, Delphy, Michèle Le Doeuff and Elisabeth Badinter, as well as by Kristeva and Irigaray, even though their respective relationships to what constituted 'French feminism' at that time differed considerably.³ Moi noted then that the muted reception of French materialist feminism was the result of their work being 'less frequently translated and less well-known precisely because of their relative similarity: they have [...] been perceived as lacking in exotic difference'.⁴ In the context of Beauvoir's own long-standing critique of psychoanalysis as a

¹Christine Delphy, 'The Invention of French Feminism: An Essential Move', in *Another Look, Another Woman: Retranslations of French Feminism*, ed. by Lynne Huffer (*Yale French Studies*, 87 [1995]), pp. 190–221.

²See for example *Sex in Question: French Materialist Feminism*, ed. by Diana Leonard and Lisa Adkins (London, Taylor and Francis, 1996) for an introduction to a selection of work by key theorists. See also works by Michèle Le Doeuff such as *L'Étude et le rouet* (Paris, Seuil, 1989) and *Le Sexe du savoir* (Paris, Aubier, 1998).

³*French Feminist Thought: A Reader*, ed. by Toril Moi (New York, Blackwell, 1987).

⁴*French Feminist Thought*, p. 6.

theoretical base from which to think about gender, her antipathy towards post-structuralist concepts of the subject and her persistent focus on the material and phenomenological aspects of sexual oppression, *Le Deuxième Sexe* seemed theoretically out-of-step with what some Anglophone readers perceived as 'French feminist theory'. What was represented as Beauvoir's loyal adherence to existentialism and implicitly to Sartre, cast her theoretically adrift as a 'first wave' equality feminist, rooted in Enlightenment humanism, who appeared to be clinging to the life-raft of an autonomous rational subject at a time when feminine difference, the maternal erotic and sexual-textual *jouissance* were deemed to be the zeitgeist of French feminist thinking. The 'discovery' in the early 1990s of Beauvoir's phenomenological approach to understanding gender, combined with a recognition of her original syntheses of existentialism, Hegelianism, Marxism and anthropology in *Le Deuxième Sexe*, has led to a major re-evaluation of her contribution to feminist thought. Tragically for Beauvoir's reputation as a feminist philosopher, however, her importance could not have been registered by those Anglophone readers who read *Le Deuxième Sexe* in English, because the 1953 translation of Beauvoir's work by zoologist H. M. Parshley is marred by philosophical *contresens*, unacknowledged omissions (approximately fifteen per cent is excised from the original French), and rewritings on almost every page. As Toril Moi has noted, this has not only been damaging to Beauvoir's reputation as an intellectual but has also obscured understanding of her philosophical arguments concerning gender.⁵ Moreover, even though a new translation of *Le Deuxième Sexe* has been commissioned, as discussed below, the shortcomings of its original 1953 translation are not an isolated instance in Beauvoir's corpus because the English translations of her correspondence with Sartre and of her other philosophical and literary texts are in some cases similarly blighted.⁶

The nature of Beauvoir's intellectual and personal partnership with Sartre has proved to be a fertile ground for scholarship as well as for projection and mythology because the relationship has been resistant to easy categorization, as the recent biography by Hazel Rowley has engagingly demonstrated.⁷ The nature of the professional collaboration between Sartre and Beauvoir initially came under feminist scrutiny from the late 1970s onwards, when Margaret A. Simons interviewed Beauvoir on several occasions about her philosophical work and the nature of her work with Sartre, and also indicated to her the major philosophical shortcomings of the Parshley translation of

⁵Toril Moi, 'While We Wait: The English Translation of *The Second Sex*', *Signs*, 27:4 (2002), 1005–35 (p. 1007).

