



Quiet Moments in a War: The Letters of Jean-Paul Sartre to Simone De Beauvoir 1940-1963

By Jean-Paul Sartre

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A collection of letters by the author of *Being and Nothingness* depicts Sartre as a soldier, a prisoner of the Germans, and a man of Resistance and charts his path to fame with the publication of his major works.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Sartre's (1905-1980) impassioned, tender wartime letters to de Beauvoir (1908-1986) intersect with history. The great majority of the correspondence gathered here was written in 1940, when the French philosopher, an army private in the meteorological service, wrote *Being and Nothingness* and his novel *The Age of Reason* while the Nazis invaded Holland and Belgium and threatened to take Paris. Writing to "my darling Beaver," he tells de Beauvoir about his incessant reading, his evolving philosophy of existentialism and, in the spirit of their open relationship, about his affairs with other women. He was captured by the Germans in 1940. After his return to Nazi-occupied Paris in March 1941, his letters discuss *The Flies*, a thinly veiled protest play. Noteworthy among the handful of postwar letters are two recording his hectic 1959 visit to American film director John Huston at his Irish estate.

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From Library Journal

Following the publication in English of Sartre's *Witness to My Life* (LJ 1/92), this volume contains the final two decades of his letters to his lifelong companion. Much of the present collection, which was edited by de Beauvoir before her death, describes life during World War II, including Sartre's imprisonment by the Germans. Poignantly, the book ends with a note by de Beauvoir explaining that Sartre's letter of July 25, 1963, was the last she received: "thereafter... we used the telephone." To be read with de Beauvoir's *Letters to Sartre* (LJ 2/15/92), whose unexpurgated text suggests how much she omitted from his published correspondence. Highly recommended to virtually all public and academic libraries.

- *Francisca Goldsmith, Berkeley P.L., Cal.*

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From Kirkus Reviews

A sequel to *Witness to My Life* (1992), which collected Sartre's letters to Simone de Beauvoir from 1926 to 1939. Most of those collected here were written in 1940, when Sartre was in the military and then in prison camp. Sartre writes, sometimes twice a day, mostly about waiting: for letters (his constant complaint), information, money, leave, action--and books, noting the absurdity of a soldier requesting Shakespeare in the battle zone: "It reeks of espionage." Many letters concern his feelings, his flirtations, and his affair with "Tania"--a classy "slut" Sartre offers to marry even though it's "Beaver" (his pet name for Beauvoir) whom, in spite of her predilection for women, he considers his soulmate. Ten years into his creative relationship with Beauvoir, Sartre admits to being "disgusted" with himself--for his promiscuity and "obscene" sexuality--and solicits her advice. But however she inspires him, he addresses her in the common language of an adolescent crush, always in the diminutive, "little" this and "little" that, even "little paragon." It's in this period of discipline, confinement, and boredom, however, that Sartre produces his greatest works--*Being and Nothingness*, *No Exit*, and *The Age of Reason*--philosophy, fiction, and drama dedicated to the absurdity of life, as well as to the necessity for freedom and for making choices. The letters slow down when Sartre returns to Occupied Paris and reunites with Beauvoir, and they stop in 1963 because, as Beauvoir explains in a footnote, after that year, in order to communicate with each other, the two always used the telephone. Without Beauvoir's responses, the letters reveal the trivial and commonplace preoccupations of even the most heroic of intellects in the most trying of times. -- Copyright ©1993, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

Users Review

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