BOOK REVIEWS

White Slave Crusades: Race, Gender, and Anti-Vice Activism, 1887-1917 by Brian Donovan (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press 2006), 184 pp., $30.00.

White Slave Crusades: Race, Gender, and Anti-vice Activism, 1887-1917 by Brian Donovan is an eloquent and engaging account of concerns and fears about the ambiguous and dreaded "white slave trade," and attempts to curtail or suppress it, from the conclusion of the nineteenth century into the Progressive era. White Slave Crusaders follows other sociological accounts, such as Nicola Beisel's Imperiled Innocents, about vice and the anti-vice movements that emerge in reactions to them. Like Beisel's work, Donovan also chronicles how these moral reactions involve apprehensions about the societal boundaries of race, gender, and class.

White Slave Crusades provides an engaging narrative of the white slave genre as presented through newspapers and other periodicals. It reveals the anxieties that the white slave genre provoked and reinforced. Donovan adroitly demonstrates the archetypal theme of the innocent young woman from a rural America arriving *to* bustling cities filled with unscrupulous men. Inevitably, these women trust the proffered assistance of one of these men, and quickly succumb to the "white slave trade". Donovan demonstrates that these narratives are not monolithic, but varied between regions and within the anti-vice movement itself. These variations become especially significant in the project of advocating for these "fallen women." Donovan reveals that where blame was cast -- foreigners and nonwhites intent on exploiting vulnerable women or a capitalist system where waged work pays women so poorly that prostitution becomes a viable decision—was not a settled issue. Donovan also adroitly portrays how those who were perceived as responsible for white slavery were often a proxy for the anxieties of those who accused them.

Donovan's account of the anti-vice crusaders also reveals the societal critiques that were implicit in their crusades. Some, such as Katharine Bushnell, noted that the white prostitutes she investigated for the WCTU in rural lumber camps, had economic motives. Many others, such as Clifford Roe, argued that "white slaves" were naïve victims of vanity, who unrealistically hoped for theatrical work, and were swiftly exploited by ruthless white slave procurers. Implicit in narratives such as Roe's is the motif of women who strayed from traditional feminine roles and willingly entered sites abounding with ethnic and racial mixing – such as dance halls – a necessary precondition for their vulnerability to white slavers. In sum, these white slave narratives served as cautionary tales for those who would violate the boundaries of whiteness.

Through examining cases from Chicago, San Francisco, and New York City, Donovan demonstrates how white slave narratives evolve into slightly

different variations yet continually follow the theme of the innocent and naïve young woman, the unscrupulous exploiters (both men and women), and the dangerous groups that threatened the status of "whiteness". Donovan contends that much of the anxieties expressed about white slavery raised questions about how whiteness was constituted, which groups were able to assume the mantle of whiteness, and what societal institutions were central to marking these boundaries.

Donovan reveals how these contested categories were not uniform, even for the anti-vice crusaders. Activists like Frances E. Willard perceived a distinctive category for the "Anglo Saxon" that joined her concerns about the exploitation of prostitutes with concerns about foreigners, and how these foreigners who were a threat to the American Anglo-Saxons. Conversely, other activists, like Jane Addams, deployed the white slave narratives to critique industrial capitalism, noting how rather than unscrupulous (and often foreign) men it was poor wages that often compelled young women into prostitution.

White Slave Crusades is an engaging account of the rise and fall of a moral and cultural panic. However, as with many accounts of moral panics from a social constructivist perspective, the reader is left hoping for a bit more direction as to how much of the anxieties about the white slave trade were due to genuine revulsion at the widespread sexual exploitation of young women, and how much of these concerns were based on projections, fabrications, and a few sensational cases. Donovan's work also touches an increasingly resonate question within the social sciences: when are fears and panics about morality and social conduct proxies for the alteration of societal boundaries of class, race, gender, and so on. The question arises: when does morality become an independent variable? For example, political scientist James A. Morone's *Hellfire Nation: The Politics of Sin in American History*, (Yale, 2003) contends that American jeremiads have been about race, class, and group boundaries since before American independence, but they have also been about morality. Donovan's work enters this important conversation.

Unfortunately, Donovan's book arrives on the scene when many of these questions are being revisited in other arenas: the question of abstinence-only sexual education in many states in the U.S. and growing evidence of resurgent international human trafficking (characterized by women being forced into sexual servitude) are just two examples. While Donovan's work is admirable in that he does not attempt to stray beyond his data and researched milieu, the timeliness of the issues raised by *White Slave Crusaders* makes us wish he had.