⁶See Margaret A. Simons, 'Introduction', in Simone de Beauvoir, *Diary of a Philosophy Student, I: 1926–7*, trans. by Barbara Klaw, ed. by Barbara Klaw, Sylvie Le Bon de Beauvoir and Margaret A. Simons (Urbana, IL, University of Illinois Press, 2006), p. 3. For a brief critical survey of the quality of Beauvoir's texts in translation, see my 'Simone de Beauvoir' entry in *Encyclopedia of Literary Translation*, ed. by Olive Classe (London, Fitzroy Dearborn, 2000).

⁷Hazel Rowley, *Tête-à-Tête: Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre* (New York, HarperCollins, 2005).

Le Deuxième Sexe. Simons has been a key figure among Anglophone Beauvoir scholars because she has persistently focused on the ‘question of influence’ between Sartre and Beauvoir and argued in favour of her philosophical originality. Simons’s enquiry has raised a number of important issues which have been addressed in various ways over the last couple of decades. These include the identification of the range of philosophical influences in Beauvoir’s work (to include inter alia Hegel, Alexandre Kojève, Martin Heidegger, Karl Marx, Claude Lévi-Strauss and Maurice Merleau-Ponty), the chronology of her development as a philosopher, and the influence of her thought and its relationship to poststructuralist feminist theory.

In France until recently, reception of Beauvoir’s philosophical work has been especially ambivalent. Judged as ‘incontournable’ and yet ‘à dépasser’, *Le Deuxième Sexe* was hailed in France as both the bible of feminism and yet also as ‘masculinist’ by differentialist feminists, especially in relation to its controversial accounts of biological sex and motherhood.⁸ As Delphy observed at the Paris conference held in 1999 to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of *Le Deuxième Sexe*, ‘[Beauvoir] serait passée sans transition du statut de “trop en avance sur son temps” dans les années cinquante à celui de “ringarde” aujourd’hui. A entendre certains, elle n’aurait jamais coïncidé avec aucun temps, ni le sien ni le nôtre. Et pourtant, quand *Le Deuxième Sexe* est paru, cela a été un coup de tonnerre, une révélation ou un défi ... pour des milliers de femmes en France et hors de France’.⁹ Although Beauvoir was hailed as the ‘mother’ of French feminism by Elisabeth Badinter, who proclaimed in *Le Nouvel Observateur* on Beauvoir’s death in 1986 that ‘Femmes, vous lui devez tout!’, it was only in the 1990s that France began to accord her unequivocal recognition. Materialist feminists who worked with Beauvoir in the 1970s on *Questions féministes* and *Nouvelles questions féministes*, such as Delphy, Monique Wittig, Monique Plaza and Colette Guillaumin, have been the most obvious heirs to her theoretical legacy in France. In common with Beauvoir’s anti-naturalist and broadly Marxist thinking on gender, materialist feminism in France positioned itself as anti-biologistic and anti-essentialist, opposing any notion of an essential gender identity. Psychological differences between men and women were viewed as caused by social inequality, a position clearly at variance with somewhat idealist approaches to sexual difference in the 1970s and 1980s which drew on psychoanalysis and semiotics. Yet as the profile of feminist philosophy has become more established in French intellectual life and with the memorial imperative of events such as Beauvoir’s death and the *cinquante-naire* of the publication of *Le Deuxième Sexe*, her importance and influence have been substantially acknowledged. The psychoanalytic writer Elisabeth

⁸Catherine Rodgers, *Le Deuxième Sexe de Simone de Beauvoir: un héritage admiré et contesté* (Paris, L’Harmattan, 1998).

⁹Christine Delphy and Sylvie Chaperon, ‘Introduction’, in *Cinquante-naire du ‘Deuxième Sexe’*, ed. by Delphy and Chaperon (Paris, Syllepse, 2002), p. 14.

