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AN EXAMINATION OF SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR'S
THEME OF SITUATED EMBODIMENT

By

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THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
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Abstract

This thesis is an examination of Simone de Beauvoir's theme of situated embodiment. The aim of the thesis is to demonstrate that the theme of situated embodiment was a concern of Beauvoir's since early childhood and that it was this interest which was the impetus for Beauvoir's later philosophical notion of authentic embodiment. Through the examination of Beauvoir's autobiographies it becomes evident that Beauvoir consistently demonstrates an early awareness that one's situation will be expressed through one's body. This idea is also present in Beauvoir's novels. In the novels it is shown that many of the characters are struggling within authentic embodiment. Beauvoir also fictionalizes many of her own experiences in the novels. These novels are used as concrete examples of Beauvoir's philosophy. Through Beauvoir's philosophical works it becomes evident that authentic embodiment will include the notions of freedom, ambiguity, and reciprocity. All are crucial when trying to live an authentic existence. Beauvoir's philosophy also focuses on marginalized groups who are in the position of the Other. One of the marginalized groups studied are women, and this thesis investigates Beauvoir's understanding of why woman is in the position of the Other. This thesis also addresses two feminist criticisms of Beauvoir's study on women. These criticisms are argued against in an effort to defend the notion of authentic situated embodiment as delineated in the first three chapters. Overall it is established that Beauvoir's early experiences allowed for her to form the philosophical idea of situated embodiment that lies at the core of her philosophy.

Summary

This thesis is an examination of Simone de Beauvoir's theme of situated embodiment. The aim is to demonstrate that the theme was a concern of Beauvoir's since early childhood and that it was this interest which was the impetus for Beauvoir's later philosophical notion of authentic embodiment.

The method that I have adopted is exegetic. The first chapter examines Beauvoir's autobiographies. The autobiographies shed light on specific moments in Beauvoir's own life where she describes both authentic and inauthentic moments of embodiment. Further interest lies in the fact that some of the autobiographies encompass periods in Beauvoir's life before she met Sartre. This will show that, prior to her partnership with Sartre, she had her own notion of authentic embodiment, at least in germ form. This first chapter will also demonstrate that, in the attempt to bear witness for the Other, Beauvoir's own authentic embodiment was sacrificed. This theme will be carried forward into Beauvoir's works of fiction, which are examined in the second chapter.

The second chapter examines Beauvoir's novels. These are of particular interest to the thesis project because they represent the application of Beauvoir's philosophy to fictional situations. However, it will be demonstrated that some of the situations that Beauvoir presents as fiction are actually taken from her own life. This is particularly interesting in regard to *She Came to Stay* as it is the fictional account of Beauvoir's experiences with Sartre and Olga Kosakiewicz. The characters face moments of inauthentic embodiment when they are solely concerned with their intellectual capabilities and, conversely, they become authentically embodied when life altering events occur.

The third chapter presents an analysis of Beauvoir's philosophical works. Considerable attention will be paid to *The Second Sex* because of the fully-formed philosophical concept of embodiment we find in it. This chapter further demonstrates the interconnectedness of Beauvoir's works in the area of philosophy. A relationship will be established between the notion of freedom and authentic embodiment, which shows the overall importance of freedom to Beauvoir's account of the ethical relationship with the Other. Furthermore, this chapter reveals that the status of the Other not only applies to woman, but also to any marginalized group.

The fourth chapter consists of the feminist critique of Beauvoir as articulated by Judith Butler and Charlene Haddock Seigfried. The main criticism addressed in this chapter has to do with the possible motivation behind *The Second Sex*. Both Butler and Seigfried contest that Beauvoir's goal was to establish unique feminine values, and they both critique Beauvoir's apparent lack of success in achieving this goal. I however, will argue that it was not Beauvoir's aim to provide unique feminine values, but rather it was her attempt at an account of the situation of woman. As such, it will be shown that Beauvoir only provides the possible biological, cultural, and historical reasons for woman's situation in order to critique them in the second part of *The Second Sex*.

Overall this thesis explores the many facets of Beauvoir's literary career in the attempt to prove that situated embodiment is a lifelong preoccupation of Beauvoir. Furthermore, I also will provide evidence for Beauvoir's independence from Sartre at least with regard to the philosophical notion of embodiment, which I will show is a concept that is uniquely her own.

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*Dedicated to Mom, Dad, Sarah, Karen,
Nathan, Jack, Curtis and my loving partner Mike.*

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Prologue

Writing a thesis often leaves one with little time to think about anything else. When I was examining Beauvoir's theme of situated embodiment I often paused to think if Beauvoir's philosophy is applicable to the world of today. Careful consideration has led me to the conclusion that Beauvoir's plea for the freedom of all individuals to be recognized has been largely unheeded. In addition, the situation of woman has also advanced little since the publication of *The Second Sex*. Although many women may not identify with Beauvoir's portrayal of women, there are still many important discrepancies which must be reconciled if we are to liberate all women and all people.

Following Beauvoir, there must be greater economic parity. We are seeing in our times many efforts to eliminate Third World debt, and the extension of greater liberties for women in oppressive societies. Yet, there is much more to be done. One of the greatest challenges that we face is the reliance on the mass media. The mass media has led to the proliferation of negative images and ideas which can be accessed by any person. In order to fully liberate all individuals we must first be critical of the negative influx of information from the mass media. The media must make it their goal to promote a more beneficial service to the world by giving those who do not have a voice the chance to let their opinion be known. That was Beauvoir's aim in life, to bear witness to the Other. We must continue to draw attention to the injustices that are suffered on a daily basis by our fellow world citizens, and we must also continue in the same vein as Beauvoir and bear witness to the Other. This thesis will be part of a much larger project in which I intend to utilize Beauvoir's philosophy in order to analyze the media and its effects on our culture.

Introduction

With the philosophy of Descartes, philosophers were faced with a unique problem: how do the mind and body interact? Descartes established a dualistic theory which states that the mind is what thinks and the body is merely extended.¹ Although the mind and body are considered ontologically independent, Descartes thinks that we only know the body through the mind. As such, little attention was paid to the body; it was merely out there in the world. The mind and the body were considered separate from one another, but they interacted on some level. With the development of the concept of embodiment, this view was radically altered.

The concept of embodiment is not a new one in philosophy, but the way in which it is utilized by philosophers has changed. Plato was among the first to introduce the idea that all things and all processes are embodiments of the Forms.² Embodiment used in this sense does not pertain to the lived experience of the individual, but rather the way in which objects and concepts in the world interact with the Forms. Embodiment as understood by phenomenologists and existentialists has its focus more on the human aspect of experience, rather than the ontology of objects in the world.

The branch of philosophy known as existentialism has its roots in the philosophy of Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, and Heidegger.³ Existentialists often combat the theories put forth by Hegel and Kant, according to Andrew. The focus of existentialism is on the individual and the way the individual interacts with and finds meaning in the world.⁴

¹ Nils Ch. Rauhut, *Ultimate Questions: Thinking about Philosophy*, (New York: Penguin Academics and Pearson Longman, 2004), 142.

² Mario Bunge, *Philosophical Dictionary*, Enlarged edition (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2003), 83.

³ Barbara S. Andrew, "Beauvoir's place in philosophical thought", in *The Cambridge Companion to Simone de Beauvoir* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 25.

⁴ *Ibid*, 25.

With the existential notion of absolute freedom, emphasis is often on the tenuous nature of this existence and the burden of responsibility. As such, existential literature tends to stress the anxiety that occurs in humans when they are faced with freedom. As Andrew states, “focus on anxiety correlates with the focus on individual choice and freedom, because choosing freedom means constantly and repeatedly taking up the burden of one’s own responsibility, and this constant burden creates anxiety, fear, and dread.”⁵ Many have concluded that existentialism is largely nihilistic. However, as the philosophy of Nietzsche and others has demonstrated, there is also joy to be derived from existence.

Because of the weight placed on the experience of the individual, existentialism includes the body in that experience. “The English language has only one word for body, which does not adequately express the different realities to which it refers.”⁶ Other languages, such as German and French, have connotations associated with the word “body” which encompasses the lived experience of the subject. The body, argue phenomenologists and existentialists, is not merely another thing in the world among other things. Rather the human body is unique as it allows for the experience of the world, “[t]he lived-body is the center from which everything else is observed.”⁷

Beauvoir was among the leaders of the existential movement. Along with her were Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and Camus. Embodiment for the existentialists, particularly Beauvoir and Merleau-Ponty, is the body in a lived situation. Existentialism then, at least in this phenomenologically oriented brand, restores the body to a place of importance thus acknowledging its necessity for our experience of the world.

⁵ Ibid, 26.

⁶ David Stewart and Algis Mickunas, *Exploring Phenomenology: A guide to the field and its literature*, (Chicago: American Library Association, 1974), 96.

⁷ Ibid, 97.

The following thesis will examine Beauvoir's theme of situated embodiment as it occurs in her autobiographies, novels and philosophy. This thesis will endeavor to prove that the early understanding of embodiment established in Beauvoir's autobiographies was the basis for the philosophical notion of embodiment present in her works of philosophy and fiction. The method which will be utilized is an examination of all aspects of Beauvoir's writing in order to demonstrate that Beauvoir consistently alludes to two types of embodiment, authentic and inauthentic. I will demonstrate that Beauvoir's concern for this theme is constant throughout her autobiographies, her works of fiction, and her philosophical works. I intend to examine situated embodiment in because I think that it is an important theme of Beauvoir's.

I also want to address the ongoing debate on the assertion that Beauvoir was simply a follower of Sartre. This view has completely overlooked the inherent validity of Beauvoir's philosophy. The difference between Beauvoir and Sartre becomes evident when comparing their two philosophies. Although it is not my intention to be comparative, I will, in this introduction, demonstrate how the position of Beauvoir and Sartre differ at least in reference to the body and embodiment.

This will be accomplished by first examining her 1927 diary. In order to understand Beauvoir's position as a philosopher one must first examine this diary that precedes her meeting with Sartre. This will show that some of Beauvoir's concepts are already present in this early diary.

After having established Beauvoir's early philosophical leanings, I will examine Sartre's position in reference to the body. This is necessary in order to further demonstrate the difference between Beauvoir and Sartre in this respect. Although again

this is not a comparative project, it is important to understand some of Sartre's philosophy in order to understand the philosophical situation of Beauvoir at the time she was writing. Lastly, I will examine a bit of the influence that Beauvoir had on Sartre, which will demonstrate that some key ideas were present in Beauvoir's writings prior to Sartre's.

Beauvoir's Early Diaries

The life of Beauvoir has been well documented in her diaries, autobiographies, and to some extent her novels. It is well known that she was a lifetime partner of Jean-Paul Sartre, and the commonly held myth still persists today that she was merely a follower of his. This is an important problem in Beauvoirian studies because Beauvoir herself admits that Sartre is the philosopher and that she is merely a writer.⁸ In addition, perhaps the most glaring fact is that *Being and Nothingness* (1943) came out before *The Second Sex* (1949). Yet, Beauvoir was working on *She Came to Stay* (1943) before Sartre had even started writing *Being and Nothingness*. I intend to demonstrate that Beauvoir was a philosopher in her own right because of the many philosophical themes present in embryonic form in her diaries, which were written before she had met Sartre.

Simone de Beauvoir was born in Paris in 1908. Her father was a conservative lawyer and she had only one sister, which her family affectionately nicknamed Poupette. Beauvoir studied philosophy at the Sorbonne and received her degree in 1929. Beauvoir has left us with perhaps the greatest gift that she could in the form of her diaries. They demonstrate her early love of philosophy and her independence from Sartre. Through an

⁸ Barbara S. Andrew, "Beauvoir's place in philosophical thought", in *The Cambridge Companion to Simone de Beauvoir* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 32.

examination of Beauvoir's diaries from 1926-1930, it is evident that some themes of Beauvoir's later philosophy existed before she met Sartre in 1929. The first clue to Beauvoir's love of philosophy occurs by her own admission in her 1927 diary, which states in reference to philosophy, "I didn't know that each system is an ardent tormented thing...that does not engage only in the abstract intelligence. But I know it now, and that I can no longer do anything else."⁹ Philosophy is what Beauvoir refers to when she states that she cannot do anything else. Beauvoir determined early in life she would write essays on life in a philosophical style by means of which she would establish certain truths.¹⁰

The diaries from 1927 reveal that her loss of faith in God also anticipated her later concepts of bad faith and authenticity. Beauvoir states, "I passionately desired to be the girl who took communion at morning mass and who walked in a serene certainty...and yet...I do not desire to believe. An act of faith is the most despairing act there is and I want my despair to at least keep its lucidity. I do not want to lie to myself."¹¹ This is an excellent example of Beauvoir's latent understanding of bad faith and authenticity because of her understanding that, since she no longer believed in God, it was to be in bad faith to keep pretending to herself that she did. Also, these diaries demonstrate her early understanding of how freedom and choice are linked to establishing a self. Beauvoir also anticipates the confrontational manner in which relations between the self and the Other can occur by noting "this opposition of the self and other...I have felt since

⁹ Margaret Simons, "Beauvoir's Philosophical Independence in a Dialogue with Sartre," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 2000: 89.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

beginning to live.”¹² Although she recognizes the confrontational relation between the self and Other, Beauvoir will later understand that it is not necessarily a hostile relationship, and that indeed an ethics can be formed. More importantly for this thesis, Beauvoir establishes the importance of situation, particularly situated embodiment. A situated self for Beauvoir, is the awareness that an individual is constantly living in a situation. The situation that an individual is in will shape that individual.

The original title of *The Second Sex* was “Essays on Women’s Situation,” which describes better Beauvoir’s overall aim. The situated self, as described by Simons, is something that is “embodied; intersubjective; shaped by history, culture, and society; and engaged in practical action in the world.”¹³ This notion is at work in Beauvoir’s diaries through her need for friendships. She poignantly states, “I am lonely to the point of anguish today...to console me I must glance at this self of multiple faces reflected in the eyes of my friends.”¹⁴ This passage clearly demonstrates her early understanding of the need for the Other and the necessity of intersubjectivity.

This relationship with the Other can also become a purpose for one’s being and Beauvoir understood this particularly well in the way that she describes the joy she felt at being, needed by Poupette and her cousin Jacques. This anticipates her later notion of the gift of oneself for others, which she describes in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*.

The idea of embodied subjectivity is also present in her earliest meetings with Merleau-Ponty in 1927. He criticized Beauvoir for being too emotional, to which she responded, “Certainly I have a more complicated, more nuanced sensibility than his and a more exhausting power of love. These problems that he lives with his brain, I live them

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

with my arms and legs...I do not want to lose all that.”¹⁵ The critical stance she adopts toward Merleau-Ponty’s attitude demonstrates Beauvoir’s early understanding that embodiment is necessary for a full existence and her denial of Cartesian dualism. If Beauvoir were a dualist, she would not describe her situation as being expressed through her body.

These concepts from Beauvoir’s 1927 diary are the early background for her later philosophical concepts. In addition, these concepts were present before she met Sartre. It must be noted, that although her ideas are present in the diaries, these ideas are still only embryonic; they do not become thematized until later in her career. Now that it has been demonstrated that Beauvoir did have some early philosophical leanings, it is important to understand Sartre’s position on the body in his major work *Being and Nothingness*.¹⁶ This will allow us to clearly distinguish Beauvoir’s views from his and present her as an independent thinker.

Being and Nothingness

Sartre generally does not seem to be interested in the body in parts one and two of *Being and Nothingness*. It is only in part three that he begins to discuss the body. His analysis of the body begins with perspective, and in particular, the structure of perception. For Sartre, when experiencing objects in the world, an individual becomes

¹⁵ Ibid, 90.

¹⁶ I do not think that it is necessary to pursue the theme of the body in Sartre past *Being and Nothingness* as it would be beyond the scope of this thesis.

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the centre of orientation for these objects: "the objects are given to me in a perspective of which I am the centre."¹⁷ Sartre provides an excellent example of this:

*For me, this glass is to the left of the decanter and a little behind it; for Pierre, it is to the right and a little in front. It is not even conceivable that a consciousness could survey the world in such a way that the glass should be simultaneously given to it at the right and at the left of the decanter, in front of it and behind it. This is by no means the consequence of a strict application of the principle of identity but because this fusion of right and left, of before and behind, would result in the total disappearance of "theses" at the heart of a primary indiscretion. Similarly if the table leg hides the designs in the rug from my sight, this is not the result of some finitude and some imperfection in my visual organs, but it is because a rug which would not be hidden by the table, a rug which would not be either under it or above it or to one side of it, would not have any relation of any kind with the table and would no longer belong to the "world" in which there is the table.*¹⁸

The kind of perspective to which Sartre is alluding in this passage is an instrumental perspective. The instrumental perspective for Sartre is the idea that the Other becomes an instrumental object for the subject. The subject will be the centre focus and, as such, the objects, which include other individuals, will be situated with the subject as the centre point. Therein, "perceiving is being the center of an instrumental field of action organized in relation to the perceiver."¹⁹ For Sartre, perceiving is inseparable from being a body. In reference to situation, Sartre understands that one is part of a situation because one is the centre of the situation, and because of one's facticity. Facticity for Sartre,

¹⁷ Xavier O. Monasterio, "The Body in Being and Nothingness", in *Jean-Paul Sartre: Contemporary Approaches to His Philosophy*, eds. Hugh J. Silverman and Frederick A. Elliston (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1980), 51.

¹⁸ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press Published by Pocket Books New York, 1966), 405.

¹⁹ Xavier O. Monasterio, "The Body in Being and Nothingness", in *Jean-Paul Sartre: Contemporary Approaches to His Philosophy*, eds. Hugh J. Silverman and Frederick A. Elliston (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press), 52.

means a person's necessary connection with the world and with their own past. Monasterio describes Sartre's concepts of situation and subject as follows: "*Situation* is a term that implies a subject, and *subject* is a term that implies a situation. To use an analogy, these terms exhibit a mutual implication comparable to that between *circumference* and *center*: neither term can be understood except in relation to the other, because they define each other."²⁰ The body, according to Sartre, is the centre of reference, and thus, from this centre of reference, one can judge whether objects are in their proper position or not. For example, if I see a picture frame where the people in the picture look to be on their heads, I would note that the picture frame is upside down. Thus in reference to situation,

[t]hough the center of the situation cannot be a center without the environment, and the environment cannot be an environment without the center, the intelligibility of the situation rests on its center, for it is through the instrumental orientation of the element of the environment toward the body-subject that the situation is a situation.²¹

The body-subject²² for Sartre can also become the body-object for another body-subject. Sartre identifies the gaze of the Other as something completely alienating by which one is made an object for a subject. By being objectified, one becomes an instrument for a subject, the centre of the situation for Sartre. Hence, "[a] body-object is at the other's mercy, passive to the other's initiative. The situation is not *his* anymore, it is the other's situation, for the other is now in control. The other is the center of

²⁰ Ibid, 52.

²¹ Ibid, 53.

²² Admittedly, Sartre does not speak of it in these terms. I am here borrowing a Merleau-Pontian term to discuss this Sartrean concept.

instrumentality, and among *his* instruments is to be counted this that which I am.”²³ In this case, the person who is the body-object is passively responding to a situation as it is defined by the person using them as an instrument for they are now, otherwise than their own body-subject.²⁴ For Sartre, the body as an object of study for the biologist is completely different than the body as it is lived by the subject. In reference to the body-object and body-subject, “[e]ither it is a thing among other things, or else it is that by which things are revealed to me. But it cannot be both at the same time.”²⁵

This brief analysis of Sartre’s understanding of the body and the body-subject will be useful as it will help clarify throughout the thesis the differences between Beauvoir and Sartre. Whereas Sartre understands the body-subject that can be a body-object for another, Beauvoir, as will be demonstrated, does not strictly ascribe to the confrontational aspect of this relationship. Beauvoir indicates a stronger relationship between the individual and the situation, the individual will be shaped by their lived situation. Further, the interaction with others who are part of that Other’s situation will have a profound effect on this Other. Beauvoir’s understanding of situated embodiment is much deeper than Sartre’s. As evidenced by her 1927 diary, Beauvoir’s ideas about embodiment were already present before she met Sartre. This, and her own views on embodiment, prove that Beauvoir is a philosopher in her own right, at least with regard to embodiment.

²³ Xavier O. Monasterio, “*The Body in Being and Nothingness*”, in *Jean-Paul Sartre: Contemporary Approaches to His Philosophy*, eds. Hugh J. Silverman and Frederick A. Elliston (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press), 54.

²⁴ Ibid, 54.

²⁵ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press Published by Pocket Books New York, 1966), 402.