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Simone de Beauvoir's Political Thinking edited by Lori Jo Marso and Patricia Moynagh (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 139 pp., $18.00.

Simone de Beauvoir's Political Thinking, edited by Lori Jo Marso and Patricia Moynagh, is a collection of essays on the political thinking of French feminist and existentialist Simone de Beauvoir as reflected in her life and work. The meaning of political in this volume is understood as derived from *polis*, meaning town, related to being a citizen. In this light, by comparing Beauvoir's multiple voices as well as analyzing her works in juxtaposition with other feminist theoreticians, the editors have constructed a volume with far-reaching implications that go beyond an examination of Beauvoir's fenminist theory and political thought; this book serves as an inspiration for social activism which is appropriate to our time.

By dedicating her 1963 book *The Feminine Mystique* to Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan acknowledged Beauvoir's influence as the "mother" of the feminist movement. Beauvoir was closely associated throughout her life with Jean-Paul Sartre, the "father" of French existentialism. Upon examination, their relationship illustrates many aspects of Beauvoir's thinking. Mary Caputi, in the last essay of the book, contrasts Beauvoir and Sartre's basic understanding of existence. Caputi borrows from Sonia Kruks in portraying Sartre as a "radical individualist" who viewed himself as a "desert island". (114) Beauvoir, on the other hand, is described as being aware of our interconnectedness; for her, " no man is an island;" our existence can only be understood in a social context; "no one is completely free…each is bound to all…Universal, absolute man exists nowhere." (117)

Patricia Moynagh describes Beauvoir's modus operandi in the first essay "Beauvoir on Lived Reality, Exemplary Validity, and a Method for Political Thought". She defines exemplary validity as a Kantian system for gaining understanding and drawing conclusions when there are no prior rules to serve as guidelines. One could go back to Descartes' *Discours de la Méthode* to understand this phenomenological descriptive method of inquiry. For Beauvoir, there is no universal archetype, no a priori essence; whether male or female, our understanding is based on "lived experience'. To understand what it means to be a woman, one can only know by examining the lives of individual women. Moynagh refers to Hannah Arendt to explain that it is from this method of exemplary validity that Beauvoir examines what it means to be a woman. Historically women were often defined by their relation to others, i.e. as wife or daughter. In recounting individual subjective stories, Beauvoir enables us to "see in the particular what is valid in more than one case."

In the second chapter, "Unsettling the Universal", Emily Zakin explores the traditional patriarchal relationship that generally defined woman by

emphasizing how she differed from the masculine Universal Ideal. Zakin quotes Beauvoir's *Ethics of Ambiguity* to state that 'it is not impersonal universal man who is the source of all values, but the plurality of concrete, particular men.'(41) We could extend that statement to specifically include concrete particular women.

In the third essay, "Reading Beauvoir with and against Foucault" Sonia Kruks interprets Beauvoir's work against that of Foucault's exploration of the ways that representations of women have shifted over time. According to Kruks, Beauvoir understood that becoming a woman involves subjectification through what Foucault calls panoptic practices, where the ever present gaze of those in power is internalized, resulting in the subject's adherence to a system "that assures the automatic functioning of power (p. 58), a system where the subject "becomes the (agent) of his or her own subjection." (p. 59) To illustrate, one could say that the inadequacy of the government in Iraq today is due to the absence of a panoptic gaze. By contrast, it is easy to understand how the omnipresent gaze of the IRS encourages compliance.

Beauvoir's account of women's interiorization of the male gaze is seen by Kruks as a rewording of Sartre's phenomenology of "the look" in his *L'Etre et le néant*. For Sartre, "the look" is experienced as a threat, rendering the recipient an object. Women have always been subject to the omnipresent gaze of power, whether on the part of a particular male or from society in general. It is here that Beauvoir makes her point that recognition of this subjection is the first step in realizing that we have the capability of choosing to reject it, thereby gaining our freedom.

