

*IN MEMORIAM***KATE FULLBROOK: 1950-2003**

I had my first opportunity to meet Kate and Edward Fullbrook at a session of the Pacific Division of the American Philosophical Association held at the Miyako Hotel in San Francisco on March 31, 1995. They had definitely captured the attention of the public by suggesting that it was Beauvoir who influenced Sartre's philosophy, rather than vice versa, and their presentation that day was entitled "Whose Ethics? Sartre's or Beauvoir's?" Kate radiated warmth and enthusiasm, and I came away looking forward to many years of exchanging ideas and listening to presentations by both Fullbrooks. They participated in the Beauvoir Society conference at Trinity College, Dublin, in September 1996, and were on the platform in the Grand Amphithéâtre at the Sorbonne in January 1999 to help celebrate the "Cinquantenaire du *Deuxième Sexe*." We were looking forward to seeing them again at the July 2001 Society conference at St. John's College in Oxford, but learned that they would not be coming because of Kate's health. And only a month after the Society's Paris conference in June 2003, we learned that Kate had succumbed to breast cancer.

Edward Fullbrook has very kindly agreed to share with us some personal reminiscences about Kate as well as sections of an informal version of the article that appeared in the October 4, 2003 issue of *The Guardian* after her death.



Edward and Kate met when she was nineteen and, he relates, "like myself, had already read and taken in *The Second Sex*, which he considers "an implicit dimension of our relationship." It had, in Kate's words, given her the courage to "take my female mind seriously."

As reported in *The Guardian*, Kate was born Kathleen Warrens in 1950 in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. She was the daughter of an arc-welder whose formal education had ended at the age of eleven. Although her parents had ambitions for their three children, Kate met with opposition from them when, encouraged by her teachers, she expressed an interest in going on to college. On the night of her high school graduation, she therefore left home and went into hiding for the summer.

In the Fall of 1968, Kate enrolled at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, where she was immediately at home in an atmosphere of social and political questioning. She earned high grades, was elected to Phi Beta Kappa, and played in an all-woman rock band at Madison, where her English and Philosophy professors encouraged her to aim higher than teaching at the high school level after she received her diploma. In order to make ends meet, even though her parents eventually gave her some financial help, she worked night shifts at a Burger King, cleaned toilets in a men's dormitory, and identified zoo plankton in the lakeside limnology lab.

When she graduated *summa cum laude* from Madison, she was the unanimous first-choice of the English Department for their federal government research scholarships. Yet she was soon told that her profile did not fit the requirements for these scholarships, something which Kate assumed had to do with her family background. In retrospect, it is more probable that she was not chosen for the scholarship because of her association with anti-Vietnam War activists, among them Edward Fullbrook, whom she married in 1972.

Temporarily thwarted in her desire to go on to graduate work, she bided her time for a while, working behind a cash-register, before traveling to Europe. She then gave academia another try, and collected a Master's degree from Queen Mary College in London in 1976, followed by a Ph.D. at Newnham College in Cambridge. Even before completing her dissertation, Kate was appointed to a lectureship in English at the College of St. Mark and St. John in Plymouth. From there, she moved on to be Head of Literary Studies at Bristol Polytechnic, where she worked to bring about the effective merging of the polytechnic and the "old" British university systems in 1992, thanks to what *The Guardian* describes as her "determination, diplomacy and sheer good humour."

Your editor would add graciousness and tolerance to that list of qualities in both Fullbrooks. While I was still quite a neophyte at the technological hoops one needed to jump through to produce readable copies of the *Simone de Beauvoir Studies*, I discovered to my horror that although all of the pages of an article by the Fullbrooks which appeared in Volume 12 were visible on my screen, the last line of each page had not printed in the final published copy. Kate and Edward could not have been more understanding in their response to my apologies and *mea culpas, mea maxima culpas*.



Her associates remember the way Kate would break into song on the way to a meeting and make amusing and sometimes outrageous doodles about self-important and pretentious colleagues. They appreciated her ability to make hard decisions and deal with the ensuing flak despite her dislike of authority, as she took on the responsibilities of various administrative positions, including that of Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at the University of the West of England in Bristol.

Edward Fullbrook writes that, against all odds, Kate was completely at ease with being an intellectual. "I've always thought," he writes, "that this owed much to her early reading of Beauvoir and to knowing about Beauvoir's life." He goes on to say:

One of Kate's traits was that she never put herself forward as a writer—she waited to be asked. But once asked, she would jump at the chance to write on whatever the topic and in whatever the publication. I recall only one exception. It was when she was first asked to write about Simone de Beauvoir. She was dumb-struck by the very idea of doing such a thing. It took much persuading by friends before, with misgivings, she agreed. Kate's writings on Beauvoir were the thing in her academic life of which she was the most proud and that gave her the most pleasure and satisfaction. In the last years of her life, I heard her tell friends on numerous occasions that being on the program of the final day of the "Cinquantenaire du *Deuxième Sexe*" at the Sorbonne was "most definitely the high point of my academic career."

Susan Manning, who was a graduate student with Kate at Cambridge, comments in *The Guardian*:

The moral commitment, the powerful political conscience, the great compassion which she brought to all her work are all there in the subjects and the title of her Ph.D. thesis on "Henry James and Matthew Arnold: Consciousness, Morality and the Modern Spirit." As graduate students pondering our futures and the meaning and value of the profession we seemed somehow to have chosen, we found [in this title] the touchstones of late-night conversations through litres of paint-stripper wine. It is poignant, and precious, to remember now our eager embracing of James's *The Middle Years*, where a writer faces the knowledge that he will not have an old age. At the end of the story, he reflects on the nature of achievement: "The thing is to have made somebody care. We work in the dark—we do what we can—we give what we have."



That modesty, that doubt, and that passion were Kate's. With days to live, she involved herself in intense discussions with colleagues and friends—how often the one became the other. And somehow, she found ways to laugh. From Wisconsin days to the final sad weeks in Bristol, Kate pushed herself to the limits of her always frail physical strength. It was a courageous life, and a deeply generous one; just, for Kate, and for the rest of us, far too short.

And so we of the Simone de Beauvoir Society must bid farewell to Kate Fullbrook, described by Susan Manning as “an eccentric and outspoken English don who for two decades campaigned forcefully, tirelessly and often humorously on behalf of Britain's new universities and of the value of a liberal education for all.” We will miss her.

Yolanda Astarita Patterson