Beauvoir's Influence on Sartre

An interview conducted by Simons highlights Beauvoir's attempt to defend Sartre's philosophical position and her own lack of influence on him. When Simons raises questions about the influence that she might have had on him, Beauvoir consistently states that they did share their work and comment on each other's work, but as for her influence on him, he hardly took any concepts from her.²⁶ When Simons questions her about Sartre's position on the body which changed significantly after 1949, the same year of the release of *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir again defends him by stating that *Being and Nothingness* "is full of texts about the body. The body always had a lot of importance for him."²⁷ These admissions by Beauvoir make the task of proclaiming her independence much more difficult. However, examining the areas of divergence between Beauvoir and Sartre reveals that they had an influence on each other, and that Beauvoir has her own concepts, which are independent of Sartre's, and possibly influenced him.

One of the problems that arise in Beauvoir scholarship is the English translations of her works. Often, as in the case of *The Second Sex*, some of the philosophical undertones are missing, and the text has been edited without noting where parts of the text were deleted.²⁸ Simons states that this might be one of the reasons why Beauvoir is not taken seriously as a philosophical writer. Examining the areas where Beauvoir's influence on Sartre is present will help to establish her philosophical status.

According to Simons, the first area of Beauvoir's uniqueness occurs in her analysis and notion of the Other.²⁹ Sartre examines the relationship between the

²⁶ Ibid, 56-57.

²⁷ Ibid, 57.

²⁸ Ibid, 41.

²⁹ Ibid, 44.

individual and the Other, most notably in *Being and Nothingness* and *No Exit*. Beauvoir's interest in the Other, however, is present in her earliest works, which she wrote prior to the aforementioned works of Sartre.³⁰ Simons asserts that Beauvoir develops a theory of the relationship to the Other based on her own experience in which she tried to reconcile the feeling of her sense of autonomy which was juxtaposed with the need to become one with the Other. It is through this difficulty that Beauvoir establishes the possibility of an authentic relationship with the Other which is based on ambiguity.³¹

In addition, previous to Sartre's concept of the alienating look of the Other, which he formulated in *Being and Nothingness*, was Beauvoir's attempt to reconcile the Other's image of itself in *She Came to Stay*. This novel culminates in the extinguishing of the Other's being. This confrontation with the Other, by Beauvoir, "anticipates the writings of Sartre on confrontations with the Other, including the section on the 'Look' in *Being and Nothingness*."³² Her conception of the Other differs from Sartre's used in *Anti-Semite and Jew*. Simons states that in this work, Sartre never thinks of the anti-Semite seeing the Jew as the Other. However, Sartre's opinion of the Other changed when he was writing *Saint Genet* from 1950 to 1952.³³ Simons argues that Sartre describes how Genet came to view himself as the Other through society's opinion of him, which is similar to Beauvoir's analysis of woman's position as the Other from *The Second Sex*. Beauvoir's analysis of the Other is present most notably in *The Second Sex*. This concept was present in Beauvoir's work before it occurred in Sartre's. Sartre also with this

³⁰ Ibid, 44.

³¹ Ibid, 45.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid, 46.

aforementioned work “first utilizes the concept of fraternity and links freedom with reciprocity, as Beauvoir had done earlier in *Ethics of Ambiguity* and *The Second Sex*.”³⁴

The influence that Beauvoir had on Sartre is also evident in her realization of the limits placed on an individual's freedom by social-historical pressures, asserts Simons. The argument put forth by Simons is that because of her childhood experiences in her quest for her own freedom, Beauvoir was able to realize the power that social pressures hold; this experience was not shared by Sartre. As such, in many of Beauvoir's novels the childhood experiences of the characters are usually considered in an effort to explain the complete situation of the character.³⁵ Sartre, by contrast, did not consider that childhood experiences of individuals influence their situation until after Beauvoir had written *The Second Sex*, asserts Simons. Sartre, however, did not place the same emphasis on the effects of the historical, social and cultural situation that constrain an individual's freedom, and as such, he cannot fully account for the situation of the Other, or liberation from the position of the Other. Beauvoir can account for the liberation of the Other because she examines the complete lived experience of the individual, which includes all previously mentioned aspects of their situation. Hence, Beauvoir can also establish an ethics which had proved difficult, if not impossible, for Sartre.

Through these many examples, it is evident that Beauvoir did have an influence on Sartre's writings, and that certain concepts of Beauvoir's are unique to her. The misunderstanding that Beauvoir is a follower of Sartre continues because of her own admissions, and the lack of a rigorous understanding of their differing positions. However, one must make the effort not to apply this label to Beauvoir because, as

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid, 47.

evidenced by this brief examination, there are important differences between their philosophies.

Key Concepts

Before beginning the analysis of the works of Beauvoir in reference to situated embodiment it is important to clarify some concepts that will be used throughout the remainder of my thesis. First, it is important to note the definition of embodiment. For Beauvoir the mind and body cannot be separate, as such, one cannot escape from one's body; hence, one will always be embodied. As such, this thesis will refer to two types of embodiment, authentic and inauthentic. What is important is one's comportment toward one's situation, which will determine whether one is authentically embodied or not. Embodiment for Beauvoir is the lived experience and the situation of the individual will be expressed and lived through the body. Hence, the historical, cultural and social situation that the individual is in will affect how the individual is embodied. Disembodiment is not possible because one cannot quit one's body, but the individual can decide whether or not to authentically assume their situation. The authentic attitude that one has toward their situation occurs when the individual fully accepts their lived situation. When one is inauthentic one will often not accept one's situation or will delude oneself about aspects of one's own situation.

The second set of concepts that I wish to clarify are Beauvoir's notions of immanence and transcendence. These are important concepts that will be used when discussing situated embodiment. They pertain to Beauvoir's views on embodiment because one should authentically assume one's situation, and what will be argued in this

thesis is that woman does not authentically assume her situation because she adheres to the situation imposed on her by man, which for woman means that she is solely immanent. Immanence for Beauvoir is defined as passivity, stagnation, confinement to repetitive tasks, and subjection to given conditions.³⁶ Conversely, transcendence is defined as engaging in freely chosen projects, activity, no repetitive tasks, and not being subject to given conditions. An example from *The Second Sex* is woman is considered immanent because she usually adheres to conditions which she has not chosen: biologically she is confined to the repetitive task of giving birth, and because she is not as strong as man, she cannot actively engage in the same projects that man does. Therefore, woman is immanent because of her close tie to her body and she is not encouraged to engage in freely chosen activity. These concepts are important to understand for Beauvoir because she uses them not only in describing the position of woman, but also in relation to any marginalized group.

Man, however, is the opposite of woman because he actively assumes and chooses the conditions which he will be in, and because man is encouraged to take up freely chosen activity. Man escapes being solely defined by his body, and as such, he is free to engage in the projects that he desires. Because woman is only recognized in her immanence, she is not encouraged to discover the transcendent aspects of her being. For Beauvoir, the individual is an ambiguous being who fluctuates between immanence and transcendence. As such, neither woman who is solely immanent, nor man who is solely

³⁶ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H.M. Parshley (New York: Vintage Books a division of Random House Inc, 1989), xxxv.

transcendent recognizes their ambiguous nature, and they cannot authentically assume their existence.³⁷

The third set of concepts that must be examined are Beauvoir's ideas of bad faith and authenticity. Authenticity for Beauvoir simply means the subject has freely chosen either their activities or their beliefs without these beliefs or actions being imposed on them. The subject must genuinely and freely engage in projects as a being who takes responsibility for their freedom and their actions. For instance, a woman who passively submits to those values imposed on her has not authentically taken up these values. Bad faith is exactly this idea. Where this individual in bad faith essentially lies to herself and refuses to acknowledge her freedom in regard to the choices that she makes and the beliefs that she holds. One can still choose when one is not free because the individual is still faced with choices, and it is up to the individual to make an authentic choice. An excellent example of bad faith is Beauvoir's own experience with her loss of faith in God. Beauvoir still desired to believe in God and take communion like all of the other girls that she knew. If Beauvoir had kept pretending to be religious, she would have been acting in bad faith because she would have been lying to herself about her true beliefs. However, since Beauvoir did admit to herself her loss of faith, and did not try to keep pretending to have faith, then she was being authentic. This relates to embodiment because in order for one to be authentically embodied they must assume their situation.

As brief as these descriptions may be, they will be helpful since I will make use of these key concepts throughout the thesis. The first chapter will examine moments of authentic and inauthentic embodiment in Beauvoir's autobiographies. It is important to begin with Beauvoir's autobiographies because they provide an insight into Beauvoir's

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We will see this in more detail in chapter three, the philosophical works.

own situation and embodiment. The examination of the autobiographies will show that Beauvoir had an understanding of her own authentic and inauthentic embodied experiences and the embodiment of others since her childhood, which influenced the way she comprehends embodiment later, on a theoretical plane. The second chapter will examine Beauvoir's non-philosophical works. I will be using the same method as in the first chapter by indicating moments of inauthentic and authentic embodiment. I have chosen in the first two chapters to analyze her autobiographies followed by her novels because Beauvoir draws on her own life experience for her novels. The third chapter will then trace Beauvoir's account of situated embodiment in her philosophical works. The analysis in the third chapter will demonstrate that, for Beauvoir, situated embodiment is an important philosophical concept, and that it is applicable to all persons. The final chapter will address the feminist critique of Beauvoir and is important because of the need to address certain misunderstandings and misreadings of Beauvoir's position regarding her philosophy. In summary, this thesis will examine aspects of Beauvoir's works with reference to situated embodiment in the expectation of demonstrating that situated embodiment is a constant and crucial theme of Beauvoir's writing.

Chapter One: The Autobiographies

This chapter is dedicated to the analysis of Beauvoir's autobiographies. It is important to begin with this inquiry because of the extensive and existential way Beauvoir examines her life. One might think that, because she wrote about these early experiences in her later life, she is interpreting them using her later philosophical concepts. However, when considering Beauvoir's autobiographies, I will be taking the position that, although Beauvoir is reflecting back on her experiences from an existential standpoint, she nevertheless is concerned with situated embodiment throughout her life. Evidence for this claim comes from Beauvoir's own admission that in writing these autobiographies she relied heavily on journals that she had kept, and from the testimony of her friends and family. I will examine Beauvoir's first three autobiographies as they provide the earliest accounts of Beauvoir's notion of situated embodiment. Also examined is the short autobiographical account of Beauvoir's mother's death because of the connection that it will have to Beauvoir's philosophical work *Old Age*. This chapter provides the textual evidence from all of Beauvoir's autobiographies. The first section of this chapter examines moments of Beauvoir's inauthentic embodiment, while the second section will examine moments of Beauvoir's authentic embodiment. The textual evidence will then be followed by an in-depth analysis which demonstrates that the theme of situated embodiment is constant throughout her autobiographies.

Inauthentic Embodiment

Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter is the first installment of Beauvoir's autobiography. In this volume Beauvoir describes every aspect of her life until the death

of her best friend Zaza (Elizabeth Mabilille).³⁸ Beauvoir begins by noting the situation surrounding her birth. She describes her situation as relatively wealthy, an older father, and first born. She states:

I was born at four o'clock in the morning on the 9th of January 1908 in a room fitted with white-enameled furniture and over-looking the boulevard Raspail. In the family photographs taken the following summer can be seen ladies in long dresses and ostrich-feather hats and gentlemen wearing boaters and panamas, all smiling at a baby: they are my parents, my grandfather, uncles, aunts; and the baby is me. My father was thirty, my mother twenty-one, and I was their first child.³⁹

The opening of *Memoirs* is very important as the reader is provided with every aspect of the events surrounding her birth. The situation of Beauvoir's family is that they are of some social status because of the surname "de" in front of Beauvoir, as she herself states. Beauvoir's family lived in an apartment in the heart of France; the clothing fashions that Beauvoir describes in the photograph she discusses seem to indicate a higher social status. Furthermore, Beauvoir also acknowledges that she did have a nanny named Louise who used to dress her sister and herself, and look after them.⁴⁰ In fact, Beauvoir describes Louise as though she were not a person, but merely an object in Beauvoir's situation as a child. Beauvoir thought that "she existed...only in order to watch over my sister and myself."⁴¹ The key figures in Beauvoir's young life were her mother and Louise.⁴²

³⁸ The death of Zaza deeply affected Beauvoir as this will become evident throughout the examination of this book.

³⁹ Simone de Beauvoir, *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*, trans. James Kirkup (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1963), 5.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 5.

⁴¹ Ibid, 5.

⁴² Beauvoir notes that her father was rarely present in her life growing up, and that he was only interested in her once he realized her intellectual potential. At this point it is clear from Beauvoir's descriptions that he was interested in her only as a disembodied mind. It is also well known that the only reason why her father encouraged Beauvoir in pursuing her accreditation at the Sorbonne was because he

The first instance of inauthentic embodiment in Beauvoir's childhood is her ability to feel certain emotions to such an extreme that it affected her entire body. For example,

I seemed to be confronted everywhere by force, never by necessity. At the root of these implacable laws that lay as heavily as lead upon my spirit I glimpsed a sickening void: this pit I used to plunge into, my whole being racked with screams of rage. All flailing arms and legs, I would cast myself upon the ground, resisting the weight of my flesh and bones the tyranny of that insubstantial power; I forced it to take material form: I would be seized and shut away in a dark cupboard among the brooms and feather dusters; there I could kick my feet and beat my hands against real walls instead of battling helplessly against the abstractions of another's will...My convulsions and the tears that blinded me served to shatter the restraints of time and space, destroying at once the object of my desire and the obstacles separating me from it...nothing was left but my naked self...⁴³

The severity of Beauvoir's temper tantrums allowed her to reach her "naked self," an embodied self. However, when she flew into these rages, she lost her sense of space and time. This quote demonstrates, that since Beauvoir did not want to assume her situation, whereby she would have to adhere to her parent's demands, she chose to be inauthentic and tried to lash out against her situation. By losing her sense of space and time, she was no longer connected to her situation which prevented her from being authentically embodied.

did not have a dowry for her. Despite his interest in her intellectual abilities, it is doubtful that he would have done anything for them, had he had a dowry for her. [Barbara S. Andrew, "Beauvoir's place in philosophical thought", in *The Cambridge Companion to Simone de Beauvoir* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 24] Beauvoir begins at this stage to note the differences in the treatment of men and women by society. These events shaped Beauvoir's understanding of her situation and the situation of other women in her time period. The emphasis placed by Beauvoir on economic freedom and historical situation finds its origin in her own situatedness, and appears in her later works, *The Ethics of Ambiguity* and *The Second Sex*, which will be examined in the third chapter.

⁴³ Ibid, 12.

Memoirs instruct the reader that the combination of Beauvoir's time period and her bourgeois upbringing instilled in her the need for restraint and disassociation from her body. Beauvoir states that she was told that a "lady" should behave in a restrained way by not showing indecency. These prohibitions, imposed on her, contributed to her inauthentic embodiment because of the apparent necessity for her to deny her body due to external restraints.⁴⁴ This is best illustrated in the following: "It must be that the body was by reason of its own nature a dangerous object when every allusion to its existence, whether serious or frivolous, seemed fraught with peril."⁴⁵ This is carried through to Beauvoir's teenage years when she also experienced disassociation from her body. Beauvoir deliberately made herself appear badly dressed, and in general had no regard for her body; she states, "I wanted to make myself impervious to my surroundings."⁴⁶ By trying to distance herself from her body, Beauvoir was unable to assume authentically her situation. Beauvoir will later come to the awareness that her situation is intimately tied with her body and with others. This allowed her to begin to realize the necessity of being with others as an embodied presence, although this was not thematized at this point.

The connection with others was not easy for Beauvoir. As she was approaching the end of her degree around the age of 18, she felt loneliness to the point that her body no longer held any meaning for her. The connection between loneliness and the body occurs because she consciously decided that, since she was lonely, she would focus only on her intellectual pursuits, and to disregard her body. When examining this behaviour, through Beauvoir's self analysis, the withdrawal from her situation into her intellectual pursuits meant the sacrifice of authentic embodiment.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 82.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 88.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 182.

The second installment of Beauvoir's autobiography entitled, *The Prime of Life*, begins with Beauvoir's return from summer vacation to her first apartment and new-found freedom. During this portion of her life, Beauvoir had met Sartre and was in regular contact with him during the summer break. Sartre had left for his military service but was in contact with Beauvoir. Beauvoir noted that for Sartre, "[t]he significance of an expression or a spectacle reached him in disembodied form; he kept himself detached enough from the event to try to catch it in words."⁴⁷ Sartre tried to maintain this distance from the event in order to express it in words, thus he was inauthentically embodied. Beauvoir also felt this inauthentic embodiment because of her admitted subjugation to the Other. This subjugation prevented Beauvoir from realizing her own authentic self and prevented her from assuming her situation because of her reliance on others to define her existence. Beauvoir states,

[d]uring my subjugation by Zaza I plumbed the black depths of humility; now the same story was repeated, except that I fell from a greater height, and my self-confidence had been more rudely shaken. In both cases I preserved my peace of mind: so fascinated was I with the other person that I forgot myself, so much so indeed that no part of me remained to register the statement: *I am nothing*.⁴⁸

This statement illustrates how Beauvoir's situation drove her to inauthentic embodiment because she did not assume her situation; rather, she allowed others to dictate her situation to her.

The third installment of Beauvoir's autobiography entitled *Force of Circumstance* begins after France was liberated from German occupation. The war had a great effect on both Beauvoir and Sartre. In describing her shift in focus from the situation in France to

⁴⁷ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Prime of Life*, trans. Peter Green, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1965), 39.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 61.

the situation in Spain, Beauvoir states her feelings at this point, "France was becoming a misty object on the horizon, and I myself was powerless to affect the places where my body moved, had ceased to exist."⁴⁹ This quote demonstrates the inauthentic embodiment Beauvoir was feeling at the time after the occupation. She was no longer in connection with her body, and as such did not realize her situation, but rather the situation in Spain. Interestingly, the only way that she could express her outrage was to forget her own body. Beauvoir proceeded once again to be disassociated from her body in order to focus solely on her intellectual life.

A further example of inauthentic embodiment occurs in Beauvoir's descriptions of the events leading up to her mother's death. *A Very Easy Death* opens with Beauvoir learning, while on vacation in Rome, that her mother had fallen in the bathroom, and that she had most likely fractured her femur. These events culminate in the death of Beauvoir's mother because, while she was being treated, it was discovered that she also had terminal bowel cancer. When she arrived from Rome and visited her mother in the nursing home, Beauvoir encountered an instance of inauthentic embodiment in her mother. Beauvoir explains, "The contrast between the truth of her suffering body and the nonsense that her head was stuffed with saddened me."⁵⁰ In an effort to ignore the state of her health, Beauvoir's mother did not authentically assume her situation. As such, she deludes herself about her situation. Further support for this idea occurs when Beauvoir's mother works with a physiotherapist, and Beauvoir notices that the hospital gown which her mother wears is wide open, to which Beauvoir's mother responds that she no longer

⁴⁹ Simone de Beauvoir, *Force of Circumstance*, trans. Richard Howard, (London: Readers Union, Andre Deutsch and Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1966), 24.

⁵⁰ Simone de Beauvoir, *A Very Easy Death*, trans. Patrick O'Brian, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1969), 18.

has any shame about her body.⁵¹ Beauvoir explains, “Only this body, suddenly reduced by her capitulation to being a body and nothing more, hardly differed from a corpse—a poor defenseless carcass turned and manipulated by professional hands, one in which life seemed to carry on only because of its own stupid momentum.”⁵² Beauvoir’s mother is completely disassociated from her situation and her body thus she remains absolutely passive. She has made herself into an object. Although it must be admitted that not having shame about one’s body does not always mean that one is inauthentic. However, the way in which Beauvoir describes her mother’s situation clearly points to inauthenticity.

These moments of inauthentic embodiment seem to share a common feature that, when faced with a situation in which one is overwhelmed, one will often resort to inauthentic embodiment and deny the situation. It is now important to examine moments of authentic embodiment to demonstrate the difference between these two modes of embodied existence.

Authentic Embodiment

In *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*, Beauvoir describes “[t]he world became more intimately part of me when it entered through my mouth than through my eyes and my sense of touch.”⁵³ The description of the world becoming intimately part of Beauvoir through her mouth points to an effort to incorporate her situation. The importance of internalizing the world in order to assume it, is carried through in Beauvoir’s description

⁵¹ An interesting point could be raised that perhaps Beauvoir’s mother simply did not have the strength or the will to be ashamed about her body because she was so ill.

⁵² Ibid, 18.

