



The Prime of Life: The Second Volume of Her Autobiography

Simone de Beauvoir , Peter Green (Translator)

Download now

Read Online ➔

The Prime of Life: The Second Volume of Her Autobiography

Simone de Beauvoir , Peter Green (Translator)

The Prime of Life: The Second Volume of Her Autobiography Simone de Beauvoir , Peter Green
(Translator)

The second volume in Simone de Beauvoir's autobiography. In it she continues the story of her life from the age of 21, through the uneasy rebellious 30s, the war years and finally to the liberation of Paris in 1944.

The Prime of Life: The Second Volume of Her Autobiography Details

Date : Published 1973 by Penguin Books Ltd (first published January 1st 1960)

ISBN : 9780140022223

Author : Simone de Beauvoir , Peter Green (Translator)

Format : Paperback 608 pages

Genre : Biography, Nonfiction, Philosophy, Autobiography, Cultural, France, Memoir, Feminism

 [Download The Prime of Life: The Second Volume of Her Autobiograp ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Prime of Life: The Second Volume of Her Autobiogr ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online The Prime of Life: The Second Volume of Her Autobiography
Simone de Beauvoir , Peter Green (Translator)

From Reader Review The Prime of Life: The Second Volume of Her Autobiography for online ebook

Manny says

In the second volume of her memoirs, Simone de Beauvoir tells you what it was like to be a young woman living with Sartre. There were many interesting surprises. I hadn't realized what a natural gift for languages he had - there was an incident when someone thought he might be a spy, because his German accent was just too damn good. I hadn't realized either what a lot of fun he was (really! I'm not being ironic!), or that he was so mentally unstable. He had some rather startling delusions about, if I recall correctly, a giant squid...

And that love triangle/*ménage à trois* with Olga. Was there ever a relationship quite so exhaustively described in literature? You can read about it here, then in fictionalized form in her novel *L'Invitée*, and then in a different fictionalized form in Sartre's novel *L'Age de Raison*. Some incidents, e.g. the one where he hurts his hand trying to impress her at the nightclub, turn up in all three.

And I still don't properly understand what happened. In fact, if you're the sort of person who buys autobiographies to get the low-down on the author's sex life, I'll warn you now that you aren't going to find out a damn thing. I'm not quite sure why she made that decision.

Kristen says

If volume one of her memoirs made me fall completely in love with Simone de Beauvoir, then volume two is what always comes afterward, where those endearing quirks are seen for the faults they are, which doesn't make one love her any less, perhaps more even.

If you're looking for the dirt, this autobiography is hardly forthcoming, but she does offer some explanation of her emotions and motives, if you read between the lines, though she never mentions any juicy personal details, which might make you want to run out and grab a biography with ALL the gossip, but if the author has firmly got her hooks in you by now, you probably won't because it would seem sleazy. Yeah, I'm talking about the preternatural relationship with young girls, etc. It seems even at this age she was already preoccupied with the 'irreparable loss of youth' and I think chasing that lost youth underlies her weirdness with the youngsters. But hey, no one is perfect!

And yes, she's sort of narcissistic (but I sort of think maybe it's a required trait to make any way in this world, see that's why I'm a failure, I'm just not self-centered enough.) She spent her youth and much of her young life believing that the world could only be understood through her senses and her superior mind alone. That others experience the exact same thing was nothing less than a revelation to her. Yet, I think this point of view is so very human and she is far more honest than most people for admitting this. It's even humorous when, after young street urchins in a Greek slum throw stones at them, she explains it away simply as they were throwing stones at "tourists" and of course the kids' anger was not really directed at 'us'. She so easily excludes herself from the social group to which she firmly belongs, but she also recognizes this error and that's what makes her writing so interesting. The reader may cringe at how she justifies everything relating to her relationship with Sartre. While her examination of sexual attitudes that were taken for granted is interesting, I must wonder at the self denial/dishonesty this takes. Her internal conflict of body vs. mind and upbringing vs. philosophy are obviously reoccurring theme.