Roudinesco, for example, has credited Beauvoir with being the first thinker in France to link explicitly the question of sexuality with political emancipation.¹⁰ In 1989, Michèle Le Doeuff's *L'Étude et le rouet* marked a significant milestone within Francophone Beauvoir scholarship, addressing questions hitherto 'impensables' such as the philosophical originality of *Le Deuxième Sexe*, elaborated in Trojan-horse style through its subversion of the masculinist discourse of existentialism. Other feminist philosophers and historians, such as Geneviève Fraisse, have recognized Beauvoir's philosophical importance for foregrounding the issue of sexual difference in her formulation of woman as 'Other', while Michelle Perrot has observed that it is the 'totalité' of Beauvoir's life and work that has had the greatest impact in France.¹¹

Interest in her work has been further fuelled in France and worldwide by Gallimard's posthumous publication of two volumes of Beauvoir's *Lettres à Sartre* and of her *Journal de Guerre*, published in 1990. These were followed in 1997 by her *Lettres à Nelson Algren: un amour transatlantique, 1947–1964* and in 2004 by the *Correspondance croisée, 1937–1940* with Jacques-Laurent Bost. Beauvoir's literary executor and adopted daughter, Sylvie Le Bon de Beauvoir, has played a key role in preparing these posthumous editions for publication and in collaborating with scholars in the field. Most recently, she has established the definitive edition of Beauvoir's 1926–27 student diaries, to be published by Gallimard in March 2008. She has also been centrally involved in the recent publication of their English translation, which forms part of *The Beauvoir Series*, a multi-volume project currently being led by Margaret A. Simons in consultation with Le Bon de Beauvoir to publish translations of previously unpublished or little known works written by Beauvoir from 1926 until 1979.¹² The publication of these posthumous works has been and will be crucially important in elucidating the detail of Beauvoir's intellectual trajectory, the nature of her working partnership with Sartre 'au jour le jour', and the depth and scope of her thought. Her philosophical diaries from 1926 to 1927 demonstrate, for example, Beauvoir's earliest philosophical preoccupation with the problem of the other and her quest to think through the ontological and ethical issues relating to the gendering of subjectivity well before she met Sartre. These posthumous publications also reveal more generally the ethical and emotional complexities of Beauvoir's personal life with Sartre and others in their milieu, while sometimes fuelling an occasionally hostile tendency in Beauvoir reception, identified by Moi, to conflate her writing with her life, as some readers have returned obsessively to 'the personality topos' in their engagement with her texts.¹³

¹⁰ *La Bataille de cent ans: histoire de la psychanalyse en France, 11: 1925–1985* (Paris, Seuil, 1986).

¹¹ Rodgers, *Le Deuxième Sexe de Simone de Beauvoir*, pp. 24, 275.

¹² Beauvoir, *Diary of a Philosophy Student*.

¹³ Toril Moi, 'Politics and the Intellectual Woman: Clichés in the Reception of Simone de Beauvoir's Work', in *Feminist Theory and Simone de Beauvoir* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1990), pp. 21–60.

Outside France, after Beauvoir's death the renaissance in Anglophone Beauvoir scholarship has gathered swifter momentum, building on Simons's work and being not least the result of the disciplinary evolutions of feminist philosophy and gender and sexuality studies in the academy. Later to become one of the most influential gender theorists of her generation, Judith Butler's earliest work in the mid-1980s notably focused on Beauvoir's concepts of gender as a 'becoming' and of the body as 'situation' in *Le Deuxième Sexe*. In two articles which were to inform core sections of her ground-breaking *Gender Trouble* (1990), Butler radically read Beauvoir alongside Michel Foucault and Wittig to argue that, as we 'become' our genders, we can only know sex through gender as it is taken up within cultural norms, laws and interdictions.¹⁴ In 1990, political philosopher Sonia Kruks pursued questions relating to Beauvoir's philosophical influences, observing that Beauvoir's account of situated subjectivity had greater philosophical proximity to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological grounding of the subject than to Sartrean existentialism. Responding to criticisms which identify a residual Cartesian humanism in *Le Deuxième Sexe*, Kruks argued that Beauvoir is, in fact, a pioneer in her attempt to reformulate the Cartesian subject because her notion of subjectivity as 'situated' and 'embodied' implies the navigation of a middle course between essentialism and hyper-constructivism.¹⁵ Avoiding the perils of mind-body dualism, Beauvoir demonstrates, according to Kruks, the intersubjectivity of the subject as 'both constituting and constituted'. Such issues would be pursued further by scholars both within and beyond Beauvoir studies.

