



Simone de Beauvoir. *DIARY OF A PHILOSOPHY STUDENT, VOLUME I, 1926-7*. Edited by Barbara Klaw, Sylvie Le Bon De Beauvoir and Margaret A. Simons with Marybeth Timmerman. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2006. xi + 374 pp.

*Review by Zach Schaengold, University of Cincinnati*

While normally the prospect of reading any teenager's diary fills me with the appropriate dread, my fears were quickly mollified in the reading of the introductory "Introduction" and two following contextual essays. These two essays- "The Literary and Historical Context of Beauvoir's Early Writings: 1926-27" by Barbara Klaw and "Beauvoir's Early Philosophy 1926-27" by Margaret Simmons- provide everything the reader might need as he delves into the thoughts, problematics, and loves of the young de Beauvoir. And this is particularly important for this type of book; a translated and annotated collection of two early journals, as part of a larger forthcoming set. Conveniently, in these three essays the authors also lay out their intents in the production of such a work.

The primary intent is obviously an accurate translation and reasonably complete annotation. This is very well done by Barbara Klaw, the primary translator and annotator. In her first essay she contends the importance of this project, stating that "Beauvoir's student diary, now available to the public at large, will be an invaluable tool in determining her intellectual and moral influence on the world" (8). Klaw also brings to the discussion the Beauvoir/Sartre question: while most scholars suggest that Beauvoir followed Sartre's philosophies, certain have contested that Sartre actually was the lesser mind, and that many of his ideas should be considered the property of Beauvoir. Regardless, it is incontestable that she was a prodigious reader, a brilliant young woman driven by a desire to understand the deeper sentiments and heavier thoughts of the world, and that her adult writings still influence in a plurality of academic and secular studies.

The editors make it clear that the nature of the original text makes it and any translation inherently difficult to read. Later notes and underlinings by Beauvoir herself, along with illegible words and passages not meant to be read by others, create



in the end a work far less readable than most. However, Professor Klaw's own sense of style makes the reading less painful, and her assiduity in detail makes otherwise opaque passages appear diaphanous. Whether the concern is about translation or legibility, she notes and explains her choice in full detail, and also makes sure that the notes are self-referential.

This book succeeds wonderfully as an introduction to the mind of Beauvoir, and even more so as a reference for any research. Concerning research into the mutual influences between Beauvoir and Sartre, this book as part of the series might certainly be able to answer a few questions. Still, it does not prove that the ideas for which Sartre is so well known originated with Beauvoir, and this would seem to be the one matter in which the editorial intent is not brought to fruition. Beauvoir's brilliance, creativity, and visceral involvement in "Life" are patent in any and all journal entries, but proof of a new philosophy is not. However, this should not in any way dissuade an interested reader from a work which is not only worth the time to read, but shows in the details the time spent by the editors in preparing it.