This is one of those books you have to decide how much time you really want to devote to looking up references, to literature, philosophy, film, theater and politics, which this book absolutely overflows with. Of course there is the historical significance and the famous people she knew. I found young Sartre's prediction that 'talkies' would never really take off funny, as well as his strange interests, like graphology, yet these were all within the trends of their times, like the Yo-yo craze which Sartre practiced morning to night at one point. I laughed at his experiment with LSD, which possibly led to his reoccurring delusions about a giant lobster stalking him (I feel for you Sartre, the single instance I took an hallucinogenic I also had had horrible time of it, no lobster though.)

I love how travel was so important to her, no matter how broke she was she managed through sheer thrift to see a large portion of Western Europe. I love how she would just take off alone for days or weeks, hiking through the Alps or across the French countryside with just some bread, sausage and canteen of wine (so French!) and no idea of her destination. I love reading about her and Sartre's trips to Spain and Italy and Morocco, where they could only afford the cheapest deck crossing on ships and often slept in parks, or barns, or in ruins they where there to sightseeing. Later she takes up cycling and rides off a cliff face, twice, the second time losing a tooth and swelling her whole face so that only after two weeks when her facial swelling goes down does she realize her tooth is embedded in her face (which apparently is a thing that happens, my nephew cut his foot open in a lake this summer, it took a while to heal and after a month it was still itching, so he was picking at it and a shell popped out! He had been walking around with a part of zebra mussel shell in his foot for almost a month! In his defense, he's only 7.)

This volume illuminates the birth of her political awareness. Up until the start of WW II she pays little notice to current events and politics, passing by strikes on her way to see tourist attraction without a thought. It is fascinating to watch as she gradually becomes more aware, for instance how she cries inconsolably during a visit to cousin's factory at the working conditions. I thought the switching to her actual diary entries at start of the war and the fall of France was interesting, the frenzied tone embodies the uncertainty and excitement of the time. I like how the diary fades out as she becomes accustomed to war, as people do become accustomed to anything. Even her lust for travel is not stopped by the Nazi occupation though she decries the "chic refuges" that she only distinguish herself from by being broke, even as she remains the firmly part middle class as much as she hates to admit it. And her joy of experiencing the liberation of Paris is infectious. Even if you have no interest her life, philosophy and the exciting times she lived, this stands alone as a beautifully written narrative. I thought about giving this 5 stars but went with four, if only to separate it from the more superior first volume. I suppose I'll have to read the next one as well.

Silvia says

Apart from the fact that it is always fascinating to read about the life of a writer, especially if it's an autobiography (and, in this case, you get so much more than just Simone's life), and that the book mainly covers the years before and during WWII in Paris (fascinating read), the book is so well written and describes such an array of different things that I felt from the very first moment that this would be one of my favourite books ever, and so it is. Simone led a very interesting life, especially for a woman at the time, and had a fascinating personality. I was particularly surprised about how neutral she and Sartre remained politically speaking for quite a long time. It is a long book and I agree that there are plenty of descriptions of people and works of art from the time but it is so worth at least one read.

Sezgi says

Simone De Beauvoir, komünist, feminist, varoluşçu gibi birçok yaftaya maruz kalmış ama bunların dikkatinden olarak ‘‘kadın’’ olarak yaşamın sürmüştür. Kendisine yaklaşımları ?eylere özellikle ‘‘Varoluşçu yazar’’ sözüne itiraz etse de faydası olmamış üstüne yapmışlardır. Bir diğery üstüne yapmışan ?ey ise kitapların Sartre ürünü olduđu, Sartre’nın arkasına saklanan birisi olduğudur. Buna inanmıyorum. Sartre’dan beslenmiş olabilir (Birçok yazar bunu yapıyor zaten) ama tamamen Sartre’dır diyemeyiz. Zaten düştükleri noktalar da olmuştur nihayetinde.

Kadın haklarını içtenlikle savunduğunu biliyorum ancak bir ?ey dikkatimi çekti. Belki çevirmenden kaynaklanan bir durum ama cümle yapısına göre doğru olduđu için üphelendim. ‘‘Erkekçe’’ tabiri çok komik ve anlamsız olmuştur. Erkekçe savaştık gibi. Beklenmeyen bir kelime cümleye bomba gibi düştümüştü.