In 1994 (with a second updated edition published in 2008), Moi's *Simone de Beauvoir: The Making of a Intellectual Woman*, was a path-breaking publication for its theoretically sophisticated analyses of Beauvoir's intellectual trajectory and collaboration with Sartre, alongside readings of *L'Invitée*, *Le Deuxième Sexe* and Beauvoir's memoirs, diaries and correspondence.¹⁶ Moi's subsequent *What is a Woman? And Other Essays* contains two key chapters on Beauvoir in which Moi stages firstly an encounter between Beauvoir and contemporary feminist theoretical debates on the body, and secondly one between Beauvoir and ordinary language philosophy. The aim of both encounters is to demonstrate how Beauvoirian theory can usefully assist contemporary theory in moving beyond the impasses produced by the terms in which

¹⁴Judith Butler, 'Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex*', in *Simone de Beauvoir: Witness to a Century* (*Yale French Studies*, 72 [1986]), pp. 35–49; 'Variations on Sex and Gender: Beauvoir, Wittig and Foucault', in *Feminism as Critique: Essays on the Politics of Gender in Late Capitalist Societies*, ed. by Seyla Benhabib and Drucilla Cornell (Cambridge, Polity, 1987), pp. 128–42; *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, Routledge, 1990), which was only recently published in French translation (Paris, Découverte, 2005).

¹⁵Sonia Kruks, 'Gender and Subjectivity: Simone de Beauvoir and Contemporary Feminism', *Signs*, 18:1 (1992), 89–110. See also Sonia Kruks, *Situation and Human Existence* (London, Unwin Hyman, 1990) and the first two chapters of her *Retrieving Experience: Subjectivity and Recognition in Feminist Politics* (Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 2001), pp. 27–75.

¹⁶Toril Moi, *Simone de Beauvoir: The Making of an Intellectual Woman*, 2nd edn (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008). First published by Blackwell (Oxford), 1994.

debates on sex and gender are staged.¹⁷ Moi argues that Beauvoir's concept of the body as a situation is a crucially original and often overlooked contribution to feminist theory. Understood as a synthesis of facticity and freedom, the concept of 'situation' enables Beauvoir to avoid dividing up lived experience into the traditional subject/object binary and hence to acknowledge the possibility of subject-subject relations within the self-other dynamic.¹⁸

In feminist literary criticism and in her key critical interventions relating to controversial areas of *Le Deuxième Sexe*, Elizabeth Fallaize's work has similarly made a major contribution to Beauvoir studies over the last two decades.¹⁹ This has been crucially important given that the early critical dismissal of Beauvoir's independent philosophical vision has also affected reception of her literary writing. Viewed as unsympathetic to 'écriture féminine' and to feminist differentialist critiques of language, Beauvoir's broadly realist and 'committed' approach to literature has been deemed less technically challenging than experimental women's writing exploring the feminine, read through the lens of feminist psychoanalytic theory. This has meant that Beauvoir's influence — as both a feminist philosopher and a literary writer — on subsequent generations of literary writers, most notably Annie Ernaux, has tended to be somewhat underestimated. Fallaize's 1988 study, *The Novels of Simone de Beauvoir*, was the first of a new wave of feminist literary criticism which read Beauvoir's texts rigorously, unencumbered by the weight of projection or reductive desire to conflate the life with the work that had sometimes characterized Beauvoir criticism.²⁰ Fallaize's subsequent *Simone de Beauvoir: A Critical Reader* brought together criticism by leading scholars from Europe and North America and focused on the three main areas of the corpus: philosophy, autobiography and fiction.²¹ More recently, both Fallaize and Moi have written dense analyses of the various shortcomings of aspects of the 1953 Parshley translation of *Le Deuxième Sexe*, contributing to the academic lobby of recent years to persuade Random House publishers to commission a new translation.²²

Beauvoir literary criticism has hence been reinvigorated by the renaissance of interest in her philosophical work. Nevertheless, there has been the attendant risk of reading her literary writings uniquely through a philosophical lens, thereby diminishing their aesthetic qualities. Notwithstanding existential phenomenology's recourse to literary illustration to explore the ambiguity of

¹⁷Toril Moi, *What is a Woman? And Other Essays* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999).

