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Pierre Bras and Michel Kail, eds., *Simone de Beauvoir et la psychanalyse*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2011. 348 pp. 35.50€. (pb). ISBN 978-2-296-56713-9.

Review by Linda L. Kick, University of California, Santa Barbara.

*Man and Society: An International Journal of Research and Synthesis in the Social Sciences* has long devoted attention to feminism. [1] Its 2011 double volume (n°179-180), entitled *Simone de Beauvoir et la psychanalyse (Simone de Beauvoir and Psychoanalysis)*, encompasses and contextualizes the proceedings of the March 19-20, 2010, international Paris colloquium on Simone de Beauvoir, sponsored by The Association for Freudian Studies and organized by Julia Kristeva, Danièle Brun, and Pierre Bras, among others. This was the first colloquium ever to address psychoanalysis not simply as an intellectual subset of Beauvoir's work, but as profoundly informing her oeuvre, from early essays, to *The Second Sex*, to letters, novels, and the autobiographies.

The twenty-two contributors to *Simone de Beauvoir and Psychoanalysis*, most of them psychoanalysts, collectively correct the misconception that Beauvoir was an enemy of Sigmund Freud and opposed psychoanalysis. Several point out that Beauvoir closely read Freud, Wilhelm Stekel, Melanie Klein, Donald Winnicott, Jacques Lacan, and Helen Deutsch. They underscore, however, that Beauvoir's existentialist and phenomenological perspectives contest any psychoanalytic determinism. As well, they emphasize that Beauvoir incorporates a historicist dimension to address the social constraints of women's sexuality and reproductive lives. They agree that reading Freud and Beauvoir side by side is not so much a matter of taking Freud to task for his treatment of woman's sexuality or of nailing down Beauvoir's errors in her presentation of Freud, but is more an invitation to revisit both thinkers and to embrace a psychoanalysis philosophically, sociologically, and historically contextualized. Beauvoir's multi-disciplinary critique of the "eternal feminine" receives a fuller treatment for the fact that psychoanalysis permeates her writing.

The following broad categories group the twenty essays in this order: Simone de Beauvoir and Psychoanalysis (introductory essays); 1) History, Bibliography; 2) Dreams; 3) Pleasure; 4) Maternity; 5) Existentialism and Psychoanalysis; 6) Novel and Autobiography. Editors Pierre Bras and Michel Kail, along with organizer Danièle Brun, provide a helpful opening orientation to Beauvoir's thought. Taken together, the essays bespeak an invigorating dialogue around the psychoanalytic nodal points of alienation, sublimation, the unconscious, sexuality, *jouissance*, and dreaming.

Whether or not the contributors see Freud as concurring with biological or social determinism, they foreground Beauvoir's expansion of his thought through existentialism and phenomenology. As regards the latter, psychoanalyst Monique Schneider finds that *The Second Sex* reinscribes a visceral corporeality lacking in Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*. In considering the child as a penis substitute, Freud envisioned an ontological gender binary to explain feminine alienation in its object whereby women's corporeal experiences of womb and fetus are eviscerated. Beauvoir reinscribes this corporeality. Ulrika Björk revisits Beauvoir's early essay "Literature and Metaphysics," where her phenomenological perspective redefines metaphysics to capture the "totality of experience" (p. 191) and explains her rejection of *a priori* scientific knowledge, including naturalistic psychoanalytical explanations. Pierre

Bras cites Claude Francis and Fernande Gontier, who underscore the influence of Georges Politzer, for whom the unconscious is conceived of as lived experience. David Risse, who finds that Freud's unconscious responds to the open-endedness of both biological and social domains, links that subversive anti-naturalist thread to Beauvoir, but recognizes that her philosophical mindset, by allowing reflection on women's oppression, complements a clinical base of observation.

Beauvoir's phenomenology is intertwined with her existentialism and this second philosophical focus, which revises a masculinist existential subject, looms large. Literary critic and novelist Jacqueline Rose discovers in Beauvoir a psychoanalytic relational dimension anathema to the existential concept of mastery and independence: "being for self" (*"être pour soi"*) (pp. 180-181). Just as the mother cannot master the infant or child, women and men fail to master the unconscious. The relation between mother and child sketches the very rapport between "the subject and its unconscious" (pp. 179, 186). Alienation through maternity, then, differentiates itself from the model of existential alienation wherein the male subject alienates himself in the female object and masters that object. Psychoanalysis and existentialism also help to make sense of the non-marriage pact of Beauvoir and Sartre. Choice, good faith, and liberty--tenets of existentialism--characterize this pact, according to Françoise Gorog.