Beauvoir sees freedom as a condition to be experienced with others, not in isolation, and there lies the political aspect of her writing. One of the characters in the novel *La Peste (The Plague*) by Beauvoir's contemporary, Albert Camus, illustrates this point of view. When presented with the opportunity to leave the plague ridden city of Oran, he ultimately decides to stay and fight against the epidemic. "J'ai toujours pensé que j'étais étranger à cette ville et que je n'avais rien à faire avec vous…(mais) cette histoire nous concerne tous…il peut y avoir de la honte à être heureux tout seul." (p. 190) (I always thought I was a stranger in this town, and that I had nothing to do with you…but this story concerns us all…it might be shameful to be happy all alone.)

In the fourth essay, "Beauvoir on Mothers, Daughters and Political Coalitions", Lori Jo Marso contemplates Beauvoir's account of her own life as an example of how an independent woman in a patriarchal society will experience tension between the desire to gain freedom and the temptation to accept the conventions of a traditional life. For Marso, a study of Beauvoir's life and work suggest the possibility of women acting in concert to achieve greater freedom. This is understood as a political act.

The struggle against oppression is not limited to women trying to achieve freedom; it is for any individual who is a "subject' in the eyes of "the other",

anyone whose freedom is diminished. Karen Shelby in the fifth essay "Beauvoir and Ethical Responsibility" explores the notion of collective responsibility. She also cites Hannah Arendt to define the guilt of those who bear responsibility as a result of their membership in a particular group, such as the Germans under Hitler in World War II. Shelby describes a half dozen personality types who act in ways to evade their ethical responsibility to others. Against these types Shelby sees Beauvoir, offering a different perspective, the "experience of another subjectivity…an alternate vision of existence…(that) opens up the possibility… of bridging the difficult gap between subject and object that is the essence of the human condition. (p. 8) This view is very much in the French tradition of the artist/writer as seer or prophet assuming responsibility to carry the torch so to speak, and illumine the direction society should take. Shelby says this 'offers those who encounter the work(s) the opportunity to engage in an exercise of thought, preparing them to think and act ethically when confronted with situations that demand it." (p. 98)

Beauvoir felt very guilty as a French citizen during the Algerian War, feeling that her citizenship rendered her complicit in the actions of her government. Mary Caputi, citing Julien Murphy, says that this was for Beauvoir "a personal tragedy". (p. 109)

Beauvoir publicized the atrocities committed by the French in Algeria and actively campaigned for the exoneration of Djamila Boupacha who had been imprisoned, beaten and tortured as a suspect in the planting of a bomb at the University of Algiers. Beauvoir's actions demonstrated her belief in the necessity to act on behalf of others to combat oppression. We can once again use the words of Beauvoir's contemporary, Camus whose novel *La Peste* is often viewed as a symbolic struggle against nazism or other forms of oppression. When Camus' character Tarrou chooses to combat the plague, he says: "J'ai fait de la politique…je ne voulais pas être un pestiféré." (I engaged in politics…I didn't want to be a victim)

In the sixth and last essay, "Beauvoir and the Case of Djamila Boupacha", Mary Caputi cites Beauvoir's use of a quotation from Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* as the epigraph to her second novel, *The Blood of Others*: "Each of us is responsible for everything and every human being." In this final chapter *of Simone de Beauvoir's Political Thinking*, Caputi investigates Beauvoir's commitment to that idea. Caputi compares Sartre's view of the world with Beauvoir's. While Sartre sought to free himself from the "other", Beauvoir concluded that "we are free only when others are free". (p. 117) She rejects Sartre's individualism in favor of social interaction. "[I]t is true that each is bound to all."

Caputi explores the arguments of two people who questioned Beauvoir's motivation, Franz Fanon, the martinican author and psychoanalyst, and Gisele Halimi, the attorney for Djamila Boupacha. Countering their criticisms with supportive arguments put forth by Stanley Cavell and Patchen Markell, Caputi

concludes by defending Beauvoir's actions as "consistent with her ethical writings". (p. 121) Caputi undrscores Beauvoir's view that we are all bound to one another "because each is bound to all, we must intervene in the fact of political struggle. We are responsible toward those who cannot enjoy the freedom, choice and responsibility that are open to us, and we msut extend the giving gesture toward the other," (p.125)

Simone de Beauvoir's Political Thinking illustrates Beauvoir as an author in the tradition of the French intellectual engagé, a seer or visionary whose understanding of society and participation in political action moves that society forward in recognizing and acknowledging that human suffering is detrimental to all and that taking action to rectify injustice is an ethical responsibility. In indicating what can be achieved through solidarity, by acting in concert for responsible, ethical solutions to social inequities, this volume is an inspiration to examine one's own situation and to collaborate with others to act against injustice and oppression.