¹⁸Moi, *What is a Woman*, p. 65.

¹⁹See, for example, Fallaize's analysis of the chapter in *Le Deuxième Sexe* concerned with 'Les données de la biologie', in which she argues that it can be read as a development of Beauvoir's work on myth, prefiguring Evelyn Fox Keller's feminist critique of science: Fallaize, 'A Saraband of Imagery: The Uses of Biological Science in *Le Deuxième Sexe*', in *The Existential Phenomenology of Simone de Beauvoir*, ed. by Wendy O'Brien and L. Embree (Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic, 2001), pp. 67–84.

²⁰Elizabeth Fallaize, *The Novels of Simone de Beauvoir* (London, Routledge, 1988).

²¹*Simone de Beauvoir: A Critical Reader*, ed. Elizabeth Fallaize (London, Routledge, 1988).

²²Moi, 'While We Wait', pp. 1005–35; Fallaize, 'Le destin de la femme au foyer: traduire "la femme mariée" de Simone de Beauvoir', in *Cinquante ans du 'Deuxième Sexe'*, pp. 468–74.

'le vécu', reading Beauvoir's literary texts as simply philosophical portmanteaux tends moreover to neglect both the discursive differences between philosophy and literature and also Beauvoir's own situated choice of genre to express the conceptual and/or the imaginary.²³

In addition to the work of Moi and Fallaize discussed above, there have been recent new readings of Beauvoir's fiction and auto/biography, some of which have drawn on her philosophy. Among these can be listed contributions by Kate and Edward Fullbrook who, building on Simons's work, have scrutinized Beauvoir's philosophical trajectory, and the nature and chronology of her collaboration with Sartre; Karen Vintges, who reads Beauvoir's philosophy and *Les Mandarins* through the lens of Foucauldian ethics to argue for Beauvoir's elaboration of an 'art of living' in her life and thought; and Alison Holland and Louise Renée's collection of essays on Beauvoir's fiction which focuses on gender and language.²⁴ Sarah Fishwick's study of Beauvoir's writings on corporeality, and Alison Fell's comparative study of motherhood as represented in Beauvoir, Leduc and Ernaux, are also important contributions in their respective areas.²⁵ In studies of Beauvoir's life-writing read in conjunction with her philosophy, my own *Simone de Beauvoir: Gender and Testimony* sought to trace the inscription of the self in her philosophical and auto/biographical texts as driven by an ethical obligation to bear witness for the other.²⁶ Susan Bainbrigg's *Writing Against Death: The Autobiographies of Simone de Beauvoir* adroitly demonstrates the ways in which the Beauvoirian narrative voice seeks to stave off the annihilation of its own transcendence in its encounters with ageing, illness, death and the Other, in an illuminating study of Beauvoir's autothanatographical practice.²⁷

Scholars based in Scandinavia have significantly contributed in recent years to the renaissance in Beauvoir studies. In 2000, the Norwegian publishing house Pax published a new translation of *Le Deuxième Sexe* to remedy the shortcomings of the existing 1960s version. Interestingly, this new translation sold 20,000 copies in a few months.²⁸ In Sweden, Eva Lundgren-Gothlin's *Sex and Existence: Simone de Beauvoir's 'The Second Sex'*, and her many subsequent articles (some of which focus on Beauvoir's philosophical relationship to Heidegger, her role within existential phenomenology and her relevance to contemporary moral philosophy) constituted landmark publications in

²³See Beauvoir's comments on this question in *La Force des choses II* (Paris, Gallimard, 1983), p. 62 (first published 1963).

