

Critical Analysis of Simone de Beauvoir's *When Things of the Spirit Come First*

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Abstract: *It is widely agreed that Simone de Beauvoir is one of most important feminist thinkers of our time. In addition to her critically acclaimed and commercially successful novels in several languages, her nonfiction works provide an in-depth look at her political activism. Her impact has been seen in a wide range of fields, from pacifism to philosophical research. "The Second Sex" was first book of its kind to address position of women, and it continues to have a significant impact on global women's movement 33 years later. Her more than 50-year friendship with late Jean-Paul Sartre put her at the heart of the intellectual group who made Existentialism extremely influential in mid-twentieth century.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

It is widely agreed that Simone de Beauvoir is one of most important feminist thinkers of our time. In addition to her critically acclaimed and commercially successful novels in several languages, her nonfiction works provide an in-depth look at her political activism. Her impact has been seen in a wide range of fields, from pacifism to philosophical research. "The Second Sex" was first book of its kind to address position of women, and it continues to have a significant impact on global women's movement 33 years later. Her more than 50-year friendship with late Jean-Paul Sartre put her at the heart of the intellectual group who made Existentialism extremely influential in mid-twentieth century.

The five tales in this collection were created after Miss de Beauvoir abandoned numerous early works that were never proposed for publication due to what she termed "shoddy romanticism." Even though she was associated with Sartre at the time, she authored this book while living away from Paris and her loved ones in provinces. It was during this time that she experienced the life-altering events chronicled into second edition of her memoirs, "The Prime of Life."

Simone de Beauvoir's debut fiction novel, *When Things of the Spirit Come First*, was published in 1961. A classic novel's structure is echoed in this collection of five short tales.

In 1937, Beauvoir sent a manuscript of this anthology of interconnected tales to a publisher. Gallimard and Grasset both turned it down, though. Finally, in 1979, Gallimard published the work. In 1982, Pantheon published first English translation of work.

De Beauvoir's first fiction, previously unpublished in English, is certainly a sign of work to come; but it's no mere juvenilia. In five separate but loosely connected tales (some of the characters know each other and show up in one another's stories), de Beauvoir chronicles the early lives of five women—most of whom become casualties, in one way or another, of French society's emphasis on "things of the spirit" (religiosity, piety, aestheticism, respectability) in preference to the "real world." Marcelle, a dreamy and devout little girl who offers her life to "a young fairhaired God," grows up to be victimized and deserted by her gigolo/husband as she acts out her spiritual piety in decidedly fleshy appetites. Chantal, in temporary exile from Paris as provincial schoolteacher, creates herself a sensitive persona devoted to beauty and the free spirit—but a real-life crisis caused by her fakery exposes her perfectly conventional narrow mindedness. Lisa, a student at a Catholic boarding school in the briefest of these tales, is torn and finally baffled by her own body's insistent undermining of her struggle to be properly soulful. Anne is stifled into the "peace" of resignation and death by the combined efforts of her proper mother, her aesthete "lover," and her romantic friend (the phony Chantal again, whose existential "bad faith" breeds disaster everywhere). So only the autobiographical Marguerite—younger sister to deserted Marcelle and to the dead Anne's Swinburne reading lover—successfully throws off her family's dedication to

"the Christian virtues": introduced to Paris lowlife by Marcelle's reprobate husband, Marguerite at last sees through even his tarnished luster for "look at the facts as they are, rather than relying on preconceived notions or oracles." Deceptively simple tales told with remarkably clear-eyed moral vision and pungent irony: a worthy opening to a shining career.

The tales are set in the 1920s and were authored by de Beauvoir during her late twenties. Traditional cultural traditions, such as arranged weddings and the dominance of church, remain. However, in wake of devastation of World War I, many in France are beginning to reexamine their traditional ideals. When it comes to social change, these tales feature young woman in forefront of movement. I have used word "front lines" with caution, since are really not courting, mating, procreation, with fresh start at least as essential as politics, war, devastation, and dying?

Marriage that was arranged. In many ways, this sounds like a logical approach. A potential bride's or groom's family may be learned about objectively by the prospective bride's or groom's parents, and some insider knowledge about their own financial situation. However, by 1920s, arranged marriages were being supplanted with individual choices of women and men. A common theme in these legends is that the attractive young guy deceives the young lady, or even purposefully gets her pregnant, in order to obtain her family's wealth. This is a cause for worry since all of these young ladies come from middle-class backgrounds. These tales also include a number of young ladies who have no concept of their own value.

Although Beauvoir is seeing a flurry of town romance, she never fails to emphasise how strong her feelings for this calm, sloppily dressed, charming guy are. Sartre's beauty and company were appealing to her, but she found his "false eye" a turnoff. Jacques and her cousin René Maheu are more truly and painfully drawn to her than she is to her companion, philosopher René Maheu. Nonetheless, she was pleased when Sartre recognised her; it gave her a chance for defining herself as well as authority she wished for having in world. Her favourite subject to discuss was "myself," which she described as "a topic that fascinates me most." "When other people attempt to analyse me, they do from their own small world viewpoint, and that irritates me. Sartre, on the other hand, constantly attempts to view me as an integral component of my own scheme of things, as someone whose beliefs and attitudes are shaped by my own. "The Other," the submissive position she portrayed into her 1949 feminist classic, "The Second Sex": creature timid and deficient in imagination, for them, love is just something delivered to the spouse as a matter of course. To him, she was not "The Other." She was a tiny player in the "little universe" of persons before Beauvoir had a connection with Sartre, as she relates in her autobiographical writings. other, to be sure of a singular and unchangeable "I". Her energetic 'sense of sovereignty' allows her to determine and interpret her life's purpose.

In the last narrative, 'Marguerite,' Simone de Beauvoir seems to be protagonist. The narrative is told from viewpoint of main character. To do so, she looks to her sister Marcelle's free-spirited erring poet husband Denis, who she considers a role model for her bolder aspirations than other young ladies. By far, this is most outlandish of five stories. However, there are surprising turns in every story. What I like most is first narrative, titled "Marcelle," which tells storey of how Marcelle met Denis and married him. Since reading this book a few years ago, it has become one of my favourites.

Even though all five storylines are distinct, protagonists of some emerge as supporting characters in others. Tales about young women's damaging effects on their marriage and scholastic prospects are prevalent throughout this collection of short stories on impact of extreme religiosity. In the book's prologue, published nearly Forty years after events occurred, Miss de Beauvoir characterises this as "the deadly impact of that sort of spiritual life" and talks of her wish to "convey their (women's) experiences and also to cope alongwith my own transition to actual world."

II. CONCLUSION

The significance of this work now resides in its illustration as to how early into her profession Simone de Beauvoir identified and stated themes that would feature throughout her writing, notably the subject of the factors that control women's lives. According to her recent comments, she plans to publish just this one early piece and will stop writing fiction altogether. She believes that her oeuvre is complete and that "one book somewhat will not affect anyone's view on totality of my work."

De Beauvoir's tales about young women who are trying to figure out who they want to be, breaking free of constraints of family, society, as well as religion, learning to respect and love themselves and others, and coming to terms with responsibilities they have accepted or are being forced to accept. Throughout her book, Miss de Beauvoir discusses the

emotions that accompany the discovery of one's sexuality as a child. She talks about people who no longer inspire her, people who disappoint her, and guys who, quite simply, act as they do.

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