Diğery yandan özel hayatından çok etkilenmedim. Simone’un en başarıları ?i?lerinden birisi bence kitabında anlattı. Cezayir’li Cemile isimli bir kız için mücadelesidir. Cemile, Cezayir Kurtuluş Örgütü Üyesi ve Fransa’nın ?gali sırasında edep yerlerine (kitapta da böyle diyor) ?i?e sokularak ?kence edilmiştir. Aç bırakılmamış, dayak atılmamış. Bu kız için müthiş bir mücadeleye giriştir. Kızın deli raporu vermek istiyorlar, kesinlikle reddediyor.

Kitapta ?kinici Dünya Savaşı’ndan bolca bahsediyor. Kendi açışından ve yaşıadıklarından yola çıkarak tabii. Hitler ve Musolini eleştirisini bolca yaparken Sovyet’i eleştirme gereği duymuyor ve kurtuluş gözüyle bakıyor. Sovyet’in katlettiği insanlar için en ufak bir yakınmada bulunmuyor. 1945’te Kırım Tatar’larından, Almanlara, kendi vatandaşları olan Ruslara yapılan eziyetten söz edilmiyor. Bu yüzden her ne kadar kadın haklarında gösterdiği etki bakımından beğensem de, iki yüzlü bir tutum görüyorum Simone’da. Aktivist olduğunu düşünmeye çok yaklaştım ki bu Sovyet safsatasıyla karşılaştım. ?aşırttı.^^

Aubrey says

One evening I went to a concert in Rouen, and when I saw the pampered audience all around me, preparing to digest its ration of aesthetic beauty, a feeling of misery swept over me. They were so powerful, there were so many of them: would there ever be an end of their rule? How much longer would they be allowed to believe that they embodied the very highest human values, and to go on moulding their children in their own likeness?

We were never prepared to acknowledge the status which circumstances objectively assigned us.

I'd forgotten how much of my brain mimicked de Beauvoir's in terms of priorities. Men? Sure, why not. Money? Enough for life and liberty and the passing of knowledge through teaching and creation, but nothing obscene, thank you very much. Thought? Oh, fuck yes. All of this is naturally displaced by chronology and country and unnaturally so by bigotry (antiblackness and transphobia and wh*rephobia and ableism oh my, the last only partially redeemed by

What were we doing here, staring at them and asking ourselves such questions? There was something insulting about our presence.

thought in the midst of a mental asylum) but there's enough for me to jump for the lesser known third and fourth entries in the autobiography tetralogy. I hope someone who's managed to retain their library powers in this Amazon climate compiles this series in a more overtly digitally linked sense, as the drop in number of ratings between the successive works is a travesty. I'm all for going a step further in reading women when it comes to class and sexuality and race and whatnot, but if you have to choose a bourgeois white woman with a man attached to follow, d.B., and to a lesser extent Sartre, are the way to go.

What I lacked was the idea of 'situation', which alone allows one to make some concrete definition of human groups without enslaving them to a tireless and deterministic pattern.

Now I reflected that to adapt one's outlook to another person's salvation is the surest and quickest way of losing [the]m.

For better or worse, I read this long enough after Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter for the memories of an assuredly delightful experience to be subsumed by the disappointment of The Mandarins, so I had to do absurd things like google Zaza to get back into d.B.'s trajectory and all its fixations. Emphasis on the fixations, for if I'm going to read 600 pages about fifteen years of the life of a committed thinker from a first person point of view, I better get an overwhelming amount of self-righteously neurotic yet ethically admirable thought processes, else I'm going to be very cranky. Fortunately, thought processes I got, amidst riots of of travelling and movie-going and dialectic-engaging that I'd be a liar to say I wasn't obscenely jealous of. I've a few consolations such as youth and reaching the next step necessary for my own jumping off processes (enough to consider shelling out for a passport at any rate), as well as having at my fingertips far more rapid interchange of communicated enlightenment, but I'd never lusted for a nineteen mile single day hike till d.B. described her solo tramping forth. Not the worst way to be motivated, to be fair.

The career in which Sartre saw his freedom foundering still meant liberation to me.

However attentive the encouragement and advice one receives, writing remains an act for which the responsibility cannot be shared with any other person.