⁵³ Simone de Beauvoir, *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*, trans. James Kirkup (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1963), 6.

of a party held by her parents: "I would crack between my teeth the candied shell of an artificial fruit, and a burst of light would illuminate my palate with a taste of black-currant or pine-apple: all the colours, all the lights were mine, the gauzy scarves, the diamonds, the laces; I held the whole party in my mouth."⁵⁴ Through eating the artificial fruit Beauvoir authentically embodies the whole party at her parent's apartment, and through this simple action she assumes the situation of the party as existing only for her.⁵⁵ The feeling that Beauvoir describes seems to indicate an early recognition of the need to be with others. In wanting to assume her situation, the young Beauvoir could only eat the artificial fruit.

A further example of authentic embodiment occurs when she sneaks out of her parent's apartment in order to go to the local bar, called the Jockey. It was at the Jockey that she felt free, and with that freedom Beauvoir gained an appreciation for her body. Beauvoir shed the principles with which she was raised in order to dance with strangers and put herself in precarious positions. She exploited these situations as opportunities to be authentically embodied because they allowed her to "feel in tune" with her body.⁵⁶ In these experiences, Beauvoir gained control over her situation, and as such, she was able to assume it. Beauvoir was able to put aside the principles that she was raised in order to acknowledge her bodily desires.

A further example of Beauvoir's authentic assumption of her bodily desires occurs in *The Prime of Life*. She reveals, upon discovery of her bodily desires through losing her virginity, a delightful event took place, which is "when heart, head, and body

⁵⁴ Ibid, 7.

⁵⁵ The world existing only for one individual is also a theme in *She Came to Stay* through Françoise's character.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 290.

are all in unison, there is high delight to be had from the physical expression of that oneness.”⁵⁷ Through acknowledgement of her bodily desires, she also realized the pain that can occur in one’s body when those desires cannot be satisfied. Beauvoir was experiencing “pain” in her body because of her situation with Sartre. The situation of missing Sartre, and Beauvoir’s physical desires provided the instance for authentic embodiment. These experiences made Beauvoir rediscover her own embodiment. She states, “the mind did *not* exist in isolation from the body, and my body comprised me completely.”⁵⁸ Beauvoir had previously experienced the joy that occurs when the mind and body are united; however, she considers the moment of her need to be with Sartre to be the first instance of this joy. The emphasis that Beauvoir places on the physical, and yet including the mind with the physical, serves to demonstrate that Beauvoir is not a dualist, and that the body with mind, once fully realized, makes for authentic embodiment.

Beauvoir describes an authentically embodied moment in an emotion when she is part of the trio with Sartre and Olga Kosakievicz. Beauvoir states that, after an evening out together, Olga said goodbye in an icy tone, which caused Beauvoir to claim that “[m]y throat was so tight that I couldn’t swallow a single mouthful of my scrambled eggs...”⁵⁹ This demonstrates that for Beauvoir, the body and situation are so tied together that the situation can cause a physical response. As such, the moment she describes with

⁵⁷ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Prime of Life*, trans. Peter Green, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1965), 62.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 64.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 259. Beauvoir also describes a similar event occurring to the character Françoise in *She Came to Stay*.

Olga and Sartre solidifies Beauvoir's own expression of her body in a situation, which arises from the feeling of tightness in her throat caused by the situation with Olga.⁶⁰

Another interesting account is found in *Force of Circumstance* when Beauvoir discusses her health crisis when she discovered a lump in her breast. Contrary to her mother's inauthentic embodied experience while sick, Beauvoir approached her situation authentically and assumed it. At this moment, she realized that her body was not invulnerable, and that it was, from year to year, decaying. To realize this, meant that she understood how age affects situation. In these moments when Beauvoir's body was seemingly under attack by factors beyond her control, she had chosen to assume her situation authentically instead of denying it.⁶¹ Through this ordeal Beauvoir understood the importance of the body in situation. It is at this point that Beauvoir provides a tentative description of embodiment: "In reality, men defined themselves for me by their bodies, their needs, their work; I set no form, no value above the individual of flesh and blood."⁶² In stating that people define themselves through their bodies, Beauvoir is stressing the prime importance of the body to the overall being of the individual.

Authentic embodiment for Beauvoir occurred when she accepted her body in its situation. Beauvoir expressed her situation through her body, and in turn, no longer felt shame with regard to her body. The following analyzes the instances of inauthentic and authentic embodiment in order to demonstrate Beauvoir's early comprehension of situated embodiment.

⁶⁰ Beauvoir describes many other instances of the tie between body and situation. However, I have chosen to focus on this particular event.

⁶¹ There were not as many examples of instances of Beauvoir's own situated embodiment in the third installment of her autobiography, this was due to her thorough account of the war and the surrounding situations.

⁶² Simone de Beauvoir, *Force of Circumstance*, trans. Richard Howard, (London: Readers Union, Andre Deutsch and Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1966), 68.

Analysis

The aforementioned accounts of situated embodiment form an important basis for the thesis project because they support the position that Beauvoir understood the necessity and importance of situated embodiment. The concept of situated embodiment, emerges in embryonic form in these autobiographies, and becomes thematized in the philosophical works.

The importance of situation is expressed from the beginning of the autobiographies when Beauvoir provides the events surrounding her birth. For Beauvoir situation is a broad term which includes elements of the historical and cultural. Beauvoir establishes from the beginning her exact location within a historical situation. She persistently establishes her historical situation throughout her autobiographies, thus showing how crucial it is to the individual.

It has been noted that she is reflecting back on her childhood as an existentialist. The clarity with which she recalls these events demonstrates the long-lasting impression they made on her. In many works of fiction, she provides bodily descriptions of her characters so that the reader can better understand their situation.⁶³ The same method is employed in the autobiographies, when Beauvoir reflects upon herself.

In Beauvoir's description of eating the fruit candies at her parents' party and feeling as though she were experiencing the complete situation, the impression is that the whole world exists for her only. Although she was authentically embodied in the moment, Beauvoir would realize in her philosophy that, for ethics to be possible, one must move beyond such self interest. As will be explored in chapter three, *The Ethics of*

⁶³ This might not be peculiar to Beauvoir's novels, and has been used by many authors. However, the frequency of these descriptions and the emphasis Beauvoir puts on them reveal their crucial importance for Beauvoir.

Ambiguity demonstrates her attempt to form an ethics based on reciprocity. Beauvoir's ethics advocate the acknowledgement of the inherent freedom of the Other. In addition, Beauvoir considers the theme of narcissistic individuals through her works of fiction, which will be elucidated in the second chapter of this thesis. Beauvoir portrays these individuals as mostly self-serving characters. Therefore, they have difficulty in their relationships with others because they do not recognize the need to acknowledge the freedom in others.

The temper tantrums are Beauvoir's way of expressing her rage at her situation as a child. The emphasis that Beauvoir places on embodying certain emotions serves to demonstrate how individuals differ in their reactions to a situation. When Beauvoir was a child and had temper tantrums, she was not assuming her situation. However, the trio was an authentic assumption of her situation. These two moments demonstrate that an individual can be authentic or inauthentic when confronting emotional situations. Because Beauvoir could not physically lash out against either Sartre or Olga, her expression of her rage was a tightening of her throat.

Another method for rebelling against one's situation is to disassociate oneself from the body. This is usually inauthentic embodiment. As has been explained, Beauvoir was taught from a young age that ladies should not be indecent. Through these examples it can be inferred that for her, to remain separated from the situation, Beauvoir disassociates herself from her body. The same charge could be brought against Beauvoir's mother when she was allowing herself to be manipulated by the doctors. Beauvoir understood that in an attempt to not be affected by her situation she had to forget about her body. This demonstrates inauthenticity, as Beauvoir asserts later in her

autobiographies. Since she does not acknowledge her body in these situations, Beauvoir does not experience the joy that she expresses later in terms of the union of consciousness and the body. As has been noted in these instances where Beauvoir disassociates herself from her body, she is usually in a state of loneliness or despair; it is only when she is embodied that she begins to feel in tune with her situation.

Beauvoir's own instances of situated authentic embodiment continue in her adventures at the Jockey. The descriptions that she provides of her embodied moments and her criticism of Sartre for considering his body only as a bundle of muscles and sinew to the detriment of the emotional, demonstrate Beauvoir's understanding of the need for the body and consciousness to be united qua embodied. Beauvoir's reliance on her journals from these periods further proves that her understanding of situated embodiment is present in embryonic form in her early life.

The *Memoirs* demonstrate that Beauvoir was aware of embodiment as a child and in her teenage years. As a child, Beauvoir demonstrated authentic, and inauthentic embodiment through her descriptions of feeling intimately connected with her body, and at some points, completely dissociated from her body. Beauvoir's growth and understanding of herself contributes to her realizing the joy the body can bring when one assumes one's situation. This first autobiography served to demonstrate Beauvoir's early understanding, even as a child, of the effects that surroundings and situation can have on an individual. Again, although Beauvoir is examining her childhood from an existential perspective, she still has a basic understanding of situated embodiment when she was a child. These thoughts of embodiment are expressed as anguish against her loneliness as a child and her rebellion against her mother's strict rules.

The opening sections of *The Prime of Life* also serve a further purpose of bridging together Beauvoir's first autobiography. Beauvoir asserts in the opening to *The Prime of Life* how being with others affects one's situation, and in turn one's embodiment. This shows that the same problems which Beauvoir faced in *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter* are repeated. In general, Beauvoir is coming to grips with the influence that others have over her situation as an individual. Also how the struggle to maintain authenticity is greatly challenged through the presence of the other. *The Prime of Life* is connected to Beauvoir's first autobiography through her maturation, to the extent that Beauvoir realized the importance of her body and her situation. Beauvoir's early childhood, as described in *Memoirs*, lays the foundation for her later thoughts on the body and others. Beauvoir advances in the second installment of her autobiography because, in this period of her life she no longer uses her body as a thing. Instead, the second installment serves as an awakening of the joy which can be felt in the perfect union of body and mind, which includes authentically assuming one's situation. Beauvoir's criticisms of Sartre for feeling the exact opposite reveal the importance of being embodied for Beauvoir and her distance from Sartre on this point.

Beauvoir consistently recognized authentic and inauthentic embodied moments in her life without naming them as such. The events she described in her first autobiography were mostly based on journal entries she had written as a child and young adult. The implications of these entries are that she did not label them as authentic or inauthentic embodiment; however, there appears to be an understanding of these situations as embodied even at a young age before she had any philosophical training. These embodied moments, whether authentic or not, provide a connection from

Beauvoir's life to her writing. Beauvoir recognized something unique about these moments, and, she describes similar moments in many of her novels.

Conclusions

In her autobiographies, Beauvoir examined her childhood, she stressed the importance of these experiences, especially in relation to the Other and freedom.

According to Tidd, what Beauvoir seeks to accomplish with her autobiography is this:

[t]hese discoveries of the material impact of history and of the Other in the real are crucial because they shape Beauvoir's engagement with autobiography in several ways: she sees the task of representing her past, first as primarily a need to engage with the otherness of collective history and, second, as an ethical imperative to bear witness for the Other.⁶⁴

Throughout her autobiographies and the account of the events leading up to her mother's death, Beauvoir is bearing witness for the Other. Bearing witness for the Other for Beauvoir means reporting on the Other's situation because the Other cannot. Her account of these events were based mostly on journal entries from the period of her life that she was investigating. As a child, she believed that the world exists only for her, and it is clear that she had a high level of narcissism. Yet, when faced with a situation she could not control as a child, she demonstrated that her only recourse was to lash out through her temper tantrums. In retrospect, these temper tantrums allow Beauvoir to understand the physical reaction which can occur when faced with a situation. Likewise, when she was a young adult Beauvoir often disregarded her body when faced with an overwhelming situation. Beauvoir also would forget about her body in order to report on the situation of

⁶⁴ Ursula Tidd, "The Self-Other Relation in Beauvoir's Ethics and Autobiography," *Hypatia*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (Fall 1999): 170.

others. In an act of rebellion against external forces in her situation, she chose to pursue intellectual goals at the expense of her body.

The autobiographies, specifically the early ones, serve as demonstrations of Beauvoir's understanding of the embryonic ideas of her later philosophy of situated embodiment. It was important to examine these instances for the validity of my assumption that situated embodiment was a developing concern of Beauvoir's. Through her own account of her life, it is clear that she consistently lived her own situation through her body, and that the lived situation gained importance for Beauvoir. In addition, she will use her own experiences as a partial basis for her philosophical works. The third chapter will demonstrate how she proceeds to thematize those key notions. She uses many instances of her own life for her works of fiction, which will be examined in the second chapter.

Chapter Two: The Novels

The medium of the novel is used by Beauvoir to express her philosophy in a fictional manner. As the previous chapter has demonstrated, the theme of situated embodiment has been a constant concern for Beauvoir and this concern has carried over to her novels. This chapter examines *The Blood of Others*, *She Came to Stay*, and *The Mandarins*⁶⁵ as they exemplify Beauvoir's philosophical concept of situated embodiment.⁶⁶ Beauvoir's novels have been largely praised as her best medium; however, I contend that they are also the vehicle that Beauvoir uses to apply her philosophy. This chapter will show that Beauvoir's novels fictionalize her own inauthentic and authentic embodied experience. The method adopted for this chapter is the same as the first chapter in that I will examine the most interesting instances of inauthentic embodiment and authentic embodiment.

Inauthentic Embodiment in the Novels

The Blood of Others is the story of some resistance fighters during the war. The format could be considered confusing as it contains both past events and present events without a clear indication of the transition. Briefly put, the novel centres around the character of Jean Blomart, the leader of the resistance, as he waits through the night for the death of Hélène, who was wounded in a resistance mission. Throughout the night Jean reflects on his life and Hélène's in an attempt to understand the guilt that he has felt throughout his life. The novel opens with the main characters in an apartment where Hélène is awaiting death. Jean notes Hélène's condition "[h]er eyes are shut, each breath

⁶⁵ Beauvoir was awarded the Prix Goncourt in 1954 for her novel *The Mandarins*, which is a very prestigious award in France.

⁶⁶ The next chapter will explore in depth her strictly philosophical treatment of the concept.

labours between her lips; the sheets rise and fall. They rise too often; the effort of living is too obvious, too noisy; she is struggling, her light is failing; at dawn it will be out.”⁶⁷ From this first description Beauvoir establishes the exact situation that Jean is facing, and the situation which H  l  ne is in and the she will ultimately die. The guilt that Jean feels for H  l  ne’s death is magnified because of the responsibility he feels for the death of another close friend, Jacques, who died in a riot that both he and Jean had attended, but that Jean had encouraged Jacques to attend. The first instance Jean’s inauthentic embodiment is a fictionalized account of an event from Beauvoir’s life.

Beauvoir ascribes to the character Jean the emotions that she felt at the time of the death of Louise’s baby. Louise was Beauvoir’s nanny when she was a child. Louise’s baby died in infancy in *Memoirs*. Beauvoir describes at length the time when she and her mother visited Louise at her apartment, shortly after her baby had died, and sees the depressing conditions in which Louise lived and how those conditions were decidedly opposite to Beauvoir’s own. The situation is now transferred from Beauvoir’s own life to Jean’s fictional situation. Beauvoir’s own feelings about that moment in her life are now represented by Jean. Beauvoir describes the events surrounding the fictionalized death of Louise’s baby. For Jean, Louise also worked for the Blomart’s, and Madame Blomart and Jean went to visit Louise shortly after her baby died. Jean describes that the sympathy he felt for Louise’s situation was so great that his throat was constricted and he could not eat. However, when forced by his father to eat, the tightness was accompanied by nausea. At this point, Jean realized that it is not the smell of the printing works that

⁶⁷ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Blood of Others*, trans. by Yvonne Moyse and Roger Senhouse (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1964), 7.

was causing the nausea, but rather the guilt that he felt with regard to his situation.⁶⁸ The guilt that Jean had towards his situation does not allow him to assume it authentically. It is not until Jean took responsibility for his situation that he became authentically embodied.

The situation as described by the novel demonstrates that, in his childhood, Jean's father constantly reiterated that there should be no equality between the bourgeois and the proletariat, and that in making them equal, one will be bringing society to the lowest level.⁶⁹ Beauvoir establishes Jean's situation as a child early in the novel in order to explain his turn to communism, which culminates in the death of his friend Jacques.

Madeleine, Jean's mistress, is described as having no interest in her body as "she gave it with indifference to anyone who asked for it", which demonstrates that Madeleine is not authentically embodied and prefers to not think about her body at all.⁷⁰ Beauvoir even notes that Madeleine did not consider her thoughts or feelings of any worth either, which further contributes to her inauthentic embodiment because she does not consider her own intellect as having any value.

Jean feels equally responsible for Madeleine and H  l  ne (his new love interest): Madeleine, because Jean feels responsible for her situation, and H  l  ne for her death. The difference lies in the fact that, since Madeleine never assumed her situation, Jean feels as though he is responsible to assume it for her. Jean feels guilty because he thinks that he is responsible for H  l  ne's death. In this respect Jean exhibits bad faith. Jean is in bad faith because he is lying to himself that he could actually have prevented H  l  ne's

⁶⁸ Ibid, 11.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 14.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 64.

death. Jean does not seem to realize at this point that it was Hélène's choice to go on that mission for the resistance, and that it was completely out of his control.

In *She Came to Stay* (1943),⁷¹ Beauvoir provides us with fictional account of her real-life situation where she and Sartre had briefly been involved in a trio with Olga Kosakiewicz. Although the events in the novel do culminate in Xavière's (Olga's alter ego) death, obviously this did not happen in Beauvoir's actual life. Françoise, the lead character, notes,

[w]hen she was not there, the smell of dust, the half-light, and their forlorn solitude did not exist for anyone; they did not exist at all. And now she was there. The red of the carpet gleamed through the darkness like a timid night-light. She exercised that power: her presence snatched things from their unconsciousness; she gave them their colour, their smell.⁷²

Françoise is inauthentic in this moment because she considers herself to be pure transcendence, in that she does not take into consideration her body; rather, she concentrates solely on her mind. Since Françoise does not acknowledge her body in situation, her authentic embodiment is not yet achieved.

The first encounter with Xavière demonstrates that initially she is very timid and is absolutely hopeless about her situation. Xavière complains to Françoise that she will never have a career or be a good housewife because she does not think that she is good enough at any of these things. Françoise takes to Xavière not because of a desire to help

⁷¹ Recently in *Simone de Beauvoir: Philosophical Writings*, [eds. Margaret A. Simons, Marybeth Timmermann and Mary Beth Mader (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 31-76] there has been released two previously unpublished chapters of *She Came to Stay* translated by Sylvie Gautheron. These chapters provide an account of brief moments in Françoise's childhood, including her first meeting with Élisabeth and how they become close friends. Françoise also meets Élisabeth's brother Pierre who Françoise eventually marries.

⁷² Simone de Beauvoir, *She Came to Stay*, trans. by Yvonne Moyse and Roger Senhouse (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1966), 7-8.

her but rather she considers her as a possession.⁷³ In this possessive attitude, Françoise invites Xavière to live in Paris at her and Pierre's expense, hence the beginning of the trio. Françoise is attracted to Xavière because she feels that Xavière is her project and that she feels responsible for Xavière's situation. Xavière takes no responsibility for her situation, and as a result, she is not authentically embodied.

Françoise does not acknowledge her body in situation. This is evident when she watches Pierre and Xavière dance; she states that she is too old to dance, and that "[s]he would never be the type of woman who had absolute mastery over her body."⁷⁴ What this demonstrates is that Françoise still confines herself to transcendence and will not accept that her body is important for realizing situations; instead, Françoise chooses not to take responsibility for her body. Transcendence in this instance takes on a different meaning, then, as a key concept described in my introduction. Transcendence for Françoise is the attempt to live as solely a mind, thereby it is her attempt to live at a purely intellectual level. When examining the other women present at a party, Françoise realizes that they all have their own unique lives intertwined with their bodies. For her, she always took care of her body as though it were a thing, something impersonal.

Beauvoir describes the depths to which Françoise's inauthentic embodiment runs: when she is confronted by Pierre about the trio, he states that if the trio is a threat to their love, then he is willing to give up Xavière. Beauvoir describes Françoise's reaction: "She was conscious only of her head, she no longer felt a body... Without jealousy, without love, ageless, nameless, confronted with her own life, she was no longer anything but a

⁷³ Ibid, 17.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 149.

calm and detached spectator.”⁷⁵ The detachment that Françoise describes demonstrates her complete inauthentic embodiment. It appears that Françoise remains detached as a method of protecting herself from the damage that the trio has caused her. The trio has disrupted Françoise’s previous situation of being one with Pierre. Françoise resorts to bad faith as a way of coping with her situation; she is not authentically assuming her situation because she is not prepared to deal with it. With Xavière representing the ultimate Other, Françoise is faced with the realization that she has sacrificed something of herself, and now she is at the point where she does not even think that she has a face. Her despair stems from an inability to recognize the ambiguity in her being; remember, for Beauvoir, an authentic embodied being is able to fluctuate from immanence to transcendence. Françoise’s inability to do this results in her reverting back to only the transcendent aspect of her being. Françoise only concerns herself with her transcendent nature, because, for her, Pierre always expresses the immanent aspects, as she notes that he is fully contained and expresses himself through his body.