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The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus by Amy-Jill Levine (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2006) 250 pp. $24.95.

Dr. Amy-Jill Levine's newly published work, *The Misunderstood Jew* (2006) is a revealing volume. *Publishers Weekly*'s cover blurb says that it does a "masterful job of describing the subtleties of anti-Semitism" and "offers a prescription for healing and mutual understanding to the literature of interfaith dialogue." *The Misunderstood Jew* may be the best of this written open/candid reality over the centuries – especially on a religious subject. The Carpenter Professor of New Testament and Director of the Program in Religion, Gender and Sexuality at the Vanderbilt University Divinity School in Nashville, TN., Dr. Levine not only writes it, she lives it.

I had the privilege of connecting with this wonderful woman scholar while attending two of her dynamic lectures – one in a Catholic Church and one in a Jewish Synagogue. In both places, the audience was responsive, intellectually impressed and engaged, which the questions directed at her from audience members confirmed. A self-described "Yankee Jewish Feminist who teaches Christians about Jesus," Dr. Levin's book does exactly that. As the prominent Catholic theologian, John Dominic Crossan notes, *The Misunderstood Jew* provides a "searing challenge from the heart of Judaism to the conscience of Christianity – very delicate but very definite…"

The last chapter of Levine's thought provoking study invites readers to ask themselves a serious question about the relationship between contemporary teaching and preaching, of their real connection to Christianity and Judaism – namely, how do I know what I think until I hear what I say? Levine poses her own significant questions as she begins the *Quo Vadis?* Chapter of this excellent volume; she reveals herself in the challenge: "How then, do we travel in the meantime, so that neither synagogue nor church gets derailed?" She writes, "Jews and Christians are too often afraid to engage each other in interfaith conversation. We fear giving the impression that we are trying to proselytize… Today these fears are exacerbated by stereotypes and the result is ignorance at best, if not fear and even hate." (p. 215, *Quo Vadis?*). Levine also maintains that there is "hope for church and synagogue […] and if church and synagogue both could recognize their connection to Jesus, a Jewish prophet who spoke to Jews, perhaps we'd be in a better place for understanding." Touche! (p. 228)

Dialogue, however, may not be enough to understand more deeply the real relationship between Judaism and Christianity. Amy-Jill Levine, I believe, has done a profound service to Jews and Christians especially, in putting her own serious approach on the line to assist us as thinking believers (or non-believers) of any persuasion about this relationship by asking questions for which she may not always having 'the' answers. Readers will be challenged by this book, not just as a recommendation, but with a spirit of meaningfulness in this

world of 'religion and politics' which in reality are, perhaps, too often provoking more harm than good.

As a Jewish scholar who teaches in a primarily Protestant divinity school, Levine lets neither Jews nor Christians "off the hook". Levine knows Judaism and Christianity and she does 'tell it like it is' thus facing what may become a negative response because as a woman scholar and a faithful Jew she writes about what matters. In this age of skepticism and doubt, Levine shares the misunderstood Jew of Christianity and Judaism with all of us– the Jew, the Christian, the Catholic, the Protestant, even convinced fundamentalists or atheists – respecting believers or non-believers alike. I suggest this solid piece of writing to anyone who can face a book that speaks to the subject of religion and is willing to ask him/herself that challenging question: how do I know what I think until I hear what *I* really say? I do recommend Levine's new book as a comprehensive theological-religious volume; it *will* challenge, if not our beliefs, then certainly our own thinking about the Jesus-Messiah in our twenty-first century.

I leave you with a final quote from Levine's book – it may stimulate you to appreciate a genuine scholar's wisdom concerning the "misunderstood Jesus" in this book as part of the process; I feel it will encourage her readers to be humanly involved. Dr. Levine writes, "Belief in Jesus as the Christ-the Messiah separates church and synagogue, Christians and Jews [but] belief is like love, it cannot be compelled. It does not rest on logical argument or historical proof [ ], the same argument holds for Judaism and Christianity."

Reading and reflecting with A.J. Levine's proactive book may be a new experience – belief-wise or otherwise. "Common history is not the same as common knowledge." Even if you fear shattering misconceptions in this book, it will lift your mind's approach to a new level.

Shalom – L'Chaim – Peace – To Life.

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