

Simone de Beauvoir: *Les belles images*

some critics' reflexions on the novel

- 1 "Les belles images contains many of Beauvoir's usual themes. However, they are here expressed in images that are facile, pat and rather too obvious. Eager to jolt the reader into contempt for the bourgeoisie, Beauvoir has indulged her taste for didacticism at the expense of imaginative insight."
(R.D Cottrell: *Simone de Beauvoir*, N.Y., 1976, p 141)
- 2 "In the final analysis, both *Les belles images* and *La femme rompue*, skilfully constructed as they may be, are decidedly inferior to Beauvoir's best fictional work." (*ibid.*, p 143)
- 3 (from *Simone de Beauvoir* by Konrad Bieber, Boston, 1979):
p 171: "...while physically harmonious, the couple [Jean-Charles & Laurence] thus fall apart..."
"...Mark Slonim's criticism that her characters are merely representations of ideas and rather lifeless..."
"...their — quite unbelievable — trip to Greece..."
pp 172-3:
"[Laurence senses] her husband's diminishing affection..."
- 4 (from *Simone de Beauvoir: Encounters with Death*, New Jersey, 1973):
p.8: "In *Les belles images*, sadness and death are systematically rejected in favor of more palatable fictions..."
p 81: "The *belles images*, the counterfeit money that circulate in this prosperous, sophisticated, middle-class milieu, are designed to hide or to justify any form of unhappiness..."
"The entire novel is constructed around the notion of evasion."
- 5 (from *Simone de Beauvoir & the Limits of Commitment*, Cambridge, 1981, by Anne Whitmarsh):
p 7: "The theme of bourgeois morality and attempted emancipation from it..."
p 174: "Some readers have expressed surprise that she concerned herself with such people; she concludes that they have failed to read between the lines [of *Les belles images*]"
- 6 (from *Simone de Beauvoir: a Study of her Writings*, by Terry Keefe, London, 1983):
p 203: "...the brilliant ironical beginning..."
204: "[Laurence's] general position in relation to the social milieu depicted, then, is characterised by ambiguity."
206: "[Laurence has] particular difficulties in her relations with men..."
209: "The depth and resonance of the final sections of *Les belles images* are unmatched anywhere in Beauvoir's fiction..."
228: "...her most homogeneous and carefully wrought work of fiction, *Les belles images*..."

by Elaine
Marks!!