Much like in the novel *She Came to Stay*, the moments of inauthentic embodiment in *The Mandarins* are associated with female characters. Beauvoir’s perfect example of someone who does not accept their situation is Paula. Paula is Henri’s girlfriend; Henri notes, “[b]eing without anything to do was not doing her any good.”⁷⁶ As we discover later in the novel, Henri literally meant that she does not do anything; she instead devotes all of her time to loving Henri, which she claims is a full-time job. However, Paula is stagnant in her situation as she will not acknowledge that her situation has changed with Henri.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 171.

⁷⁶ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Mandarins*, trans. by Leonard M. Friedman (United States: The World Publishing Company, 1956), 21.

Beauvoir provides a description of love-making in which one partner is inauthentically embodied. The scene takes place between Henri and Paula where Beauvoir describes the act as follows:

Tonight he was lying on top of a frenzied woman who spoke obscene words and whose scratches hurt. He was horrified by her and by himself. Her head bent back, her eyes half-closed, her teeth bared, she had given herself totally to love, was so frightfully lost, that he felt like slapping her to bring her back to earth, felt like saying "It's just you and I and we're making love, that's all."⁷⁷

What is interesting about this quote is that Paula is inauthentically embodied in this moment because she does not accept that the situation with Henri has changed, and as such, she continues to make love to him with the same actions. Paula is not authentic because she is in bad faith about her situation with Henri. However, Beauvoir clearly indicates that, for Henri, the situation has changed and he ultimately wants out of it; yet Paula will not acknowledge the change.

Paula has temporarily lost the ability to justify her own existence. In this respect, Paula is living in complete immanence as she depends on Henri to give her life meaning, and in this way Beauvoir asserts that Paula makes her love for Henri her whole life, whereas she is only a part of his.⁷⁸ The character Paula carries her love for Henri to such an extreme that she considers that her love is her vocation. There is no doubt that Beauvoir is depicting the woman of bad faith from *The Second Sex*. Paula is the literary representation of the "woman in love" from *The Second Sex*.⁷⁹ Further proof is that Paula never wants Henri to change, and she constantly has ways of justifying to herself that he

⁷⁷ Ibid, 30.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 88-91.

⁷⁹ We will explore this further in the next chapter.

has not changed. Paula becomes so detached from her situation that she believes herself capable of observing her situation from the outside.⁸⁰ When Paula has cut ties with Henri and received a lot of therapy that she finally begins to accept her situation.

Anne's character is also to a certain extent trapped in her situation. Anne is a psychoanalyst, and when describing her life, she describes it as though she were reading about one of her patients.⁸¹ Anne also feels responsible for her daughter Nadine's situation, which often leads her to blame herself for Nadine's actions. Beauvoir provides this background information in order for the reader to better understand Nadine and Anne's situations. Beauvoir describes that Anne is aware that she has little regard for her body. Much like the descriptions of Françoise, Anne is only concerned with her intellectual pursuits and not her body. This indicates that she is not authentically embodied.⁸² However, Anne's awareness of her attitude towards her body may be the first step towards her assuming an authentic embodiment.

Another interesting character is Nadine. She uses her body as a means for getting approval from men. Nadine will openly have sex with a man, even if she has to get him drunk first because she thinks that that is the only way that men will like her. Nadine tries this technique on Henri to get him to take her to Portugal.⁸³ In order for Nadine to feel alive after the death of Diego, her fiancé, she constantly needs to be with others, and needs others to need her, asserts Beauvoir. This is indicative of Nadine's need to be justified by others instead of her justifying her own existence. Nadine needs the bonds of flesh in order to feel alive, and she is described as claiming that "she was as indifferent

⁸⁰ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Mandarins*, trans. by Leonard M. Friedman (United States: The World Publishing Company, 1956), 445-446.

⁸¹ Ibid, 35.

⁸² Ibid, 43.

⁸³ Ibid, 63.

about getting into bed as sitting down at a table.”⁸⁴ This is an interesting contrast to Anne who no longer cares about her body because she thinks that her life as a woman has ended. However, where Anne is trapped in transcendence like Françoise, Nadine is trapped in immanence as she does not acknowledge the transcendent nature of her own being. Both of these positions are undesirable because they do not express the ambiguity of the human condition. Hence, neither Nadine nor Anne fluctuates between immanence and transcendence.

Anne’s first affair with Scriassine is described in a cold and detached manner, which again indicates that she is not embodied. Anne notes the way that he quickly rushes her off to bed, and then the way he makes love is so cold that she compares the experience to a dentist’s steel tool.⁸⁵ Scriassine insists on Anne getting pleasure from this experience, and he insists that she enjoy herself as well. Beauvoir further describes that Scriassine says that Anne is resisting with her head. This demonstrates that Anne, in this moment, is definitely not authentically embodied: firstly, because she feels like she is just being used for pleasure; and secondly, he is being aggressive and not reciprocal. Thus, she will not assume this situation.

Anne’s attitude towards making love to a stranger can be juxtaposed with Nadine’s attitude about sex. Nadine states, “I’ll bet there isn’t one woman in a hundred that enjoys getting laid.”⁸⁶ Nadine’s blunt honesty indicates that she is aware of the situation of woman. Nadine does not enjoy sex, rather she uses it as a tool to get what she wants. However, by being solely defined by her body, she lives only in immanence.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 80.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 82.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 104.

On a visit to America, Anne meets Lewis Brogan, with whom she begins an affair.⁸⁷ When she arrives home from her most recent trip to America, Anne experiences a detachment from her situation. It appears as though the only way she can be authentically embodied is when she is with Lewis, which also indicates bad faith, because Anne thinks that she is only complete when she is with Lewis. Anne is lying to herself that she cannot be a complete person without Lewis. Only when she receives a letter from Lewis urging her to come back to America does she note that she has “once more found [her]... living body.”⁸⁸

The situation with Lewis, however, has changed since Anne’s last visit to America. Lewis now turns out the light when they make love, and Anne feels as though she is merely his pleasure machine and that they are sleeping together cold.⁸⁹ Anne experiences inauthentic embodiment because her body no longer exists for Lewis who is her only validation for her body. With her break from Lewis, Anne cannot acknowledge her situation. This is interesting because in her relationship with Lewis, Anne is ultimately in the position of the Other. Anne requires Lewis to justify her existence, and as such, Anne was in the role of the Other because she was only used for her body.

These moments of inauthentic embodiment in the novels demonstrate a common theme which corresponds with Beauvoir’s autobiographies. When the characters experience moments of inauthentic embodiment, it is because they do not accept their situation, or their bodies in situation. This will be established more clearly in the formal

⁸⁷ This is another instance of Beauvoir fictionalizing her own life. This could very well be the story of her affair with Nelson Algren.

⁸⁸ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Mandarins*, trans. by Leonard M. Friedman (United States: The World Publishing Company, 1956), 538.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 547-548.

analysis of the novels. It is now important to examine moments of authentic embodiment in the lives of the characters.

Authentic Embodiment in the Novels

In *The Blood of Others*, Jean's guilt is the catalyst denying his inheritance of his father's company, and moving out of his parents' apartment to become a printer at a rival print shop. Jean desired to be a mere labourer and not a company owner, thereby temporarily ridding himself of his guilt. He will become responsible for his own situation, not merely accepting the situation given to him.⁹⁰ Once Jean realizes the effect his past has on his present situation, he is again able to form the resistance movement.

Jean states that he does not choose to exist, but he is responsible for his actions and reactions in his situation. This shows that he is assuming his situation in that he has not chosen to exist, but he is accountable for what happens in his situation. With this admission, he also begins to realize that he is not responsible for the situation of others. Evident from his discussions with Madeleine whom he has ended his relationship, in order to make Hélène happy, Madeleine begins associating with a drug addict and taking drugs herself. Jean realizes that although he is the one who broke off relations, it is ultimately up to Madeleine to take responsibility for her situation.⁹¹

A further indication of Jean's authentic embodiment occurs in a conversation between himself and Hélène where he states, "I've always felt that, even when I was a kid; my eyes are sufficient for this boulevard to exist; my voice is sufficient for the world to have a voice...I didn't create the world, but I create it again, by my presence at every

⁹⁰ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Blood of Others*, trans. by Yvonne Moyse and Roger Senhouse (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1964), 25.

⁹¹ Ibid, 112.

instance.”⁹² Jean is expressing himself as pure transcendence in this moment; however, he also realizes that, although he is not responsible for the world, he is responsible for his situation in the world and the world that he creates. As such, Jean is fully living his situation because he thinks events in his life happen through him. Jean is authentically embodied because these events usually trigger a physical response. Hélène also recognizes Jean’s authentic embodiment when she states, “[h]e was there, entirely self-contained in that male body which she held in her arms.”⁹³ This quote indicates that his whole being includes his situation, which is contained and expressed through his body. Jean is the sole character who remains authentically embodied when he takes responsibility for his situation.

In *She Came to Stay*, Françoise’s rage at her situation with Pierre and Xavière initiates her recognition of her authentic embodiment. Françoise notes in a conversation with Pierre that she feels a lump in her throat when she talks about Xavière.⁹⁴ This physical manifestation of her rage at Xavière demonstrates that she is finally establishing a link between her emotions and her bodily expressions she is thus beginning to be authentically embodied.

Françoise compares her reaction to her body with Pierre’s when she notes that he “was precisely where his body was, his body could be focused in a single glance.”⁹⁵ This demonstrates again that Pierre is authentically embodied, and Françoise realizes that she does not express herself in the same manner. This is an important realization for

⁹² Ibid, 122. This quote is interesting because a similar idea of the world existing only for one individual is present in Beauvoir’s autobiographies and in the character of Françoise from *The Mandarins*. However, the difference lies in the fact that Jean is taking responsibility for his situation and as such he is authentically embodied.

⁹³ Ibid, 150.

⁹⁴ Simone de Beauvoir, *She Came to Stay*, trans. by Yvonne Moyse and Roger Senhouse (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1966), 134.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 157.

Françoise because she is beginning to realize what she is lacking. She also realizes that the body is an important aspect in one's situation.

Through her illness, Françoise realizes that she does not have to be responsible for everyone's situation, and furthermore, that she can be the one who is taken care of as just a body. The moment is important for Françoise because of the acknowledgement of her body. Through her illness, Françoise is finally aware of the immanent nature of her body. In addition, that her situation is expressed through her own body without the presence of Pierre.

Françoise begins to take note of her appearance when she is going out with her friend, Paule, without Xavière. This is an important step for Françoise, as before she barely looked at herself in the mirror, but now she has carefully plucked her eyebrows and arranged her hair in the best way to suit her face.⁹⁶ Françoise finally gives in to her own desires and stops living through others on her trip with Gerbert.⁹⁷ Françoise finally lives for herself and has an affair with Gerbert, which truly demonstrates her new-found immanence and the ambiguous nature of her being. Finally with her affair, Françoise cuts Xavière out of her life and is no longer willing to make any sacrifices for her. When they go off to fight in the war, they keep up a correspondence with Françoise. However, Xavière does not know of Françoise's affair with Gerbert, and one day when Françoise is out, she returns home to find that Xavière had read all of her letters. Xavière learns that Pierre is not actually her friend anymore and would prefer to break off with her completely and also that Gerbert and Françoise had an affair. Françoise confronts

⁹⁶ Ibid, 280.

⁹⁷ Gerbert is introduced early in the novel but mostly as a young man with whom Françoise has a particular fondness. However, he eventually gets together with Xavière once the trio has broken. Even though the trio has broken they still remain closely tied.

Xavière in a gesture of kindness, but Xavière will not return the kindness. Françoise then decides to eliminate Xavière by leaving the gas on in her room and murdering her. The ending represents a snuffing out of the Other, and Françoise's acknowledgement of her authentic embodiment. The Other, I would protest, is not normally a threat to authentic embodiment; however, in the case of Françoise, Xavière represented the final obstacle to her authentic embodiment, and in order for Françoise to accept her situation, she needed to be rid of Xavière once and for all.

Lastly, the characters in *The Mandarins* have few moments of authentic embodiment. Henri's authentic embodied state is demonstrated when he has a falling out with Robert where "[i]n his head, in his body, there was such a violent convulsion that he thought for a moment he was going to faint."⁹⁸ This quote asserts that Henri is authentically embodied because the situation that he is in is manifested through his bodily reactions.

Anne's character must be reexamined after she meets Lewis Brogan on her trip to America. Anne begins an affair with Lewis, and she notes that he has provided the catalyst for her acknowledgement of her body again.⁹⁹ Beauvoir describes the authentic embodied love-making that occurs between Lewis and Anne: "His desire transformed me. I who for so long a time had been without taste, without form, again possessed breast, a belly, a sex, flesh; I was as nourishing as bread, as fragrant as earth. It was so miraculous that I didn't think of measuring my time or my pleasure."¹⁰⁰ This quote demonstrates a complete change in Anne's embodiment, especially when compared to

⁹⁸ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Mandarins*, trans. by Leonard M. Friedman (United States: The World Publishing Company, 1956), 257.

⁹⁹ This situation is Beauvoir's fictional account of her real life affair with Nelson Algren.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 341.

her experience with Scriassine. Anne is now beginning to feel the immanent aspect of her being because of the regained awareness of her body. She claims that in her affair with Lewis she is involved body, mind and soul, which indicates that she is authentically embodied in this affair. At the end of the novel, Anne comes out of the despair that her situation has dictated, and instead of rebelling against her situation by committing suicide, she accepts her situation and regains a new appreciation for life.¹⁰¹

The moments of authentic embodiment have been elucidated. The common feature seems, as in the autobiographies, to be that once one has accepted one's situation, one is able to achieve authentic embodiment. The following analysis will examine the characters and their moments of authentic and inauthentic embodiment.

Analysis

As Holveck puts it, Beauvoir's novels are the "concrete metaphysical" experience of abstract philosophical concepts.¹⁰² Particularly from *The Blood of Others*, it is evident that Beauvoir is examining the theme of freedom and situated embodiment that she will later explicitly write about in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. According to Holveck, Beauvoir realizes that all values refer to choices made by the individual who is finite and limited. Holveck states that in *The Blood of Others*, both Jean and Hélène have difficulty living authentically by assuming total responsibility for their free actions. However much he desires to rid himself of his past by becoming a typographer in a rival print shop, Jean comes to the realization that one cannot truly escape one's past because, according to

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 610.

¹⁰² Eleanore Holveck, "The Blood of Others: A Novel Approach to *The Ethics of Ambiguity*", in *Hypatia*. Vol. 14, No. 4 (Fall 1999), 3.

Beauvoir, one's past is incarnated in one's body.¹⁰³ Conversely, Hélène ignores her situation and does not take any responsibility for it, according to Holveck. Holveck asserts that it is not until Jean breaks with Hélène during the war that Hélène realizes that she is with others and situated. For Beauvoir, authentic embodiment expresses our intentions, and in the case of Hélène, it was not until she realizes her responsibility that she expresses herself through her authentic embodiment.¹⁰⁴ Hélène is aware that it was her free choice to go on the mission which ultimately cost her her life and, in that respect, she tries to assure Jean that she made the choice herself, so he can take no responsibility for it, asserts Holveck.

Beauvoir further explores the notion of embodiment in *She Came to Stay*. Beauvoir adheres to the notion of intentionality, which states "[r]ather than thinking of consciousness as a kind of receptacle for perceptions and images, the principle of intentionality identifies consciousness as a *relation* which human beings have to objects, both real and imagined."¹⁰⁵ According to the Fullbrooks, Beauvoir thinks of the body as a system of integrated perceptual powers, which includes consciousness. From the beginning, Françoise considers herself as a disembodied consciousness; when she claims that the world exists for her, she believes that she has a universal vantage point, according to the Fullbrooks. In this way Françoise avoids anything that reminds her of her immanence, and thus she tries to maintain the illusion of pure transcendence, which leads ultimately to bad faith.¹⁰⁶ Likewise the Fullbrooks indicate that Xavière is in a

¹⁰³ Ibid, 9.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 13.

¹⁰⁵ Edward Fullbrook and Kate Fullbrook, "Beauvoir and Plato: The Clinic and the Cave", in *The Existential Phenomenology of Simone de Beauvoir*, eds. by W. O'Brien and L. Embree (Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001), 55.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 56.

similar position, as she tries to maintain the illusion that she is pure immanence. Once Françoise is ill in the clinic, she finally experiences herself as a body and acknowledges her immanence. Because Françoise has experienced herself as a body, she now reaches a calm state in which she can finally see the future.¹⁰⁷

Turning now towards the analysis of *The Mandarins*, one can establish the theme of frigidity, as demonstrated with the character Anne. Cataldi argues that Beauvoir's notion of frigidity centres around women who use their bodies as a means of rebelling against their situation. As is noted in *The Second Sex*, the situation that a woman is in directly affects her bodily responses. Hence, when a woman requires a method of retaliation against her situation, the response is usually frigidity. For example, frigidity can occur when a man is too aggressive or when the woman feels shame about her body. However, usually frigidity is an act of rebellion against patriarchal structures.¹⁰⁸ Cataldi points to Beauvoir's definition of situated embodiment in order to demonstrate how situation affects the individual. Cataldi explains that situated embodiment is "[t]ranscendentally subjective and immanently objective, embodiment is ambiguous."¹⁰⁹ Beauvoir advocates reciprocal sexual relationships between men and women; however, if the male just seeks domination, then the reaction of refusal by the woman might be this response of frigidity, asserts Cataldi. Anne's first sexual experience with Lewis is described as filled with passion and desire; she was well aware of her authentic embodiment and pleasure, as well as his authentic embodiment and pleasure. However, when Lewis takes Anne abruptly without a word or a kiss, Anne notes how cold sex is.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 62.

¹⁰⁸ Suzanne Laba Cataldi, "Sexuality Situated: Beauvoir on "Frigidity"", in *Hypatia* Vol. 14, No. 4 (Fall 1999), 71.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 71.

There is no longer any pleasure, and she even notes that he treated her like a pleasure machine.¹¹⁰ Cataldi indicates that the coldness Anne describes is not attributed to her but rather to the situation as a whole. Anne has the same cold reaction to Scriassine when she sleeps with him and he tries to dominate her pleasure. As Cataldi rightly indicates, in order to get out of this situation, Anne ends up faking an orgasm, which demonstrates the inauthenticity of this sexual experience.

Nadine is the obvious foil to Anne in that, although she may not derive pleasure from her sexual encounters, she has them very often and uses them as a means to get men interested in her. Cataldi states that in Beauvoir's memoirs she thinks Nadine is frigid, but the frigidity that Nadine experiences is due to a rebellion against the stereotype of promiscuity in women. Cataldi further argues that in this way Nadine is not free because she does not think that she has a choice whether or not to sleep with these men.

Conclusions

In the comparison of Nadine and Hélène, one can point to instances where both characters experience sexuality as a means of rebellion against their situations. The desire to punish the male comes out in the episode where Hélène, after being rejected by Jean, goes out and sleeps with the first male that offers, which ultimately results in an abortion. Women can use their bodies as a vehicle for revenge against male dominance, but which can, in turn, lead to frigidity in the woman.¹¹¹ In this way, Hélène, like Nadine, is rebelling against male dominance, in this case Jean's, and uses her body as a

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 72.

¹¹¹ Suzanne Liba Cataldi, "The Body as a Basis for Being: Simone de Beauvoir and Maurice Merleau-Ponty", in *The Existential Phenomenology of Simone de Beauvoir*, eds. by W. O'Brien and L. Embree (Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001), 97.

means for acting out her defiance. Hélène's disgust at her first sexual experience is evidenced by the references to this person she had sex with as a brute and a dirty beast.¹¹² Both of these characters are in bad faith as, according to Beauvoir, healthy female eroticism requires both desire and respect from the male, something that obviously did not occur for Hélène and Nadine.¹¹³

When the characters of Hélène and Nadine are contrasted with Xavière, it can be demonstrated that Xavière forms within herself "a type of 'ambiguous unity' that is, for Beauvoir, characteristic of erotic experiences generally."¹¹⁴ This comes from the way in which Xavière narcissistically enjoys touching her own eyelashes and the downy hair on her skin, according to Cataldi. Xavière in this way is not detached from herself, as she is realizing the enjoyment of early sexual experiences. This allows her to examine herself from an objective standpoint.

