

***Simone de Beauvoir's Political Thinking*. Lori Jo Marso and Patricia Moynagh, editors. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006; viii + 139 pages; ISBN 0-252-07359-2; \$30.75 (paper).**

The diverse essays in Lori Jo Marso and Patricia Moynagh's *Simone de Beauvoir's Political Thinking* address the dearth in scholarship about Simone de Beauvoir's political vision. Moynagh's essay is an excellent introduction to the collection, focusing on what she calls de Beauvoir's method of situated analysis. She argues that through describing the reality of an individual's situation, de Beauvoir concretized her theories and politics in a manner that was sympathetic to the social circumstances within which we act. Emily Zakin begins her essay with a refusal of the common assertion that de Beauvoir's work is irreconcilable with contemporary French feminist theories, in particular Julia Kristeva's work. Her essay meshes well with Moynagh's as it considers how de Beauvoir conceptualized equality through her re-theorizing of the universal as not masculine, making it inassimilable with abstract liberal equality. Continuing from what might be thought of as an antagonistic mother-daughter relationship between de Beauvoir and contemporary French feminists, Marso's essay thinks through de Beauvoir's "uneasy" position as a mother of feminism and as a daughter whose writings about her own mother have frequently been charged with mother-blaming. However, Marso's reading of this relationship more usefully considers Simone and Françoise de Beauvoir's relationship as one that negotiates the difficulties of "vertical" bonds between women in order to forge "horizontal" bonds. Rather than responding to her mother's immanence and situation with judgement, de Beauvoir responds instead with compassion.

The final two essays explore in depth de Beauvoir's involvement with Djamilia Boupacha, an Algerian woman whose torture and sexual assault by the French army garnered much media attention. In *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (1948), de Beauvoir argues that freedom can never be attained unless one acts tirelessly toward the freedom of the other. Karen Shelby's essay sees de Beauvoir's decision to share responsibility for the publication of a book on Boupacha with lawyer Gisèle Halimi in the face of legal recourse as an example of de Beauvoir's ethical responsibility. de Beauvoir condemned the public hand-wringing over the case, asserting that refusing to act amounted to condoning the brutality of French colonialism. Mary Caputi's essay takes the Boupacha case as a compelling study in the differences between de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre's politics and ethics. This essay also counters critiques by Frantz Fanon and Halimi of de Beauvoir's refusal to personally meet Boupacha as well as her extensive involvement with the media as indications that de Beauvoir was promoting herself, though this part is not as convincing as the rest of the essay. However, Caputi very persuasively argues that de Beauvoir's concept of situation allows for a more nuanced analysis than Sartre's insistence that anybody, in any situation, who refuses to act toward freedom is living in bad faith. Thus, de Beauvoir's vision is more

amenable to a politics of freedom and real change. As inhabitants of Canada who live in a political climate marked by several of the same conditions as those of the French-Algerian conflict that de Beauvoir critiqued - militarism, (neo-) colonialism and imperialism, and nationalist complacency - this collection is timely and significant, and calls on us to act in response to these conditions.

Rachel Hurst
York University