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## Note from the Book Review Editor / Note de la responsable des recensions

Time has been affected by the pandemic, and so has memory, as we think back to the “before times,” or because we are thrust out of our routines, we have time to reflect on the further past. The publication of Simone de Beauvoir’s novella, *Les Inséparables*, written in 1954, is a significant event in Beauvoir studies, occasioning both the pleasure of reading new work by Beauvoir and the opportunity to rethink some of her other works, such as *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter* and *When Things of the Spirit Come First*.<sup>1</sup> In *Les Inséparables*, she returns to the subject of her friendship with Élisabeth Lacoïn, the “Zaza” of the memoirs, who is recreated arguably to pay a debt Beauvoir feels she owes.<sup>2</sup> Her portrayal of friendship between women in a restrictive society invites comparison with *My Brilliant Friend*.<sup>3</sup> In recognition of this potential for reflection, we have two reviews of the novella, one in English and one in French. The third book reviewed in this issue is Judith Coffin’s *Sex, Love, and Letters*, which focuses on the close epistolary relationships Beauvoir developed with her readers across the world.

Our first review of *Les Inséparables* is from Ursula Tidd, who has published research across Beauvoir’s oeuvre, including Beauvoir’s literature, philosophy, and autobiography.<sup>4</sup> In considering the new novella, Tidd provides a vivid account of the unfolding narrative and the complex intertextual references, as well as fascinating hypotheses as to why Beauvoir did not publish the book, although it was complete.

Jean-Louis Jeannelle specializes in Beauvoir’s autobiographical texts and has edited a collection of essays on Beauvoir’s *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*, as

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- 1 Simone de Beauvoir, *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*, trans. James Kirkup, London, Penguin, 1963 [1958]; *When Things of the Spirit Come First: Five Early Tales*, trans. Patrick O’Brian, New York, Pantheon Books, 1982 [1979].
  - 2 Simone de Beauvoir, *The Prime of Life*, trans. Peter Green, London, Penguin, 1962 [1960], p. 13.
  - 3 Elena Ferrante, *My Brilliant Friend*, trans. Ann Goldstein, New York, Europa, 2020 [2011]. See Judith Thurman and Sylvie Chaperon, “On *Les Inséparables*, Simone de Beauvoir’s Unpublished Novel,” Villa Albertine, video, 1:03:04, October 22, 2020.
  - 4 Ursula Tidd, *Simone de Beauvoir*, London, Reaktion Books, 2009.

well as edited her memoirs for the Pléiade series with Eliane Lacarme-Tabone.<sup>5</sup> His review of *Les Inséparables* describes the contrast and religious conflict between the two girls and suggests that Beauvoir found the fictional presentation of her relationship with Zaza to be less valuable than the autobiographical one.

Our final review is by Ellie Anderson, who has published work on Beauvoir's ethics and her views of love and marriage.<sup>6</sup> Coffin is a historian of French society and culture, and her book analyzes a large selection of letters written to Beauvoir over thirty years, from the 1940s to the 1970s. Anderson focuses on the reception of *The Second Sex*, the Algerian war, and the importance of emotion in the letters, and notes that the question of Beauvoir's intimate relationship to her readers is one that scholars will continue to investigate.<sup>7</sup>

The publication of these works, and these responses to them, open up a range of questions concerning the role of letters in creating a literary and philosophical dialogue, the relationship and tensions between fiction/the novel and memoir, the nature of intimacy between friends and readers, memory, and the role of fiction-writing in atoning for faults, imagined or real.

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5 Jean-Louis Jeannelle, ed., *Mémoires d'une jeune fille rangée*, Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2018; Simone de Beauvoir, *Mémoires*, 2 vols., ed. Jean-Louis Jeannelle and Éliane Lecarme-Tabone, Paris, Gallimard, 2018.

6 Ellie Anderson, "From Existential Alterity to Ethical Reciprocity: Beauvoir's Alternative to Levinas," *Continental Philosophy Review*, vol. 52, no. 2, 2019, pp. 171–189.

7 Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier, New York, Knopf, 2010 [1949].