The characters of Françoise and Anne are unique when compared to the other female characters in the novels. Françoise is presented by Beauvoir as pure transcendence. She has little regard for her body, and initially she tries to observe the world from a universal standpoint. Both characters endure situations in which their views of themselves are challenged. In the case of Françoise, it is not until she must go to a nursing home for her illness that she realizes the immanence of her body; likewise, it is not until Anne has an authentically embodied sexual experience with Lewis that she realizes the pleasures of the body and the importance of her own body. Both these

¹¹² Simone de Beauvoir, *The Blood of Others*, trans. by Yvonne Moyse and Roger Senhouse (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1964), 96.

¹¹³ Suzanne Laba Cataldi, "The Body as a Basis for Being: Simone de Beauvoir and Maurice Merleau-Ponty", in *The Existential Phenomenology of Simone de Beauvoir*, eds. by W. O'Brien and L. Embree (Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001), 97.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 104.

characters, in opposition to their situation, choose to forget their bodies in favour of their intellectual pursuits. In addition, they also do not acknowledge their bodies because of their concern for the situations of others. Françoise is far more concerned with Pierre's and Xavière's situations than with her own. Likewise Anne is concerned with Nadine and Robert's situations. Neither Françoise nor Anne takes into consideration their own situations until they experience events which are purely their own. These life-changing events are the catalyst for both characters to accept and examine their situations whereby they become authentically embodied.

I wish to conclude by saying a few words about the experiences of the male characters. A comparison between Jean and Henri can be established because of the effect that their situations has on their bodily comportment. The guilt that Jean has towards his situation is present from his earliest childhood. Jean has constantly felt guilty about his bourgeois upbringing when facing those of a lower economic status. This guilt is temporarily relieved when he denies his inheritance and becomes a labourer in a rival printing company. The inaction that Jean vows to take after the death of Jacques is due to his guilt as well. By comparison, Henri feels guilt when he constantly tries to break off his relationship with Paula. He feels responsible Paula's attachment to him. Both characters triumph over their guilt once they realize that, although one is intimately connected with others, what one decides to do with that situation is solely up to the individual. Jean and Henri initially refuse to allow the other characters to assume responsibility for their own situations; hence their authentic embodiment is impaired. Yet, once the awareness of individual responsibility occurs to both Jean and Henri, they are able to accept their situation and become authentically embodied. The guilt that one

feels about other's situations can impair embodiment because the individual is in bad faith. The individual is in bad faith because they do not authentically assume their situation as a person who is responsible for their own situation and not the situations of others.

This chapter demonstrated that Beauvoir's novels are the practical application of Beauvoir's concept of situated embodiment. This concept appears to be the most problematic for the female characters of Beauvoir's novels. As will become evident in the next chapter, Beauvoir shows similar themes, present in *The Second Sex*, of the immanence imposed by patriarchal dominance in her novels. This dominance is present for the majority of her female characters. Nadine and Hélène both choose to utilize their bodies in supposed non-conventional ways in order to assert their opposition to males. Anne and Françoise sacrifice their authentic embodiment for intellectual pursuits and for their concerns over the situations of others; by contrast, the males in the novels appear to achieve their authentic embodiment upon the realization that they are not responsible for how others accept their situations. The novels demonstrate that situated embodiment is a lasting theme in Beauvoir's works, and that Beauvoir's own situation includes her past, as she uses examples from her own life in these novels. This chapter has also provided some insight into Beauvoir's thoughts on embodiment as she has clearly applied to fictional situations her philosophical concept of embodiment, to which we will now turn.

Chapter Three: Philosophical Works

Beauvoir's first philosophical piece was *Pyrrhus et Cinéas*, published in 1944. This essay was followed by a second philosophical piece, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, published in 1947, which showed the reciprocal nature of the relationship with the Other. The relationship with the Other is reciprocal because of the need of the individual to acknowledge freedom in the Other, and the Other to acknowledge freedom in the individual. Perhaps Beauvoir's most famous philosophical work is *The Second Sex*, which was originally published in French in 1949, and in English in 1952.¹¹⁵ *The Second Sex* examines the historical situation of women from nomadic times to Beauvoir's time. Although published later than the other two essays, *The Second Sex* is important to examine because of the extent to which Beauvoir meticulously analyzes the position of woman as the ultimate Other. Beauvoir explains how woman's situation greatly affects her interaction with others and the world. In turn, as will be shown, woman's situation will also affect her body and embodiment. Although the feminist critique will not be examined in this chapter, the common criticism leveled against Beauvoir is that she was promoting male values in *The Second Sex*. This criticism and others will be addressed in the following chapter.

The analysis of *The Second Sex* demonstrates the importance of situation for Beauvoir. Although *The Second Sex* focuses only on woman's situation, the analysis of *The Ethics of Ambiguity* will unveil the immediate connection between the situation of woman and that of others who have their freedom restricted in some manner. For the purposes of this thesis, I will provide an analysis of only the most pertinent parts of *The*

¹¹⁵ The translation of *The Second Sex* into English is often questioned because H.M. Parshley was not a philosopher. As such, some of the philosophical, specifically phenomenological tone has been lost in the English.

Ethics of Ambiguity. Once all of the philosophical works have been adequately examined, I will then analyze them in conjunction with one another in order to present the consistent notion of situated embodiment. The analysis of *Must We Burn Sade?* follows is only limited to sections that have relevance to this present thesis.

Instead of beginning with the opening chapter, it is important first to understand some key concepts in *The Second Sex*. The notion of authenticity, and conversely bad faith, or inauthenticity, is important for understanding the whole of *The Second Sex*, and for analyzing the notion of embodiment. Beauvoir does not directly define what is meant by authenticity for her reader. However, taking the clues from *The Second Sex*, I can establish a working definition. In considering the female characters in the works of Stendhal, Beauvoir states, "What he likes in them is what today we call their authenticity: that is the common trait in all the women he loved or lovingly invented; all are free and true beings."¹¹⁶ For Beauvoir, these women are alive, and they attain their values from themselves, not through outside influences. This quote is representative of Beauvoir's notion of authenticity because it emphasizes the importance of freedom and of being true to one's self. The notion of freedom, which will be more adequately examined once *The Ethics of Ambiguity* is analyzed, can be summed up as positive versus negative freedom, or the freedom from a restraint (such as economic circumstances), i.e., to have the freedom to do an action. A more clear definition of freedom is expressed in the introduction of *The Second Sex*:

Every subject plays his part as such specifically through exploits or projects that serve as a mode of transcendence; he achieves liberty only through a continual reaching out toward other liberties. There is no justification for present

¹¹⁶ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H.M. Parshley (New York: Vintage Books a division of Random House Inc, 1989), 241.

existence other than its expansion into an indefinitely open future. Every time transcendence falls back into immanence, stagnation, there is a degradation of existence into the “*en-soi*”—the brutish life of subjection to given conditions—and of liberty into constraint and contingency. This downfall represents a moral fault if the subject consents to it... [e]very individual concerned to justify his existence involves an undefined need to transcend himself, to engage in freely chosen projects.¹¹⁷

There is an important juxtaposition in the preceding quote. Beauvoir explains the difference between immanence and transcendence. As indicated in my introduction, for Beauvoir, immanence is allowing oneself to be subjugated by outside forces and conditions. The important aspect of immanence is that one allows oneself to be treated in that manner; and it relates to bad faith because one may not then be true to oneself as a transcendent being. For Beauvoir, immanence is a choice. When an individual chooses to accept a situation which is imposed on them, they are usually living in immanence. It is important to note that this individual is still making a choice to be immanent. Yet, the individual can also choose to define authentically the situation for themselves and not allow a situation to be imposed on them. Conversely, transcendence is defined as being with others and engaging in freely chosen projects.¹¹⁸ In lying to oneself, one is committing an act of bad faith, for Beauvoir, and in this respect one is not being authentic. It will be necessary to understand what “lying to oneself” means when examining the situation of woman, because, as Beauvoir elucidates, women consistently are in bad faith in their relations with others, particularly men, and more importantly, themselves.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, xxxv.

¹¹⁸ In the second chapter, I used transcendence in a different way than Beauvoir to highlight that Françoise focused solely on her mind without acknowledging her body.

The Second Sex

Beauvoir begins her major work with the simple question, "Woman?" which she in turn answers with the basic biological answer that a woman has a womb and ovaries, and that is sufficient to describe woman.¹¹⁹ Obviously the purpose of the opening is to protest against the statement that woman is reducible to biology. Biological explanations of woman for Beauvoir serve only to demonstrate how the male is trying to imprison woman in her sex. Beauvoir clearly states that "the body is not a *thing*, it is a situation," which emphasizes the tie between the body and situation, an inseparable one for Beauvoir.¹²⁰ One must address woman's situation because the situation and the activities pursued by women lead to a better understanding of them. Since the biological explanation of woman is not enough to define woman completely, Beauvoir must turn to the body as lived by the subject.¹²¹

As Beauvoir understands it, sexuality does play a role in our relations with others. She notes that between humans sexuality is always present. Interestingly, instead of making that sexual difference of primary importance, Beauvoir states that the quest for being is of primary importance, and sexuality is only one factor in that quest. Beauvoir continues with this notion and asserts that "[e]xistence is all one, bridging the gaps

¹¹⁹ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H.M. Parshley (New York: Vintage Books a division of Random House Inc, 1989), 3.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, 34.

¹²¹ Beauvoir examines in depth Freud's psychoanalytical perspective of the woman. This description is not necessary to the thesis project, but it is interesting to note that Beauvoir asserts that the total situation of women promotes a feeling of shame and rejection of the female sex because of the importance placed on privileges experienced by males. The situation promotes the feeling of shame and rejection in woman because of the constant reinforcement of male values in society and culture, which clearly degrade the "female virtues". Relating this notion back to Beauvoir's autobiographies, Beauvoir was aware from her early childhood of the differences between the privileges granted to men versus those granted to women. Beauvoir was aware of this difference at an early age. As such, Beauvoir did not agree with Freud's analysis of women. Freud, as is well known, developed a theory of the development of sexuality in children, however, as Beauvoir and others have claimed, this was from a male perspective. Yet when turning to females, Freud adheres to the same system of binary, genital logic.

between individual existents; it makes itself manifest in analogous organisms, and therefore constant factors will be found in the bonds between the ontological and the sexual.”¹²² In sexual development, the liberty that the subject feels is a point of anxiety, asserts Beauvoir. Hence the subject feels the need to find him/herself in objects in the world in order to struggle against alienation. This struggle against alienation requires a representation of the self in the world or alter ego. Beauvoir asserts that for the male, the penis is to be considered as a smaller representation of the male himself. The male is privileged in this position because the alter ego is still part of his own flesh, whereas the little girl’s only recourse to an alter ego is through an object which is outside of herself, such as a doll. Beauvoir’s psychoanalytic interpretation concludes that the male is defined as a human being, whereas woman is merely defined as female. Beauvoir then offers her solution to the dilemma that woman has to face, which is “hesitating between the role of *object*, *Other* which is offered her, and the assertion of her liberty.”¹²³

Beauvoir emphasizes that woman’s awareness of herself is not defined exclusively in sexual terms, but rather from their situation in which economics and technology play a role. Exploring the notion of economy, Beauvoir observes that woman’s role in the home has denied her economic equality,¹²⁴ which is necessary for the liberation of woman. The reason for the stress on economic freedom occurs because traditionally woman has had to depend on man for economic stability, which in turn has subjugated her. However, once economic freedom has been granted to her, she will no longer require man for economic stability.

¹²² Ibid, 47.

¹²³ Ibid, 52.

¹²⁴ This point could largely be contested today with the advent of a majority of women working outside of the home, however, with the persistent inequality in pay there still leaves an economic gap between the sexes.

Beauvoir then provides a detailed account of the historical situation of women. She begins with the nomads and ends with the period after the French revolution. Although the historical aspects may be less crucial for my inquiries, there are still some important points to consider in relation to this historical analysis. For nomadic women, pregnancy and menses were a distinct disadvantage because they prevented them from doing work, and in turn, they had to be taken care of by the males. Due in part to the lack of natural birth control (such as seasonal or cyclical fertility, which is the case for some other female mammals), human females were at constant risk of pregnancy, which in turn made the nomadic women submit passively to their biological fate. Beauvoir uses the term risk when discussing pregnancy because it could happen at any time, and at this point in history, there were hardly any ways to prevent pregnancy. In this respect, the female nomad is restricted to a life of repetition and immanence, according to Beauvoir, which is contrasted with the male who represents transcendence, marked by activity wherein the male was the hunter and actively ensured the survival of the group. The female nomad does not have the same opportunity to escape the biological restraints as the male, and as such, she becomes solely defined by her body.

The early tillers of the soil represent a brief moment in history when women had considerable economic power. Property and name were from the female's side, and in turn, any inherited property would be passed down from the females.¹²⁵ However, with this economic responsibility also came many myths surrounding femininity, such as females being able to make crops grow by magical powers and to summon the spirits of ancestors. These myths were perpetuated by an increasingly patriarchal society, which actively sought the removal of woman from positions of power. These myths, as

¹²⁵

Ibid, 67.

prevalent then as they are now, and they enforce the tie of woman to the earth. They also allow for women to be marginally honored, but only out of fear by the males. This occurred because of the lack of scientific explanations for these events. Males' fear turned into resentment, and thus the active effort to rid the female of her supposed mystical powers. Ultimately, it was the male who chose the position of woman as mystic. In choosing woman's position without consulting her, the male asserts his subjectivity, whereas woman, who passively accepts the situation imposed on her, only serves to further her objectivity.

Woman was further relegated to the role of the Other with the increasing stress on private property, according to Beauvoir. This was due to the fact that it was men who held the property, and women were considered to be part of that property. The situation of woman did not advance until the advent of the industrial revolution when machinery erased the need for raw brute strength, and woman was permitted to assume an economic role.¹²⁶ The economic roles did advance during the industrial revolution because women were gaining economic independence from men. However, due to the fact that working conditions were so horrible in most factories during the nineteenth century, more often than not, women would work seventeen hours a day without seeing any sunlight. In this respect, women still did not gain their economic freedom because they were still paid a fraction of what their male counterparts were making.

Some freedom was afforded to woman with the introduction of birth control. Woman was finally able to take control of her reproductive capabilities, which afforded her more freedom to enter the workforce. Beauvoir asserts that woman can thus regain control over her situation because she is no longer subject to her biological nature.

¹²⁶

Ibid, 113.

The situation of woman is also not improved by the many myths surrounding femininity. Beauvoir argues that, since the rise of patriarchy, males have kept woman in a state of dependence, and thus she has remained the ultimate Other. She is partially responsible for this relegation to the role of the Other because she has freely chosen to be the Other. In this respect, Beauvoir does not view woman as a slave, because all women have the choice to relinquish this position of object, but more often than not, woman does not exercise this right. In addition, most myths support this role of woman as Other; for example, in Genesis, Eve was created from Adam's rib, and therefore she is not an independent being.¹²⁷ For Beauvoir, "[w]omen do not set themselves up as Subject and hence have erected no virile myth in which their projects are reflected; they have no religion or poetry of their own: they still dream through the dreams of men. Gods made by males are the gods they worship."¹²⁸

The implications from woman's not creating her own values leads to a definite problem when women try to achieve authentic embodiment. Embodiment, which is a combination of body and situation, cannot be achieved authentically because these women do not authentically assume their situation. Rather, the situation is imposed on woman by man; she does not have any active role. However, woman still chooses to allow herself to be in this position so there is still some choice. Hence, without choosing and assuming a situation of her own, and her body being constantly objectified, woman has immense difficulty in experiencing authentic embodiment. This is exemplified in the Christian belief of the separation of the soul and body. Women were considered to be closely tied to their bodies. As such, she is associated with her body by man, and

¹²⁷ Ibid, 141.

¹²⁸ Ibid, 143.

therefore, woman is automatically considered to be a lesser being because of her body. Woman's embodiment is affected because even though women are aware of their bodies, they are still not actively pursuing their transcendence or assuming their situation; hence woman has difficulty in achieving authentic embodiment. Woman, for Beauvoir, is doomed to a life of immanence, a life of repetitive tasks, such as housework, whereas the male is allowed to go out and assert himself in the world as a transcendence for he is authenticity in action.

Beauvoir states, "[o]ne is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine."¹²⁹ Hence, the female child is already granted her vocation in life as a passive creature, which is solidified from earliest childhood by culture. The implication of the idea that woman's situation is culturally determined is that it does not allow her to authentically realize her embodiment because she is not socialized to assume her situation as a transcendent being; rather she learns to be passive which allows her to be immanent. Transcendence allows for an authentic embodiment, and woman is judged to lack the ability to achieve it.

Some experiments involving young children only serve to reinforce Beauvoir's theories. It has been shown, in a study conducted by Straus (1966), that women and men typically throw objects differently. The female child rarely uses her lateral space; instead, the motion is concentrated in the arm, rather than using the whole body.¹³⁰ The male child, by contrast, uses his whole body when throwing, including the extension and

¹²⁹ Ibid, 267.

¹³⁰ Iris Marion Young, "Throwing Like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment Motility and Spatiality," *Human Studies*, 3 (1980): 137.

use of lateral space. There is seemingly little explanation for the difference. All that Straus could conclude is that girls throw in a different way because they are females.¹³¹ Young attributes the difference in throwing to the situation of woman as being rooted in immanence. Although there is active transcendence in the body part (the arm) that is doing the action, the rest of the woman's body stays motionless, and hence remains rooted in immanence.¹³² The woman will only move the one necessary body part for throwing, instead of using her whole body to hurl the object, whereas a man will utilize his whole body for the throw. Keeping in mind that, for woman, the body is considered to be mostly an object, Young argues further that there are cultural stipulations on the activities of girls; girls do not use their lateral space because they have been conditioned to feel as though they cannot. Young argues in the same fashion as Beauvoir that situation and embodiment are intimately connected, because the culture instills in girls not to make use of the space around them, and instead, to concentrate on inner space; therefore, when presented with an activity such as throwing, the girl will remain with most of her body in immanence.

In the erotic experience, the difference between men and women is considerable with respect to embodiment. The male, for Beauvoir, reaches towards the object with his whole body and being; the male concentrates his whole sexuality in one organ. For Beauvoir, this implies that the male is fully and authentically embodied. Whereas for woman, the clitoris and the vagina are separate, thereby her sexuality is not in one distinct organ. Woman is passive in the sexual act, as she cannot actively assert her desire for her partner. Man can literally reach out towards his partner with his penis.

¹³¹ Ibid, 138.

¹³² Ibid, 146.

Woman, by contrast, does not and in turn she instead can only passively receive the penis. The erotic dimension promotes the immanent and passive nature of woman, for she is the one that must be penetrated, and can never do the penetrating. For Beauvoir, this can be considered a sort of violent act, especially when the woman does not fully understand what the sexual act entails prior to having sex for the first time. The erotic dimension solidifies woman's immanence because she is not encouraged to know and experience her body as man does. The cultural taboos establish a double standard whereby man is encouraged to discover his body in the erotic dimension as action, and woman is dissuaded from discovering that action within herself.¹³³ However, there is a way Beauvoir indicates for a happy sexual union: "[w]hat is required for such harmony is not refinement in technique, but rather, on the foundation of the moment's erotic charm, a mutual generosity of body and soul."¹³⁴ The body and soul must be involved through mutual generosity, which means a completely authentic embodied experience by both the male and the female.

The mother, for Beauvoir, is in a similar position of feeling trapped in immanence due to the birthing process, which only serves to reinforce the feeling that women are tied to their bodies because they become solely defined by their bodies. This tie to the body does not represent authentic embodiment because woman passively accepts the role of immanence, which is just the baser functions of the body. Beauvoir considers motherhood to be immanent because it is repetitious, and woman is completely passive in that she must be subject to her body throughout her pregnancy. The woman is not encouraged to develop mentally; rather, she remains associated solely with the body.

¹³³ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H.M. Parshley (New York: Vintage Books a division of Random House Inc, 1989), 380.

¹³⁴ Ibid, 402.

Beauvoir asserts that woman cannot escape immanence, “[i]f the flesh is purely passive and inert, it cannot embody transcendence, even in degraded form...”¹³⁵ However, through the ability to obtain abortions and other contraceptive measures, woman can control her own fertility. Thus, she is presented with an opportunity for authentic embodiment through an active role, and she no longer has to be passive flesh. Instead she can be an active transcendence.¹³⁶

For Beauvoir, the analysis of the woman in love only serves to reinforce the structure of the male transcendence and female immanence. The woman in love tends to want to lose herself in her lover. The woman does not desire her separate transcendence; instead she is satisfied in becoming one with her lover and allowing him to achieve transcendence. In this respect, the male will make his female companion one part of his world. He will maintain his independence, and the woman will become one portion of the sum total of his activities.¹³⁷ By contrast, the woman in love will lose her independence because she will make the male her only activity; she will exist only through him. By allowing the male to achieve transcendence and by not asserting her own transcendence, the woman in love will be doomed to immanence, but Beauvoir provides an account of the way woman can escape this passive role.