²⁴Kate and Edward Fullbrook, *Simone de Beauvoir: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge, Polity, 1998) and *Sex and Philosophy: Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir* (London, Continuum, 2008); Karen Vintges, *Philosophy as Passion: The Thinking of Simone de Beauvoir* (Bloomington, IN, Indiana University Press, 1996); *Simone de Beauvoir's Fiction: Women and Language*, ed. by Alison Holland and Louise Renée (New York, Peter Lang, 2005).

²⁵Sarah Fishwick, *The Body in the Work of Simone de Beauvoir* (Bern, Peter Lang, 2002); Alison Fell, *Liberty, Equality, Maternity in Beauvoir, Leduc and Ernaux* (Oxford, Legenda, 2003).

²⁶Ursula Tidd, *Simone de Beauvoir: Gender and Testimony* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999).

²⁷Susan Bainbrigg, *Writing Against Death: The Autobiographies of Simone de Beauvoir* (Amsterdam, Rodopi, 2005).

²⁸Moi, 'While We Wait', p. 1032.

rigorous readings of Beauvoir's philosophical work.²⁹ Gothlin was also crucially instrumental as philosophical consultant to the first translation of *Le Deuxième Sexe* into Swedish by Åsa Moberg in 2002. Working in Finland and Norway, Sara Heinämaa has explored Beauvoir's phenomenological account of the body and her relationship to Merleau-Ponty's thought.³⁰

In the United States, works by feminist philosophers such as Debra Bergoffen, Nancy Bauer and Fredrika Scarth have been valuable for their analyses of Beauvoir's method of existential phenomenology and her rewriting of the Cartesian subject from a feminist ethical perspective with its attendant ramifications (as Scarth argues) for community conceptions of otherness and difference.³¹ Important collections of essays such as Emily Grosholz's *The Legacy of Simone de Beauvoir* and Claudia Card's *The Cambridge Companion to Simone de Beauvoir* have recently demonstrated the richness of contemporary philosophical readings in the field.³² In Germany, Ingrid Galster has accomplished valuable work over the last decade, assembling key texts and commentaries relating to the reception in France of *Le Deuxième Sexe*, among other texts.³³

Much of this new wave of scholarship in Beauvoir studies has emerged from major conferences organized to mark events like the *cinquantenaire* of the publication of *Le Deuxième Sexe* in 1999, such as those in Paris and Germany.³⁴ Others have taken place annually under the auspices of the North America-based International Simone de Beauvoir Society (which has existed since 1981), under the devoted and tireless presidency of Yolanda Astarita Patterson since 1983.³⁵ Also in the United States, the existence of the Simone de Beauvoir Circle of feminist philosophers has encouraged debate and dialogue. Recent Paris-based conferences have facilitated the renaissance of interest in Beauvoir's work in France so that prominent theorists such as Kristeva have been able to revisit their dialogue with her thought in

²⁹Eva Lundgren-Gothlin, *Sex and Existence: Simone de Beauvoir's 'The Second Sex'* (London, Athlone, 1996).

³⁰Sara Heinämaa, *Toward a Phenomenology of Sexual Difference: Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Beauvoir* (Lanham, Rowman and Littlefield, 2003).

³¹Debra Bergoffen, *The Philosophy of Simone de Beauvoir: Gendered Phenomenologies, Erotic Generosities* (New York, SUNY Press, 1997); Nancy Bauer, *Simone de Beauvoir: Philosophy and Feminism* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2001); Fredrika Scarth, *The Other Within: Ethics, Politics and the Body in Simone de Beauvoir* (Lanham, Rowman and Littlefield, 2004).

³²*The Legacy of Simone de Beauvoir*, ed. by Emily Grosholz (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004); *The Cambridge Companion to Simone de Beauvoir*, ed. by Claudia Card (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003).

³³Ingrid Galster, *Le Deuxième Sexe de Simone de Beauvoir* (Paris, Presses de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2004) and *Beauvoir dans tous ses états* (Paris, Tallandier, 2007).