Although an existentialist phenomenology necessarily reconfigures the subject in *The Second Sex* and in Beauvoir's novels, novelist Lisa Appignanesi notices that Beauvoir engages psychoanalysis less comfortably in the last three of her autobiographical works: *The Prime of Life*, *Force of Circumstance*, and *All Said and Done*. These rather self-consciously construct Beauvoir's public persona, for she shows herself keenly aware of a subjectivity inflected by the conscious/unconscious divide and, thus, of the challenge of controlling one's story. Writing of oneself in the first person sets up the impossible situation of telling. Cécile Decousu foregrounds how well the fictional space of writing allows for an ungraspable, ambiguous subjectivity, that "chiasmus" of being-in-the-world--of identity and otherness (pp. 205-206). Indeed, fictional space-time configures a certain anonymity at the heart of the existential project and Beauvoir seems to find that anonymity in fictional protagonists such as the psychoanalyst Anne Dubreuilh of *The Mandarins*.

Beauvoir's attention to dreams and creativity is taken up by contributors Julia Kristeva, Marie-Jo Bonnet, and Danièle Brun. Kristeva examines the dreams of the autobiographical *All Said and Done*, where Beauvoir represents the ceaseless activity of the unconscious and its attempts to work out conflicts with parental figures and lover partners. Kristeva's larger focus, however, is a "sociohistorical interpretation attentive to the analytic experience" (p. 91). Bonnet considers Beauvoir's dreams as signaling repression of a possible abortion. Brun sheds light on Beauvoir's fiction as a playing field for repressed desire which can work itself out through the literal or figurative death of a female double, thereby exploring an intra-gender self-other dynamic, particularly striking in *She Came to Stay*, *The Mandarins*, and *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*.

Taking up the triangulation of Beauvoir, psychoanalysis, and American feminists, Françoise Barret-Ducrocq notes that Beauvoir was critical of American women for seeing psychoanalysis as a tool of Enlightenment thinking with its universal male subject. Despite Beauvoir's insistence that women form a category of human beings, she may have undervalued anatomical differences, including the capacity to give birth, an unfortunate legacy, Barret-Ducrocq argues, if maternity becomes a burdensome, passive corporeality such that the mother is seen more as object than subject.

Given the international reach of Beauvoir's influence, it is only fitting that a volume such as this should round out the essays of the colloquium with a section entitled "Simone de Beauvoir in Translation." The final essay here will encourage readers of English to set aside the 1953 H. M. Parshley translation of *The Second Sex* and pick up the 2009 translation by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier, who underscore the need for a translator's familiarity with and respect for an author's philosophical,

literary, and psychoanalytic *Weltanschauung*, something that was outside the purview of Parshley, a professor of zoology.

For interdisciplinary-minded feminists, *Beauvoir and Psychoanalysis* may forecast an antidote to the limbo that Beauvoir studies occupy in many American universities. Her psychoanalytic contributions have long fallen outside the body of canonized psychoanalytic thought, her philosophical grounding can be off-putting to literary scholars, and Feminist and Women Studies Departments and Programs can gravitate toward the social sciences, with little scheduling room for feminist philosophy and advanced literature classes. This volume, however, might well be used to design a number of university courses that engage Beauvoir's multi-genre, multi-disciplinary oeuvre. Of course, university professors, both here and in France, need to negotiate working within their respective disciplines, but they well may want to advocate that a figure such as Simone de Beauvoir needs a broader interdisciplinary reception that includes philosophy and literature and, now, as well, psychoanalysis.

Pierre Bras and Michel Kail open their introduction with the observation that "Simone de Beauvoir did not have the life she ought to have had" (p. 15). Neither of the likely possibilities—the life of a gender-confined wife and mother or the life of debilitating labor—became Simone de Beauvoir's life. Her perspective of situated freedom and transcendence—so relevant in the twenty-first century—attests to a third way that may or may not involve the raising of children, but that clearly holds out the hope of self-creation, encouraging the fullness of humanity from each individual. With the publication of *Simone de Beauvoir and Psychoanalysis*, the role that psychoanalysis plays in Beauvoir's unraveling of "the eternal feminine" is now squarely on the scholarly map.

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## NOTES

[1] *L’homme et la société: Revue internationale de recherches et de synthèses en sciences sociales*

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