According to Beauvoir, the method for woman to achieve transcendence is through assuming her own transcendence, and not trying to achieve it through the male. This requires woman to take an active role in her being. It has been suggested that the best method for woman to achieve transcendence is through a reversal in the roles of man and woman, whereby the male is reduced to immanence. However, Beauvoir argues

¹³⁵ Ibid, 495.

¹³⁶ Ibid, 484-485.

¹³⁷ This is reminiscent of the character Paula as discussed in the previous chapter.

against this and maintains that woman must assert her transcendence as being equal to that of man. In order to achieve her own transcendence, woman must actively engage in her own projects. She must also not lose herself in her relationship with a man. This can be achieved through Beauvoir's notion of ambiguity in which both partners would fluctuate between immanence and transcendence. Thus, neither partner would be wholly immanent or transcendent. Further, they could both experience embodiment in an authentic fashion.

*The Ethics of Ambiguity*¹³⁸

Beauvoir expounds an ethical theory in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. She recognizes that being in the world necessarily means being with others, and this is why an ethics is so important. In this essay, Beauvoir conceives of the need for reciprocity and recognition of freedom in the Other. Reciprocity is of importance for her because, as she observes, it does not happen often in relationships with others. Freedom is also a component because Beauvoir understands that, fundamentally, people are free beings. However, she qualifies this notion of freedom and asserts that, even though people are free to make choices in their lives, there will still be hindrances. The task is then to recognize the ambiguity of Being and to accept it.¹³⁹ The ambiguity that Beauvoir speaks to is the fluctuation between immanence and transcendence. This fluctuation will prevent the individual from being wholly transcendent or wholly immanent. In addition, ambiguity will allow the individual to assume authentically their situation because they

¹³⁸ For the purposes of this thesis I have chosen to focus only on the relevant portions of *The Ethics of Ambiguity* that have a direct bearing on my topic.

¹³⁹ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, trans. Bernard Frechtman, (Secaucus: The Citadel Press, 1975), 13.

can approach it in a manner tailored to that individual. Beauvoir provides a negative definition of authenticity which is “[t]o exist genuinely is not to deny this spontaneous movement of my transcendence, but only to refuse to lose myself in it.”¹⁴⁰ This quote shows that authenticity is tied to ambiguity because the individual will recognize the transcendent aspects of his or her being, but should not become defined solely by it.

She determines that morality is intimately connected to freedom because to will oneself free, one has an obligation to also will the freedom of others. One’s situation however, determines whether an individual can be truly free. For example, slaves can only exercise their freedom within the parameters of their situation; they are not entirely free. Outside of the situation of the slave or a woman in a harem, the task of every individual is to recognize the freedom in others. Through the recognition of the freedom of others, reciprocal relationships will be established. In this relationship one will remove certain constraints that hinder the freedom of the Other, so that the Other can accomplish his/her desires. In turn, the Other will do the same. This reciprocity should be extended to all individuals that one encounters; hence, for Beauvoir, “[t]o will oneself free and to will that there be *being* are one and the same choice, the choice that man makes of himself as a presence in the world.”¹⁴¹ As a presence in the world, one must also recognize that all persons have this freedom.

Her ethics show an understanding of how situation affects the freedom of the individual in that there will always be hindrances to freedom. Yet, through ambiguity, the individual can remove the restriction of being defined as only transcendent or immanent. For embodiment to be authentic, Beauvoir recognizes that ambiguity and

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 13-14.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 70.

freedom are necessary for transcendence. Freedom will allow the individual to have certain restraints removed, which will allow the individual to pursue a more active role in their situation. This in turn, will allow the individual to assume authentically their situation because they have more control over it.

Old Age

The study presented in *Old Age* is formatted in much the same way as in *The Second Sex*. The first part of the book is dedicated to biological data on the elderly, and the second part to the being-in-the-world of the elderly. *Old Age* continues Beauvoir's philosophical study of those marginalized by society. The themes of *The Second Sex* are used in the examination of situated embodiment for the elderly. These themes tie into the autobiographical notions of situated embodiment, with particular reference to the feelings that Beauvoir has over the death of her mother, as seen in *A Very Easy Death*.¹⁴²

The problem of old age is something that must be examined because it affects us all. There is no conceivable way to deny the aging of our bodies. If one were to deny the aging process one would be inauthentic. Beauvoir begins her study of old age from the very first writings about it in ancient Greece. From these early accounts, Beauvoir ascertains that there was an understanding by the ancient Greeks of the need to maintain activity into old age. Although the Greeks understood this, the scientific study of old age did not become a concern until the twentieth century. In 1909, the science of geriatrics was founded by Nascher. Nascher felt the need to develop geriatrics as a science after his visit to an old age home where he was astounded to discover how long the patients

¹⁴²

See chapter one.

actually lived.¹⁴³ According to Beauvoir, it was then explained to Nascher that the patients were treated like children; the doctors acted like pediatricians. With the historical understanding of old age established, Beauvoir then begins her own phenomenological study of it.

Beauvoir begins with the sexuality of the elderly. She focuses on the change in the sexual experience of the elderly, thus indicating again how fundamental such relationships are. Beauvoir notes that, for the male, it is possible to maintain sexual vigour well into old age, even though the overall function may decrease or be more difficult to accomplish.¹⁴⁴ She contrasts the image of the elderly male with that of the elderly female. For the elderly female, the ability to conceive children is eliminated with menopause; this decisive break in the reproductive process is unique to the female of the species.¹⁴⁵ Beauvoir notes how these biological changes can affect embodiment: "Generally speaking, so long as the mind retains strength and balance, the subject can be kept in good health: it is when the intellectual, spiritual side is badly shaken that the body deteriorates."¹⁴⁶ This is important to note because Beauvoir is emphasizing the intimate connection needed to maintain health in the body and the mind.

In the ancient traditions, which Beauvoir thoroughly examines, one constant can be established in reference to the elderly. The attitudes of the culture directly affect the way the elderly are treated. If a culture is wealthy and settled, the elderly will most likely be treated well; however, if the culture is poor and nomadic, the elderly are treated with

¹⁴³ Simone de Beauvoir, *Old Age*, trans. Patrick O'Brian, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1977), 27.

¹⁴⁴ However, with the introduction of such drugs as Viagra it is easier for elderly men to achieve and maintain erection.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 33.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 38.

little regard because of issues of survival.¹⁴⁷ Although Beauvoir's historical account of the elderly is interesting, I want to focus on her account of the lived experience of the elderly.

In the second half of her work, Beauvoir begins her existential account of old age. She notes that a feeling of inauthentic embodiment occurs in the elderly due to the deterioration of the body. The elderly individual observes their body from a position of detachment: this is demonstrated by elderly who can describe their symptoms with little attachment.¹⁴⁸ One does not really have a conception of what one's body looks like on the outside; rather one depends on others for that image of ourselves. Some elderly develop a distorted view of their bodies as still youthful and as such, they do not consider themselves as old. However, when a person comments on the elderly person's age or appearance, for example, saying to an elderly person that they are "a nice *old* man," the elderly person becomes aware of the gap between the image they have of themselves and the actual image of themselves as perceived by others. Beauvoir comments on this disassociation: "[w]hether we have recovered a more or less convincing, more or less satisfactory image of ourselves or not, we are obliged to *live* this old age that we are incapable of *realizing*. And in the first place we have to live it, to experience it, in our bodies."¹⁴⁹ Many elderly people experience inauthentic embodiment as though their body were a physical shell forced upon them and which they have to take care of. Beauvoir also notes those elderly who take inauthentic embodiment to such a point that they manifest symptoms in their bodies. For example, if a person believes that at 60 he or she should be considered old, and that is when all the physical declines begin to occur,

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 90.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 319.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 335.

then when this individual is 60, he/she will act old, even if he/she are still in perfectly good health, and he/she may even bar themselves from doing activities because they see themselves as “old.” This is inauthentic embodiment because they are restraining themselves from activities that they can do perfectly well, because of societal pressures. These pressures do not allow them to authentically assume their situation.

Beauvoir has some issues in regard to age: she states that, even if the body remains in good health, the weight of the body will be felt by the individual in old age. For the majority of the time, the mind and the body are united until their demise;¹⁵⁰ but occasionally it can happen that one wears out before the other. For example, Alzheimer’s disease is the deterioration of the mind before the body, and a disease like Multiple Sclerosis is the body wearing out before the mind. Beauvoir states that it is particularly sad for those individuals who depend on their bodies, such as artists or actors, when their bodies no longer cooperate with their mind. There is, generally speaking, a fear of death which occurs in most individuals. However, for the elderly, this fear sometimes shifts to the fear that the body will not wear out when the mind wants to die.¹⁵¹ For the elderly person, this means that they would have to live even though they are prepared for death.

*Must We Burn Sade?*¹⁵²

Keeping in mind that Beauvoir is concerned with the situation of woman, it is surprising that she is largely sympathetic to the Marquis de Sade. Sade, as we understand

¹⁵⁰ Even though the mind and body are united it does not necessarily mean that one is authentic as has been shown in the previously.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 497.

¹⁵² I have chosen to include *Must we Burn Sade?* because of Beauvoir’s sympathy towards Sade’s writings despite his treatment of women. It should also be noted that I have only examined those sections of the essay that best relate to my thesis topic.

from Beauvoir, had difficulty in reconciling his urges with his social situation. Beauvoir does contest the fact that Sade exhibits acceptance of his situation through his acknowledgement that every man wants to be a tyrant in the bedroom.¹⁵³ Sade advocated that one must remain completely and authentically embodied in the situation of the sexual act because the sexual act provides the basis for an immediate connection with the Other.¹⁵⁴ This connection is slightly different than the absolute reciprocity advocated by Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*, because, for Sade, although one is connected to the Other, one must still remain an egoistic self. Sade describes the sexual act: “[i]n his revolt, the tortured object asserts himself as my fellow creature, and through his intervention I achieve the synthesis of spirit and flesh which was first denied man.”¹⁵⁵ Sade states that, through the Other in the sexual act, one can achieve authentic embodiment, which he describes as the union of the spirit and the flesh. However, the excitement of the sexual act for Sade could not have the same effect, if the individual was not authentically embodied, asserts Beauvoir.

In addition, Sade wrote about murder, but it was in an effort to exercise unrestrained freedom, and as noted by Beauvoir, “by indefinitely prolonging the death throes of his victim, the author can perpetuate on paper the exceptional moment in which a lucid mind inhabits a body which is being degraded into matter.”¹⁵⁶ This further shows the need of Sade for an authentic embodied presence in the sexual act, because of the joy that occurs (at least on paper for Sade) when snuffing out that authentic embodied presence. In closing here, Beauvoir states that Sade also understood that the roots of

¹⁵³ Simone de Beauvoir, “Must we Burn Sade,” in *Marquis de Sade: Selections from His Writings and a Study by Simone de Beauvoir*, chosen by Paul Dinnage (New York: Grove Press, 1953), 16.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 32-33.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 34.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, 41-42.

inequality are from economic circumstances, which is closely related to the conclusions that Beauvoir herself draws in *The Second Sex* and *The Ethics of Ambiguity*.

Analysis

With the explication of Beauvoir's philosophical works completed, I will now analyze these works with the intention of uncovering themes. From the first chapter we have ascertained that Beauvoir has always been concerned with the notion of situated embodiment as evidenced in her autobiographies, which were based on journal entries from the corresponding periods in time. In particular, from the autobiographies Beauvoir demonstrates an understanding of her own situatedness as a French woman. Beauvoir notes that, in order to write *The Second Sex*, she had first to admit that she was a woman, and this had a definite effect on her situation. The situation of woman as described in *The Second Sex* is that of the inessential Other. In the idea Beauvoir expresses the position of the Other is also the label of those groups who are marginalized by society. The societal standard for the subject is the young male for Beauvoir. It is important to note the use of 'young' to denote the male subject because once the individual is considered elderly by society, that individual becomes the Other. Eliminating the structures of patriarchy, which reinforces the societal standard for the subject as a young male, will allow woman and the elderly to be liberated from the role of the Other.

Throughout *The Second Sex* Beauvoir advocates woman's freedom, which means the freedom from the myths that place woman in the position of the Other, and the freedom to be subjects. Beauvoir indicates that the situation of woman is determined by society, not solely by biology. Secomb states, "Beauvoir seems to argue that Woman has

the potential to attain freedom, to overcome her immanence, and to achieve existence as a being-for-itself.”¹⁵⁷ Beauvoir maintains that woman can achieve a union of transcendence and embodiment in order to become a being-for-itself. Secomb provides an excellent description of Beauvoir’s plan for woman,

[i]nstead Woman as incarnate-becoming suggests a life of transformation and transition that involves consciousness within flesh or rather a fleshing out of consciousness...[I]ncarnate-becoming is then neither an idealist abstraction nor a purely biological transformation, but is the process of modulation or the becoming of the material being.¹⁵⁸

This process is obviously not an easy one, but it involves recognizing the inherent ambiguity of the individual, which will lead to the ethical relationships between the self and the Other.

Through the notion of ambiguity, Beauvoir recognizes that the body is in situation.¹⁵⁹ Bergoffen explains that, although there is not much about embodiment in the *Ethics of Ambiguity*, one must assume that the person is always an intentional, situated subject. As has been demonstrated in my analysis of *The Second Sex*, subjective embodiment is always sexed and gendered for Beauvoir. In the *Ethics of Ambiguity*, Beauvoir notes that one must aid others in realizing their freedom and transcendence. As Bergoffen rightly indicates, the Other for Beauvoir is both an obstacle in one’s way and also open to one’s appeal: through calling out to the Other, one can bridge the gap that exists and form an ethical relationship. This relationship must involve all individuals

¹⁵⁷ Linnell Secomb, “Beauvoir’s Minoritarian Philosophy,” *Hypatia*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (Fall 1999):97.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 98.

¹⁵⁹ Debra B. Bergoffen, *The Philosophy of Simone de Beauvoir: Gendered Phenomenologies, Erotic Generosities*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 4.

regardless of age or gender. However, for the elderly, the same problems exist as for woman. The elderly are subject to particular myths which are perpetuated by patriarchy.

The elderly, much like woman in *The Second Sex*, are marginalized members of society. At the time of the publication of *Old Age*, there was little attention paid to the elderly because of the presumed lack of philosophical content of such work. However, as I have argued, she does apply a phenomenological methodology throughout her study of old age. As argued by Miller, Beauvoir "extends this observation in *La vieillesse* discerning not only that subjective embodiment is always sexed and gendered, but also that it is continuously involved in the process of aging. The penultimate stage of such subjective embodiment, more often than not, is old age."¹⁶⁰ Miller indicates that, in the first section of *Old Age*, Beauvoir examines the elderly as objects, yet in the second half of the book, she examines the elderly as subjects. Beauvoir is attempting to bring to light the injustices committed against the elderly, and she is combating the supposed truisms about the elderly. Beauvoir's study of old age, according to Miller, is also ethical, for Beauvoir is advocating, as in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, that all members of society should be recognized as free. Beauvoir is doing much the same thing in her study of old age; she advocates that, even if the elderly may not be contributing to the economy, they still need to be recognized as embodied, free subjects.

Beauvoir describes a doubling that occurs in the elderly. Firstly, she establishes the doubling of the elderly's embodiment, and secondly, she notes the impact of outsiders' views of the elderly.¹⁶¹ There is usually a conflict between the elderly

¹⁶⁰ Sarah Clark Miller, "The Lived Experience of Doubling: Simone de Beauvoir's Phenomenology of Old Age", in *The Existential Phenomenology of Simone de Beauvoir*, eds. W. O'Brien and L. Embree, (Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001), 129.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, 139.

individuals' view of themselves and how outsiders view them. This was especially apparent in *A Very Easy Death*, where Beauvoir could not reconcile her mother's feelings about the condition of her body, and how she herself felt from her outside perspective. As Miller indicates, the problem is the attempt to reconcile our own internal feeling of age versus how society views us. Beauvoir's solution, however, is to assume a different image of ourselves, one that does age with us, i.e., to authentically embody our old age.

In connection to *The Second Sex*, *Old Age* also considers the stereotypes perpetuated by society's image of the young man as the epitome of subjectivity.¹⁶² Beauvoir's own response to aging, as evidenced by her autobiographies, was one of horror, which shows her own difficulty in reconciling her own view of herself with the societal valuation of youth, and in particular, the youth and beauty of women. Her own personal struggles aside, Beauvoir states that the elderly should not reduce themselves to the stereotypes of society, basically the same plea that Beauvoir makes for woman. There is, however, one poignant difference between Beauvoir's study of the situation of woman and the study of the elderly: whereas Beauvoir has little sympathy for the position of women who do not exercise their freedom, she is slightly more sympathetic to the elderly.¹⁶³ In reference to bad faith, Deutscher indicates that it is natural for the elderly to slip into bad faith about their condition. A particularly poignant example is Beauvoir's own mother. At some level, she must have been aware of the fact that her body was fatally ill; however she maintained that she was getting better, a definite sign of bad faith. A similar idea is explored in *The Second Sex*. Woman has the added difficulty of trying to reconcile her own internal feelings with society's view of her. The impact of society

¹⁶² Penelope Deutscher, "Bodies, lost and found: Simone de Beauvoir from *The Second Sex* to *Old Age*," in *Radical Philosophy*, 96 (July/August 1999): 7.

¹⁶³ Ibid, 12.

and situations is especially great for these marginalized groups. Woman and the elderly who are in bad faith succumb to the image that society presents of how they should act. Woman is told to dress and act a certain way; the same can be said for the elderly. The influence of society will have direct repercussions on their authentic embodiment. The individual, as woman or as the aged, will not be genuinely assuming his/her situation, if the situation is imposed on them. In turn, there can be no chance for authentic embodiment as long as woman and the elderly are not free to assume their own situation.

For all marginalized groups, the body seems to be viewed by society as an object. This objectification of the body is internalized by the individual; hence the individual can easily slip into bad faith. For woman as for the elderly, the body is considered a passive thing that is manipulated by outside forces. For woman, this consistently happens in pregnancy, the sexual act, and economic activities. For the elderly, it is time itself which weakens the body. In addition, there are also the myths surrounding both woman and the elderly, which seem to have the biggest effect on embodiment. Women and the elderly are taught that their bodies are weak. There is a problem when trying to achieve authentic embodiment when the individual cannot reconcile the image that they have of themselves as a subject with the reality of a weak body. In turn, the individual cannot achieve authentic embodiment in the Beauvoirian sense because he/she has not assumed the reality of their body.

Bergoffen provides her own account using Beauvoir, Freud and Sade concerning the achievement of liberty for marginalized groups. According to Bergoffen, it is important to remember that economic and political equality is not enough for Beauvoir to completely liberate woman or any other marginalized group, there must also be a change

brought to our patriarchal society. Patriarchy tries to maintain the equation that subject=male, male referring to the male in his prime.¹⁶⁴ This latter qualification is important because, once the male is elderly, he is subject to the myths of patriarchy. Sade however, substitutes this subject position for a libertine which can be either male or female, according to Bergoffen. Bergoffen turns to Freud to account for the perceived need to sustain the patriarchal myths. Freud states that there are two desires in men: firstly, the heterosexual desire for women; and secondly, the homosocial desire for each other.¹⁶⁵ As Bergoffen explains, for Freud we are all primarily horde animals, and as such, the homosocial desire exists because, as individuals, men cannot overthrow the patriarchal father, but united they can. As Bergoffen indicates, women play no part in this for Freud because he assumes the myth of woman's passivity; women simply comply with the desires of the male and their silence is necessary to fulfill men's patriarchal desire.

Bergoffen traces the origin of female passivity to the need for the repressed bisexuality of women. As Freud discovered, babies are naturally bisexual, however in the male, it can play out with his homosocial desires. However, for woman this desire is repressed, which does not allow for the affirmation of the self. However, if that affirmed self desires to be the absolute subject, then woman's rebellion would just maintain the same social structure as before, but now the male will be the Other.¹⁶⁶

According to Bergoffen the patriarchal structure can be changed through the ambiguity that Beauvoir advocates. Hence, the absolute subject will be avoided because

¹⁶⁴ Debra Bergoffen, "Ménage à trois: Freud, Beauvoir, and the Marquis de Sade," in *Continental Philosophy Review* 34 (2001): 152.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 153.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 159.

of the fluidity of the ambiguous subject, states Bergoffen. Bergoffen explains, although it must be acknowledged that there will always be an inessential other category, this category does not have to be occupied by the female, as Sade asserts. Beauvoir is challenging this structure of passive and active, because if the individual is an ambiguous being, she/he will be at the same time both passive and active, hence there is no need for the absolute authoritative being.¹⁶⁷

Conclusions

The necessity of the liberation from the whole system of patriarchy is the crux of Beauvoir's overall project. *The Ethics of Ambiguity* recognizes the need for individuals to be ambiguous subjects. Clearly, Sade portrays a similar understanding when he advocated that it is not necessary for the authoritarian to be male. Beauvoir, in *The Second Sex*, holds that only healthy relationships recognize the ambiguity of each partner in a reciprocal relationship. The elderly also must recognize the ambiguity of their being as they must balance their internal impression of themselves and the outside perspective of themselves. Ambiguity is suppressed under the yoke of patriarchy.