³⁴The Paris conference marking the 'cinquantenaire du *Deuxième Sexe*' was organized by Sylvie Chaperon and Christine Delphy. Ingrid Galster organized another important conference in Bavaria in 1999, in which key specialists commented on individual chapters of *Le Deuxième Sexe*. Proceedings were subsequently published as *Simone de Beauvoir: Le Deuxième Sexe* (Paris, Champion, 2004).

³⁵Recent conferences of the International Simone de Beauvoir Society include those held in the USA (1991, 1993, 1995, 1997, 1998, 2004, 2005); Ireland (1996); Portugal (1999); Canada (2000, 2007); UK (2001); Italy (2002 and 2006); Paris (2003), held jointly with the Groupe d'Études Sartriennes.

productive ways.³⁶ In 2002, witnessing this resurgence of philosophical interest, *Les Temps Modernes* devoted an issue to ‘Présences de Simone de Beauvoir’.³⁷

Forthcoming and re-issued primary texts as well as numerous conferences and events planned to take place throughout 2008 will contribute towards keeping Beauvoir in the spotlight. Of these primary texts can be noted Gallimard’s re-issuing of the following since the late 1990s: *L’Amérique au jour le jour* (1997), *Mémoires d’une jeune fille rangée* in Foliothèque commentary and Folio (2000, 2008) and *L’Existentialisme et la sagesse des nations* (2008). Most importantly, as noted above, the long-running campaign to persuade Random House to commission a new English translation of *Le Deuxième Sexe* has resulted in two U.S.-born Paris-based translators, Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier, being commissioned for the task. To date, the translation is due to be published in 2009, although it is unlikely to be the fully annotated scholarly edition which many scholars would consider essential. The new translation is nonetheless likely to be a considerable improvement on the 1953 Parshley text. During 2008, conferences and centennial events are planned in France, the UK, North America, China and elsewhere, which augurs well for the health of Beauvoir studies in the foreseeable future. The renaissance in scholarly activity is not simply a dialectical shift; it exists, as Kruks has noted, because Beauvoirian philosophy helps to ‘address impasses that confront feminist theory today’ and to think through ways in which we might move into ethically grounded analyses of the lived experience of gender and sexuality in a terrain beyond poststructuralism.³⁸ With the prevalence of demographically ageing societies, Beauvoir’s *La Vieillesse* will certainly attract greater scholarly attention in these debates, aptly furnishing, as Deutscher notes, a further answer to the fundamental question raised in *Le Deuxième Sexe*: ‘qu’est-ce qu’une femme?’³⁹ In an era when the ethics and politics of material embodiment are challenged by virtual Second Lives and the ceaseless migration of identity categories, as exemplified by contemporary debates on intersexuality, transgender and race, Beauvoir’s phenomenologically grounded analyses of gender relations and their discursive formations remain an indispensable theoretical resource.

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³⁶ Julia Kristeva, ‘Beauvoir présente’, *Simone de Beauvoir Studies*, 20 (2003–04), 11–22. The conclusion to Kristeva’s recent trilogy on female genius, *Le Génie féminin* (Paris, Fayard, 1999–2002) is also dedicated to Beauvoir; moreover, Kristeva headed the ‘comité scientifique’ responsible for the Beauvoir centenary conference held in Paris in January 2008.

³⁷ *Les Temps Modernes*, 619 (2002), ed. by Michel Kail, also author of *Simone de Beauvoir philosophe* (Paris, PUF, 2006).

³⁸ ‘Beauvoir’s Time/Our Time: The Renaissance in Simone de Beauvoir Studies’, *Feminist Studies*, 31 (2005), 286–89 (p. 306).

³⁹ Deutscher, ‘Beauvoir’s Old Age’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Simone de Beauvoir*, pp. 286–304; Beauvoir, *Le Deuxième Sexe*, I: *Les Faits et les mythes* (Paris, Gallimard, 1966), p. 11.