Beauvoir states we are in a world with others, and the only means for establishing relationships with others is through reciprocity. Reciprocity in light of the situation of woman and the elderly does not seem to be considered by our society. The examination of Beauvoir's autobiographies has revealed that, on occasion and as a method of rebelling against one's situation, one will disregard one's body. This means becoming impervious to one's surroundings. It is understandable in light of *The Second Sex* and *Old Age* that the individual can reject authentic embodiment, because of her/his need to reject her/his

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Ibid, 162.

body as portrayed in society. At first glance there appears to be no other recourse available for these marginalized members of society than to forget their bodies. Yet, as *The Ethics of Ambiguity* explains, we need to help these marginalized members of society to realize their fundamental freedom in order to realize our own. Freedom for these individuals can only take form once the patriarchal determined myths of woman and the elderly are abolished.

Although Beauvoir is working within the confines of a patriarchic system, and has concluded that woman is the Other, and Sade, has also demonstrated there is no need for woman to be the Other. Yet, if the entire system of patriarchy were abolished, there would be no need to have a definitive subject. The subject would instead be an ambiguous being, both passive and active, immanent and transcendent. This ambiguity in relation to situated embodiment is of prime importance. Although Sade concentrated on the necessity for an individual to be authentically embodied only in the sexual act, Beauvoir explains that the individual should strive to be authentically embodied at every moment. Inauthenticity occurs in part due to the myths of society, and what the myths impose on individuals. Once these myths are overcome, either on a large scale or by the individuals themselves, the possibility for a situated authentic embodied existence becomes attainable.

Chapter Four: The Feminist Critique of Beauvoir and counter-arguments

When examining Beauvoir's thought, it is also imperative to examine the feminist critique in order to argue that it is based on a misinterpretation of Beauvoir's aim. The critique of Beauvoir is most prominently leveled by Judith Butler. This chapter will examine Butler's claims, among other feminist criticisms, in an attempt to defend Beauvoir. In general, feminists fault Beauvoir for asserting that, in order to achieve transcendence, woman must adhere to male values. This rests mainly with Beauvoir's account of woman in *The Second Sex*. My aim is to defend Beauvoir's account of the lived experience of woman. As I have shown throughout the thesis, embodiment is a central concern in Beauvoir's philosophy. In *The Second Sex*, it is clear that Beauvoir is not being prescriptive, but rather descriptive in her account of woman's experience. Beauvoir is accused of perpetuating the myth that women should be like men. Furthermore, there is the claim that the virtues which Beauvoir espouses are largely considered to be male virtues. According to this criticism, the only way that women can achieve transcendence in Beauvoir's theory is by adopting male virtues and becoming like men. Beauvoir is also criticized for her account of motherhood and pregnancy. The feminist's assert that Beauvoir is causing harm to women because she is not validating the traditional female roles.

It is important to examine this criticism because it has a direct bearing on this thesis project. If it is correct that Beauvoir did ascribe male virtues to women as a means for achieving transcendence, then there is little possibility for authentic female embodiment. The reason is that woman would still be adhering to values that she did not choose. Instead, I will demonstrate that, Beauvoir does not imply that woman should

adopt male values, rather, she provides a descriptive account of the lived experience of woman, Beauvoir does provide a way for female authentic embodiment through the notion of ambiguity. Ultimately, she is concerned with the ambiguous flourishing of all individuals, be they male or female.

This chapter will largely focus on both Butler and Siegfried, because of their revolutionary views with regard to gender, which also question the basic concepts of feminist thinking, such as femininity and gender.¹⁶⁸ Once the feminist critique as expressed by these two thinkers is elucidated, the remainder of this chapter will be devoted to counter-arguments.

Judith Butler

Butler is one of the more prominent figures in the criticism of Beauvoir. She rests her criticism on her own theory of gender. Butler attempts to develop a new theory of sexuality which is anti-essentialist, and based on a performative theory of sex and sexuality. Butler has been wrongly represented as promoting the voluntarist theory of gender. This theory suggests that, "not only the mental and behavioral aspects of sexuality, but also bodily features: all were viewed as voluntary properties, readily selected, somewhat like clothes and hair styles."¹⁶⁹ Heinämaa contends that the voluntarist theory states that through the various methods at the disposal of every individual, people are able to alter and shape their bodies. Using the voluntarist theory, the individual can refuse sexual characteristics, both mental and physical, for contrasting sexual characteristics. Heinämaa uses the example that a woman can reject traditional

¹⁶⁸ Sara Heinämaa, "What is Woman? Butler and Beauvoir on the Foundations of Sexual Difference" in *Hypatia* Vol. 12, No. 1 (Winter 1997), 20-21.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 21.

feminine behaviour, and can alter the shape of her body through the binding of or the removal of breasts. Butler, however, argues against the voluntarist theory of gender, and instead portrays the individual as a being who is free to play with various characteristics.

Butler asserts that her concept of performative gender theory is based on Foucault's critique of the Cartesian subject.¹⁷⁰ She considers Beauvoir's concept of the body as "a mute facticity, anticipating some meaning that can be attributed only by a transcendent consciousness, understood in Cartesian terms as radically immaterial."¹⁷¹ The view that Beauvoir is merely perpetuating Cartesian mind/body dualism is a recent development in Butler's work, and largely contradicts her earlier works where she had claimed that Beauvoir rejects this dualism. However, it is important to understand where Butler's new opinion of Beauvoir originated. According to Heinämaa, Butler originally based her criticism of Beauvoir on Beauvoir's references to Merleau-Ponty. Heinämaa asserts that Butler focused on Merleau-Ponty's assumed primacy of vision instead of his account of the body in order to conclude a male dominated view of sexuality, Butler rejects Merleau-Ponty.

The problem arises that after her initial criticism of Beauvoir, Butler situates Beauvoir's works within the phenomenology and philosophy of Merleau-Ponty. In this reading of Beauvoir, Butler still asserts that Beauvoir is putting forth a theory of cultural gender differences.¹⁷² Butler further states:

When Beauvoir claims that "woman" is a historical idea and not a natural fact, she clearly underscores the

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 129.

¹⁷² Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory", in *Performing Feminists*, ed. Sue-Ellen Case, (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1990), 271.

distinction between sex, as biological facticity, and gender, as the cultural interpretation or signification of that facticity. To be female is, according to that distinction, a facticity which has no meaning, but to be a woman is to have to *become* a woman, to compel the body to conform to an historical idea of "woman."¹⁷³

In order to better grasp Butler's understanding of Beauvoir, Heinämaa also asserts that one must comprehend the logic behind the sex/gender description. Heinämaa points to the substantive and formal use of sex and gender. Firstly, the substantive sex/gender distinction was popular among American and British feminists in the 1960s and 1970s. This distinction, which is based on the mind/body dualism, consisted of a list of features for both sex and gender.¹⁷⁴ This substantive definition later gave way to the formal definitions which were based on the juxtaposition of culture and nature which stated that criteria for sex and gender as separate categories. According to her, the formal definition of gender encompassed all sexual features that are dictated by social or cultural constraints, whereas sex is considered to be a biological feature. The formal definition of gender led to two types of gender theory: constructionist which indicates that gender differences are due to social constraints, and secondly, the voluntarist view. According to Heinämaa, Butler thinks that Beauvoir adheres to the voluntarist theory of gender, which is incorrect.

¹⁷³ Ibid, 273.

¹⁷⁴ Sara Heinämaa, "What is Woman? Butler and Beauvoir on the Foundations of Sexual Difference" in *Hypatia* Vol. 12, No. 1 (Winter 1997), 30.

Charlene Haddock Seigfried

A further critique of Beauvoir is presented by Charlene Haddock Seigfried in her essay entitled "Gender-Specific Values."¹⁷⁵ Seigfried, like Butler, perpetuates a misreading of Beauvoir's account of woman. Seigfried argues that Beauvoir fails in her account of the liberation of women because of her distinction between immanence and transcendence. Furthermore, Seigfried asserts that the transcendence-immanence dichotomy perpetuates the male as the norm: "[i]t is itself an exemplification of the asymmetrical relationship whereby 'man represents both the positive and the neutral, as is indicated by the common use of *man* to designate human beings in general; whereas woman represents only the negative, defined by limiting criteria'."¹⁷⁶ Hence, for Seigfried, if one wants to adhere to gender-specific values which express the different modes of being in the world for men and women, Beauvoir's model is inaccurate and a new model must be developed.

The problem which occurs for existential writers on the subject of women is that they still tend to use Beauvoir's distinction between immanence and transcendence, wherein the male represents transcendence.¹⁷⁷ These writers do not face the intrinsic problems of including women in the category of transcendence.

The first problem with the distinctions between immanence and transcendence that Seigfried finds is that the terms are never clearly and systematically defined in *The Second Sex*. Seigfried asserts that, in order to understand the distinction, one must have a

¹⁷⁵ Charlene Haddock Seigfried, "Gender-Specific Values" in *The Philosophical Forum* Vol. XV, No. 4 (Summer 1984), 425.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, 425.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

clear understanding of existential thought, and that Beauvoir uses the Sartrean notion of transcendence in her works. Seigfried explains the definition of transcendence:

The free subject, in ordering his life, makes himself something and thus is always in danger of objectifying his own person. Anguish is the center of self consciousness because the free person exercises his freedom in choosing, but this very choice in turn limits the subjective nothingness by defining it along certain lines and not others. While the object is always some definite thing, the subject is nothing insofar as the subject, freed from all constraints, unconditionally chooses to choose and thus creates and recreates his self.¹⁷⁸

In this respect, immanence can be understood from the sensible world and the factual, asserts Seigfried. Although Beauvoir is trying to establish the ambiguity of the human situation, according to Seigfried, she fails in that her descriptions of transcendence and immanence are often presented in opposition to each other. Beauvoir's notion of transcendence is supposedly neutral with regards to gender; however, Beauvoir also asserts that generally it is the male who represents the active creation of values. Seigfried further states that Beauvoir describes the subject who freely chooses to be a subject, and freely chooses to be engaged in projects. She also states that historical transcendence has been solely ascribed to the male. Seigfried asserts that Beauvoir has committed a fundamental mistake in her definition of transcendence, and she cannot establish a valid theory of woman specific values.

Seigfried points out that Beauvoir claims that women have not set up their own female values, in opposition to male values. She suggests that the reason why Beauvoir states that women have not set up female values is that they have not done so authentically; thus they have been inauthentic. Women have been attributed with values

¹⁷⁸

Ibid, 426.

like domesticity and submission, but these were in fact imposed on women by men, which stems from the men's desire to subjugate women.¹⁷⁹ Seigfried is arguing for female values, which are derived from female experience without the bias of the male perspective imposed on them.

According to Beauvoir, women have not set up female values.¹⁸⁰ Seigfried explains that:

Women differ from one another, and from men, in their facticity, just as men differ from one another and from women in their facticity and not in their humanity. The factual includes any aspect of a situation that is simply given prior to and apart from the free assertion which brings about the human person. But to cling to any particular way of being in the world as necessarily given and not contingent is to be in bad faith, so only inauthentic women would set up female characteristics as values.¹⁸¹

The ramifications are that, if women did establish values based on being female, the values would be based on gender, not on free choice, according to Seigfried. In order to have authentic human values, values must be established outside of the categories of male and female.¹⁸² Hence, argues Seigfried, feminine values are just the factual aspects of a woman's situation in immanence.

Seigfried states that, for Beauvoir, female values do account for the way that women have their being in the world because women fundamentally start with disadvantages, these being the menstrual cycle and the threat of pregnancy, both of which passively come to the woman and further solidify her immanence. Seigfried acknowledges that, for Beauvoir, although woman's ability to perpetuate the species is

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, 428.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid, 429.

part of her situation, this by no means can solely define her. In this respect, woman must assert her freedom in order to be recognized as a subject by men.¹⁸³ Seigfried further asserts that it would be unlikely that women would not choose to be an authentic subject, “i.e., to define themselves as immersed in the species, as submissive, for instance, as a female characteristic, unless their being is as such inauthentic, which is impossible, since only a subject capable of authenticity could fall away from it into inauthenticity.”¹⁸⁴

Seigfried accuses Beauvoir of making a fundamental category mistake in that she is “confusing an empirical development—the emergence of transcendence historically through specifically masculine efforts—an ontical-ethical principle,—that as human anyone can/ought to be transcendent.”¹⁸⁵ This leaves one with the idea that woman must adopt male values for transcendence, asserts Seigfried, because there only appear to be male values. This occurs because historically male values emerged first, but these values are supposed to be values for both males and females, yet, as Seigfried points out, these supposed universal human values are always skewed towards the male side.

Beauvoir indicates that traditionally woman has been relegated to the realm of immanence; this position should be denied by woman in an effort to assert her transcendence as she is also essentially a subject.¹⁸⁶ Seigfried rightly points out that Beauvoir utilizes the immanence and transcendence dichotomy to explain woman’s historically inferior position. This dualism sets up a ranking of values that are considered traditionally male and female, which results in the male values being highly prized and the female values being considered degrading. Seigfried commends Beauvoir for

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, 431.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

realizing this dualism. However, Seigfried thinks that Beauvoir has made a fatal flaw with respect to her use of the dualism of immanence and transcendence because of the masculine basis for transcendence, which Seigfried asserts is evident in Beauvoir's section on motherhood from *The Second Sex*.

Beauvoir states that giving birth is not a creative act, even though it is a uniquely female act. Saying that woman is not creative in giving birth is for Seigfried, the equivalent, of saying that women can only be creative once they become more like men. Beauvoir consistently tries to deny that giving birth is part of woman's essential nature, which results in "refusing to allow motherhood any human value, granting it only to biological necessity as perpetuating the species, she has adopted the pejorative male assessment of a potent female experience they are excluded from."¹⁸⁷ Seigfried further asserts that so much of language is based on the creative aspect of birth imagery that it seems impossible to deny that giving birth is not a creative act.

Seigfried argues that motherhood is seen as a non-creative act by Beauvoir due to the historical excuse for woman's oppression. In addition, Beauvoir's use of the immanence and transcendence distinction, which she took over from Sartre, whereby transcendence is always described in reference to its opposite. These opposites are often described as "openness to the future versus repetition of life...creates, invents, shapes the future vs. merely nourishing."¹⁸⁸ There are countless other examples that Seigfried uses which lead her to conclude that Beauvoir fails to provide a critique of this dichotomy: she relies on the existing categories, which result in woman striving for male defined transcendence in order to be human. Beauvoir must then describe giving birth as an

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, 433.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, 434.

involuntary biological action when she uses these categories. Seigfried further asserts that Beauvoir does not escape the nature versus culture problem. Seigfried states that giving birth should be considered neutral, and that the subject will ultimately determine whether the act is immanent or transcendent depending on how the subject views their role in the act; the options are being a baby-making being, or a free subject that chooses to have a child.

This leads Seigfried to conclude that the only means of achieving transcendence is through the subjugation of an Other; which means that in order for woman to assert her transcendence, she must affirm the very dualisms of subject and object, and immanence and transcendence. In this respect, to achieve transcendence, a woman must make another group the Other, thereby setting up a master and slave relationship. Seigfried postulates that the only group that woman can put in the immanent position is man, and this clearly is an absurdity. Seigfried asserts that the structure of immanence and transcendence necessarily entails that there will be a slave. For Seigfried, "the irony is that woman, in the same process of transcendence, but qualified as woman to man rather than man to woman, would find herself affirming as especially human those very traits that have already been given to her by man because he denigrated them."¹⁸⁹ Seigfried further asserts that these passive traits are contradictory to the vision of transcendence that Beauvoir uses. The implications are that, since man identified the traits that he wished to magnify (the male traits), and downplayed other traits (the female traits), then woman can only achieve transcendence by applying the same process to man.¹⁹⁰ Seigfried acknowledges that Beauvoir herself did not reach this conclusion because, after

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, 437.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

she provided the account of the beginning of male transcendence, she ultimately labeled the process as a universal human project outside of historical and cultural constraints. In sum, Seigfried asserts that the primary problem with Beauvoir's account of the possibility for female transcendence is that ultimately it will fail due to the dichotomy of male transcendence and female immanence.

The critiques of Beauvoir have been stated. The main critiques of Beauvoir are with her concept of transcendence which is predicated on male values. The values that she expresses do not allow for woman to assert her own values. With that said, my task is to try to defend Beauvoir against these charges in an effort to ensure the validity of Beauvoir's project.

A Reply to the Feminist Critique:

Bergoffen asserts that the feminist critique of Beauvoir, i.e., that Beauvoir wanted women to become men and assume male values, is unfounded. In fact, Beauvoir was trying to demonstrate that "under patriarchy neither men nor women confront the ambiguity of their condition because within patriarchy each sex is given a gender specific bad faith role. Man (at least some men) gets to play the fantastic bad faith role of the absolute transcendent subject. Woman gets to play the derogatory bad faith role of the immanent (almost) object."¹⁹¹ Bergoffen rightly states that Beauvoir does not want a reversal of these two positions, but rather a complete dismantling of the roles. Beauvoir

¹⁹¹ Debra B. Bergoffen, *The Philosophy of Simone de Beauvoir: Gendered Phenomenologies, Erotic Generosities*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 34.

asserts that the roles of patriarchy will be erased when each gender realizes its ambiguity.¹⁹²

Beauvoir was the driving force that made gender theory possible. It is worth quoting again that: "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman...No biological, psychical, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female being presents in society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature..."¹⁹³ Sanford says that this quote indicates two categories: the biological category and a further category that is "figured in society".¹⁹⁴ The sex/gender distinction is largely considered to be obsolete by most feminists, and by default, *The Second Sex* is considered a historical text with little relevance to theorists today. However, as Sanford states, *The Second Sex* is relevant, and because of its too many misreadings (particularly Butler's interpretation) that it has not been given its rightful place in feminist theory.

Butler classifies Beauvoir as a sex/gender feminist, which means that Beauvoir is taken to be advocating a distinction between sex and gender.¹⁹⁵ According to Sanford, Butler states that sex is just an effect of gender. However, because of the emphasis placed on gender, one is led to believe that sex is the cause of gender. Sex then becomes a substance that determines what an individual is.¹⁹⁶ Sanford states that Butler does not provide any distinctions between ontology and the "metaphysics of substance."¹⁹⁷ Butler then:

speaks of 'men' and 'women' as 'ostensible categories of ontology' and of the 'various reifications of gender' that

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Ibid.

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Stella Sanford, "Contingent ontologies: Sex, gender and 'woman' in Simone de Beauvoir and Judith Butler", in *Radical Philosophy* Vol. 97 (1999), 18.

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Ibid.

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Ibid, 19.

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Ibid, 20.

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Ibid.

have constituted the 'contingent ontologies' of (gender) identity. Effectively, Butler opposes 'ontology' to 'effect', in the sense that an ontological understanding of gender identity is taken to be a falsely essentializing one, whereas recognition of gender identity as effect is a recognition of its constructedness and of the possibility of its openness to change.¹⁹⁸

Butler further credits Beauvoir with the notion that sex is already gender, which, as Sanford rightly states, is Butler's own theory and not Beauvoir's. Butler further credits Beauvoir with the disintegration of the sex/gender distinction, states Sanford. However, this could not be more wrong, Beauvoir in her famous quote implies that "one is not born", in referring to sex, "rather one becomes", indicating gender. Beauvoir is trying to state that there is no inherent underlying essence for either the female or the male gender.¹⁹⁹ Sanford further notes the importance that Beauvoir places on ambiguity and facticity in order to emphasize that, for Beauvoir, the facticity of the body cannot be separated from the situation of the body. Hence, for Beauvoir, it is the total situation that will define woman, states Sanford. Therefore, in the total situation woman will be able to authentically assume her situation, and, in turn, she will be able to be authentically embodied.

When Butler interprets that Beauvoir dissolves the sex/gender distinction Butler agrees, yet when she thinks that Beauvoir is perpetuating the sex/gender distinction, she disagrees.²⁰⁰ However, Sanford has demonstrated that there is not a clear statement of the sex/gender distinction in Beauvoir's text; one must question why Butler sees this distinction in Beauvoir's text. Sanford proposes that Butler's distinction that she reads

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Ibid.

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Ibid, 22.

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Ibid.

into Beauvoir is Butler's own distinction between the ontological and the performative. Sanford states that, in Butler's views, sex is the effect of gender all along, so ontology will be the effect of performativity. Sanford further argues that, for Butler, "the sex/gender distinction breaks down through its own epistemic absurdity. If sex is only *known* through its linguistic/cultural articulation as gender, it must be, in itself, unknowable."²⁰¹ However, as we are well aware, Beauvoir was not concerned with the epistemic, but rather the existential, asserts Sanford.

Furthermore, Butler's assertion that Beauvoir is a voluntarist in the Cartesian or Sartrean sense is blatantly incorrect. As my thesis has shown, Beauvoir's notion of the subject cannot be identified with the Cartesian cogito because the Beauvoirian subject is a situated embodied subject which necessarily entails a connection between the mind and body. Consciousness for Beauvoir is expressed through the mind and body as they react against the situation, whereas for Descartes consciousness is only expressed in the mind. Beauvoir is closer to Merleau-Ponty's notion of the body-subject "intertwined *with* the world. The decisions made by such a subject should not be conceived as acts of free will; rather, they are bodily postures or attitudes taken in specific situations."²⁰² These situations will shape the individual and allow the individual to be either authentic or inauthentic.

The main flaw of Butler's interpretation of Beauvoir is that she interprets Beauvoir through the tradition of Anglo-American feminism, which focuses on the sex/gender distinction.²⁰³ According to Heinämaa, Butler thinks that the goal of

²⁰¹ Ibid, 23.

²⁰² Sara Heinämaa, "What is Woman? Butler and Beauvoir on the Foundations of Sexual Difference" in *Hypatia* Vol. 12, No. 1 (Winter 1997), 22.

²⁰³ Ibid.

Beauvoir's work is to collapse the sex/gender distinction, but, as we have seen, Butler is actually reading this distinction into Beauvoir's work. Beauvoir's aim was to study the sexual difference between man and woman through a phenomenological account, not to solve or collapse the differences, but to identify the full existential situation of woman. The quote by Beauvoir, that "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman," is interpreted by Anglo-American feminists to mean that Beauvoir considers "becoming" as a process of socialization.²⁰⁴ Furthermore Beauvoir is seen as attacking biological determinism. Beauvoir rejects not only biological determinism, but also all other causal ways of becoming sexed, states Heinämaa.

The section of *The Second Sex* on biology leads to the greatest misunderstanding of Beauvoir's position. According to Le Doeuff, in this section, Beauvoir is not defending biological explanations for the situation of woman; rather she is demonstrating the limitations of biological explanations.²⁰⁵ Beauvoir's purpose for this chapter is clearly expressed in the conclusion of the chapter: "Biology is not enough to give an answer to the question that is before us: why is woman the *Other*?"²⁰⁶ The Anglo-American reading of Beauvoir that sees her rejecting biological determinism is partially correct, asserts Heinämaa. What is missed by the Anglo-American feminists is that Beauvoir also rejects all psychoanalytic as well as historical materialist theories of woman. Beauvoir asserts that the situation of woman cannot be established if one tries to understand by means of identifying causes and effects. Beauvoir is studying the

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid, 23.

²⁰⁶ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H.M. Parshley (New York: Vintage Books a division of Random House Inc, 1989), 37.

constitution of meanings, therefore a phenomenological account.²⁰⁷ Heinämaa asserts, "Beauvoir argues that causal explanations must give way to a phenomenological study of meanings and their constitution in actions and practices if we want to understand the sexual difference."²⁰⁸ Beauvoir is trying to understand the situation of woman, but she is not trying to give a justification for why woman is in the position that she is in.

Phenomenology provides Beauvoir with the necessary tools to study the experience of woman and the meanings that this experience has for woman. Heinämaa states, "[t]he phenomenologist *suspends* his judgements and prejudices about existence and non-existence in order to be able to describe the world as it *appears* to the subject."²⁰⁹ Furthermore, the phenomenologist tries to understand how meanings are made through the experience of the subject, so the phenomenologist cannot centre her studies on any realities that are supposedly behind experience, especially any explanation that has its basis in psychology, sociology or biology. Beauvoir is practising this phenomenological method in her study of woman, and as such, she cannot appeal to any of these supposed explanations of experience because, as a phenomenologist, Beauvoir must examine the particular and specific experiences of woman in order to look for the origin of the essence of woman.

As my thesis has shown, Beauvoir is concerned with the situated embodied experience of woman which will include the background of individual, cultural, and historical elements. However, these cultural and historical elements are not used as an explanation for how woman acts, but rather they are presented as contributing factors to

²⁰⁷ Sara Heinämaa, "What is Woman? Butler and Beauvoir on the Foundations of Sexual Difference" in *Hypatia* Vol. 12, No. 1 (Winter 1997), 24.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid, 25.

the overall situation of woman. Ultimately, it is up to the individual woman to decide how to interpret her past, and that will determine the effect that it has on her. Of course, Beauvoir, is coming from the standpoint that the embodied subject is ultimately intertwined with what it encounters, which includes other embodied subjects.

Beauvoir is advocating an ambiguous subject because the subject is not transparent to itself.²¹⁰ Beauvoir is adopting a phenomenological perspective as she clearly states, "it will be said that the body is not a *thing*, it is a situation, as viewed in the perspective I am adopting—that of Heidegger, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty; it is the instrument of our grasp upon the world, a limiting factor for our projects."²¹¹ In this respect, because Beauvoir does not think of the body as a thing, but rather as an active subject, sexuality cannot be an attribute of the body, asserts Heinämaa. Rather, sexuality is a style of being. Heinämaa further asserts that, for Beauvoir, "femininity or womanhood, when conceived as a style of being, cannot be pinned down by a common source or form; it can only be conceived by studying its concrete manifestations and the various relations between them."²¹² This is exactly Beauvoir's project in *The Second Sex*. Instead of providing an over arching reason for why woman is in the position of the Other, Beauvoir only speculates about causes through her study of individual women. Heinämaa states that Beauvoir describes the many actions and practices that make up what is considered to be woman; therefore, she is not trying to find the cause for the mental and physical differences between man and woman.

²¹⁰ Ibid, 26.

²¹¹ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H.M. Parshley (New York: Vintage Books a division of Random House Inc, 1989), 34.

²¹² Sara Heinämaa, "What is Woman? Butler and Beauvoir on the Foundations of Sexual Difference" in *Hypatia* Vol. 12, No. 1 (Winter 1997), 27.

The supposed masculine values that Beauvoir is portraying disappear altogether when it is recognized that Beauvoir, in the beginning section of *The Second Sex* on biology, is providing a definition of woman from man's perspective, i.e., these descriptions are not Beauvoir's own. Butler's criticism that Beauvoir is merely conceptualizing the body in a Cartesian way, and that the idea of becoming a woman is an act of immaterial consciousness is unfounded.²¹³ Beauvoir clearly describes the subject through embodied existence, therefore making the subject bodily, which clearly differs from the Cartesian notion of the subject and from Butler's interpretation. The fundamental flaw Butler's interpretation of Beauvoir is that she thinks that Beauvoir is providing an explanation for gender differences, not a phenomenological account, Heinämaa then asserts that Butler is presenting Beauvoir's work as a theory about the sociological and cultural production of gender. Butler does not seem to realize that, for Beauvoir, the aforementioned aspects are not separable from the individual's experience. All of the historical factors of an individual's life will ultimately contribute to the individual's situation.

The criticisms raised by Seigfried are interesting; however, they still rely on the notion that Beauvoir is presenting a theory of liberation for woman. Firstly, as this thesis has demonstrated, Beauvoir is putting forth an existential account of the lived experience of woman. She does this in an effort to understand the situation surrounding woman, not specifically to advance a program for their liberation. Seigfried raises the issue that Beauvoir is perpetuating male values through Beauvoir's distinction of immanence and transcendence, wherein the male is considered to be the norm. Beauvoir is difficult to defend on this point because she does seem to take the male as a model for

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Ibid, 28.

transcendence. However, Beauvoir's reason for doing so must be clearly understood. Beauvoir is using the male as transcendence because, transcendence is action. Beauvoir states, "[i]t is because man is a being of transcendence and ambition that he projects new urgencies through every new tool."²¹⁴ The traits that Beauvoir states, transcendence and ambition, are not confined to man, Beauvoir is merely demonstrating that, traditionally, man has represented these traits, but they are not limited to man. Ambiguity for Beauvoir is of the utmost importance, and as such, she desires an ambiguous being which will have aspects of both transcendence (as action) and immanence.

Although Seigfried rightly indicates that immanence and transcendence are not clearly defined in *The Second Sex*, it is unfair to think that Beauvoir is using the Sartrean description of transcendence. The description that Seigfried provides does have some important aspects; however, she misses the fundamental notions of ambiguity and ambiguous relationships in Beauvoir's philosophy. The description that Seigfried provides presents a hostile image of the self where anguish is the key to self-consciousness. The anguish that Seigfried describes seems to stem more from the hostile Sartrean relationship of the look. For Beauvoir, the subject is more fluid, and can be both subject and object at various points.²¹⁵ The subject in her ambiguous being can freely move from immanence to transcendence as her situation alters. Seigfried thinks that Beauvoir is presenting the ambiguous human situation, but she further states that, for Beauvoir, immanence and transcendence are often presented in opposition to each other. This understanding does appear to have some merit upon first reading of *The Second Sex*,

²¹⁴ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H.M. Parshley (New York: Vintage Books a division of Random House Inc, 1989), 57.

²¹⁵ This differs from Sartre in that the fluid subject does not encounter necessarily a hostile experience when turned into an object.

but what must be noted is Beauvoir's reason for this supposed opposition. Beauvoir is not presenting her study of the situation of woman especially, in the first part of *The Second Sex*, as what she believes to be true about the situation of woman. Beauvoir, instead, is examining many of the possible explanations in order to discount them for her own study. The opposition which Seigfried points out is present because of preconceived notions of the relationships between man and woman, which Beauvoir later disregards.

Seigfried asserts that Beauvoir cannot establish female values, and that female values have been imposed on woman by man. I speculate that Beauvoir would agree with Seigfried that the preexisting female values have been imposed on woman by man, but again, Beauvoir is stating this so that she can consider the lived situation of woman free from the previously held beliefs of female values. Seigfried thinks that Beauvoir cannot establish feminine values because any feminine values will be out of immanence. I must again assert that Beauvoir's project was not to define feminine values or to provide a program for woman's transcendence, rather it was to examine the situation of woman.

The authentic human values that Beauvoir desires are outside of the gender distinction keeping in mind that, for Beauvoir, the subject is ambiguous. Beauvoir only states those traditional methods for defining woman in order to criticize them, not as the defining features of woman's immanence. Seigfried further states that woman would not value immanence as a female virtue, if she desired transcendence.

I must look to *The Ethics of Ambiguity* in order to counter Seigfried by indicating the importance of reciprocity and ambiguity. It is not so much that woman would not value immanence, but as a human being, woman would realize the fluctuation which is

necessary for reciprocal relationships between immanence and transcendence. In *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir acknowledges that the only truly healthy relationship between man and woman will be an ambiguously reciprocal one. In order for authenticity to be possible, one must understand the transcendent aspect of their being, especially if they have only ever been in the position of immanence; then it is important to maintain ambiguity as the fluctuation between immanence and transcendence.

Seigfried charges Beauvoir with a category mistake. In this thesis, I have demonstrated that the position of the immanent Other is not defined by Beauvoir as solely female. In *Old Age*, the Other is any elderly individual regardless of gender. Since, in this respect, the position of Other for Beauvoir is essentially gender-free and sex-free, it is important to note that the characteristics which she attributes to the elderly are the same that she attributes to woman, ie., a marginalized member of society. Again Beauvoir's motives are to uncover the truth behind these myths, and as such, expose the possibility of transcendence for marginalized individuals. The supposed empirical development is not what Beauvoir bases her descriptions of immanence and transcendence, but rather she uses the empirical studies in order to demonstrate that the categories of immanence and transcendence cannot be established through this very empirical development.

Seigfried's accusation that, for Beauvoir, giving birth is not considered a creative act for woman is for the most part true. However, Beauvoir's reason for this assertion is that woman has been historically defined solely by this act, and as such, woman has been closely associated with the body. Although Seigfried understands this aspect of Beauvoir's thought, Seigfried does not seem to realize that Beauvoir is presenting the

myths about woman in order to critique them. By her acknowledgment that giving birth is not a creative act, Beauvoir is trying to eliminate creativity as defined by woman's birth process in order to establish a gender neutral idea of creativity. However, giving birth could be considered to be creative for Beauvoir, provided that the subject freely chooses to have a baby. Although Beauvoir does utilize the dichotomy of immanence and transcendence, Beauvoir is not, as Seigfried charges, taking these distinctions wholesale from Sartre. Beauvoir recognizes the need for the fluid transition from both these states for each individual in order to establish reciprocal relationships. This clearly argues against Seigfried's point that in order for woman to achieve transcendence woman must subjugate another group. Because Beauvoir is advocating an ambiguous being, there is no need for a subjugated group.

Conclusions

The feminist critique has yielded some interesting results. Both Butler and Seigfried come from the position that Beauvoir is trying to establish unique feminine values. As has been argued throughout this section, Beauvoir's project was to account for the situation of woman, including all cultural, historical and biological presuppositions. Beauvoir establishes these presuppositions in order to critique them and to reach her conclusion that none of these factors are the reason for woman's oppression, but rather the entire lived situation of woman that does not allow woman to achieve transcendence. Beauvoir does this in an attempt to make woman aware of the situation that she is experiencing in order to change it. Beauvoir does not provide a prescriptive statement for how woman should live her life, but rather she is encouraging woman to

think for herself, to freely choose her own projects, and not have her projects dictated to her through any cultural, historical or biological factors. Although it is difficult to reconcile Beauvoir's views on motherhood, I can speculate that, as long as woman is authentically choosing motherhood, she is asserting her transcendence.

Beauvoir's ultimate goal is not an individual who is constantly asserting her transcendence. Rather, Beauvoir recognizes the need to be ambiguous subjects such that one can fluctuate between immanence and transcendence. This ambiguity allows for reciprocal relationships to be established between man and woman where each will aid in the achievement of freedom. In this respect Beauvoir differs from the Sartrean notions of immanence and transcendence, and as such, allows for these categories to be applied to all situations where one party is considered to be oppressed. The feminist critique, as explored in this chapter, demonstrated a clear mistake in starting point. Having shown how they erred, I have adequately countered their arguments.

Conclusion

This thesis has endeavored to prove that the theme of situated embodiment is consistent in Beauvoir's thought. Through the systematic analysis of her works I have demonstrated that Beauvoir's concerns about situated embodiment began from her earliest childhood. Beauvoir was adept at examining her own life in an existential manner which led her to apply the concept of situated embodiment to her philosophical works and her works of fiction.

The first chapter of the thesis demonstrated Beauvoir's embryonic form of the concept of situated embodiment. These moments of situated embodiment were taken directly from her life, and they serve as the basis of Beauvoir's later philosophical notion of embodiment. Beauvoir then applies some of her own moments of situated embodiment to the characters in her works of fiction. By using moments from her own life in her novels, Beauvoir has shown how important situated embodiment is.

Beauvoir's autobiographies also bear witness to the Other. Bearing witness to the Other entails giving a voice to those who cannot speak for themselves. By Beauvoir reporting on events that occur at specific points in her life, she accomplishes both an account of her own situation and the situation of others. Through her detailed accounts it becomes evident that situation has a direct bearing on embodiment. Beauvoir was often willing to sacrifice her own authentic embodiment (particularly during World War II) in order to provide an account of the suffering of the Other. In these moments, Beauvoir altogether disregarded her own bodily desires in order to bear witness to the Other. In that sense, inauthentic embodiment could yield positive results. Bearing witness to the Other is important for Beauvoir, and she achieves it only through inauthentic embodiment.

Chapter two examined the novels that Beauvoir wrote and how they contain many instances of the theme of situated embodiment. The novels enriched the examination of the theme of situated embodiment because they demonstrate Beauvoir's application of the philosophical concept of situated embodiment to fictional situations. This link can be established between the autobiographies, the philosophical works, and the novels. Beauvoir understands embodiment personally, which she then conceptualizes for her philosophy. The novels then combine her philosophical understanding of embodiment and a fictionalized account of moments in her life. Throughout the novels, one can recognize instances that closely parallel Beauvoir's own life and those characters that are the application of her philosophical concepts.

The third chapter was important to the overall goal of the thesis because it showed a philosophical understanding of Beauvoir's concept of situated embodiment. Beauvoir's autobiographical account of embodiment then becomes translated into a philosophical concept which Beauvoir uses in both her philosophy and her novels. Through Beauvoir's own personal understanding of the affect of situation on embodiment, she examines society's marginalized groups. Through this philosophical examination, Beauvoir concludes that any marginalized group, such as woman and the elderly, will exhibit inauthentic embodiment because they do not authentically assume their situation.

I have stressed this point in the third chapter because of its applicability to the criticisms put forth by feminists, which I examined in the fourth chapter. Beauvoir's systematic analysis of woman's situation lead her to the understanding of the importance of the liberation of woman from certain restraints, which, in turn, led Beauvoir to the hopeful conclusion that it is possible for woman to escape the position of the Other

through the notions of ambiguity and freedom.²¹⁶ For authentic ethics to be possible, Beauvoir understands that there must be recognition of intrinsic freedom and ambiguity for all individuals. The notions of freedom and embodiment, which are present in Sade's writings, are stressed by Beauvoir because of the close parallels to her own account.

Lastly, the fourth chapter examined the criticisms put forth by feminists against Beauvoir and some counter-arguments. I have revealed that most of the criticisms of Beauvoir hinged on a misinterpretation of Beauvoir's purpose in *The Second Sex*. It was important to counter these arguments because if Beauvoir was merely prescribing male values to women then women could not be authentic. The criticisms of Butler and Siegfried are based on the misreading that Beauvoir was trying to establish unique feminine values. This misinterpretation is based on the beginning sections of *The Second Sex* where Beauvoir systematically elucidates various biological, historical and cultural reasons for why woman is the Other. Many of the critics of Beauvoir take these sections to mean that these are Beauvoir's excuses for why woman is the Other. However, as I have clearly shown throughout this thesis, Beauvoir provides the analysis of these various areas in order to conclude that it is not any one of these factors that put woman in the position of the Other, but rather the whole lived situation of woman. Beauvoir is not trying to establish unique feminine values, as she does not provide prescriptions for how woman should live her life. Instead, Beauvoir's message is that woman should assert herself and freely chose and assume her own situation. In my examination, I have shown that the fundamental mistake of the feminist critique, as we find it expressed in Butler

²¹⁶ Although liberation is important for Beauvoir, she does not provide a step by step method for achieving liberation as Siegfried thought.

and Seigfried's writings, is their misunderstanding of Beauvoir's overall aim with her treatise on woman.

In conclusion, the various mediums that Beauvoir employed have revealed her constant concern for situated embodiment. When examined together, these works show the interrelatedness of Beauvoir's life and her works. Beauvoir is adamant about embodiment and the individual's attitude towards their own situation, because she understands the direct bearing it has on an authentic existence.

Beauvoir has definitely rejected Cartesian dualism with her concept of situated embodiment. In the same vein as Nietzsche, she has demonstrated a joy in existence that can occur when the mind is expressed through the body. Beauvoir has emerged as one of the legitimate leaders of the existential movement. Beauvoir's employment of various mediums to express her philosophy has allowed for her to fully express the lived experience of the individual, which in turn establishes her applicability to all time periods. I have also, with this thesis, solidified Beauvoir's position as a philosopher in her own right, and I have shown that she has a philosophy which is independent from Sartre.

Beauvoir's philosophy is currently relevant to academic studies and to society as a whole. Women and marginalized groups, of today still need Beauvoir in order to examine their lived situation and to take up Beauvoir's task of liberating themselves from the role of the Other. Many of the problems that Beauvoir wrote about over fifty years ago still persist for women. Women are still earning less than men, and in some places in the world women, are struggling for even basic human rights. Our mass media also reinforces certain negative images and ideas about women, which are counterproductive

to Beauvoir's goal. However, the mass media could also help the woman of today to further Beauvoir's cause. With the mass media, women can command the attention of the world and tell the stories of those women who do not have a voice. When women take up Beauvoir's task of learning to assert their transcendence, they can help others to liberate themselves. The mass media could be a tool to disseminate this information to a larger audience. Authenticity and freedom are ever more important to our current culture. The philosophy of Beauvoir speaks to this, and as such, it will remain relevant to our lived situation as embodied human beings.

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