My favorite parts were the ones devoted to d.B.'s gradual awakening from conscientious solipsism to full commitment to a life that gave her the means of liberty and coupled it to the awareness of those not given the same by random chance as well as to the eternal question: will you do nothing? My least favorite was every time a tart or "animalistic" and associated phraseology were mentioned, or whenever d.B. didn't feel the need to engage with something if Sartre already had or some self-subsuming bad faith, which you'll appreciate the irony of if you're familiar with the terminology. I admit to getting lost when the references and surnames-only came too fast and thick (some footnotes other than the single one at the very end would've been welcome), but what I got was marvelous, especially when it came to translations. I could've used more than a flippant dismissal when it came to Dorothy Richardson and more than a moment of gossip with regards to Simone Weil, but with Hemingway and Kafka and especially Faulkner (I'm serious about writing that d.B./Faulkner essay) opened venues of thinking of writers reading and writing writers. Cameos of Camus and Queneau and Genet and co. were less engaging, but it at least laid the groundwork for future engagements with them. I was completely lost when it came to cinema and only recognized the plays of Sartre when it came to the theatre, but I wouldn't be adverse to going back and searching up what d.B. had to say about them if I happen to stumble across any of the era. I'm not as obsessed with the abstract as d.B., but her delight at slapstick is a hopeful sign.

*'Anything is preferable to war,' she said, to which Sartre replied: 'No, not **anything** — not Fascism, for instance.'*

No one can accept Hitler's peace proposals; but what sort of war will there be instead?

I felt no rancour at this conversation; there was something so ridiculous about their expressions and the way they talked that, for a moment, the whole business of collaboration, Fascism, anti-Semitism, and the rest of it seemed to me a kind of farce, designed to entertain a simple-minded audience. Then, dazedly, I came to my senses again, in the knowledge that they not only could but did cause grave harm to people...It was the very nullity of these people that made them dangerous.

This review probably would've been longer if I had started out on keyboard rather than paper, but as I'm not in the mood to go on a binge rant about the bigotry, this is a good place to conclude. It's funny how stuck I am on d.B.'s nonfic when her fic has done little to inspire (for example, I actually find it a good thing that she thought her moralizing too obtuse in *The Blood of Others*), but it seems I prefer that an author's motivations be rendered explicit when it's their philosophy of life that I've come for, so I might as well go to the unconsciously subjective source. Plus, I've yet to get to the *The Second Sex* stage of the remembrance, and there's nothing I found more annoying than recognizing more of Sartre's work during the course of this novel to the point of contemplating chasing down his (auto)biographies as well. Reading the wiki is staving me off for now (it's hilarious that I treat everything post-WWII as spoilers), but I can't make any promises for the future. Fortunately, d.B.'s freedom to sleep around and Sartre's stances on colonialism and anti-Semitism are powerful motivations, but I can at least promise to let d.B. have her say first.

I think about happiness. For me it was, primarily, a privileged way of apprehending the world; and if the world is changing to such a degree that it can no longer be apprehended in this fashion, then happiness loses its importance.

Sometimes I admitted that Sartre was right; but on the other occasions I reflected that words have to murder reality before they can hold it captive, and that the most important aspect of reality — its here-and-now presence — always eludes them.

Samantha says

Have you ever read a book and the first sentence you read you can't stop because it has struck forcefully at how you define yourself? This is that book for me. De Beauvoir wrote her autobiography in four parts, indulgent? Not particularly. Although De Beauvoir obviously writes from her perspective, she's often focusing on the world around her, her developments as a writer in a community of writers and how the war that surrounds her impacts her philosophy. This book focuses on De Beauvoir's life from just as she's leaving home and meeting Jean-Paul Sartre to the end of the Second World War. She charts her relationship with Sartre and the developments of their philosophies, and the impacts the war had on each of their worldviews. This book also provides an inside look at that specific community of writer's-socialist, progressive, existentialists-who came to prominence at this time.

Amélie says

« [...] je sais qu'on ne peut jamais se connaître mais seulement se raconter. » (p. 420)

J'ai fait la rencontre de Simone via ses *Mémoires d'une jeune fille rangée*, lus une fois sans trop d'intérêt, puis redécouverts avec beaucoup d'enthousiasme il y a quoi, un an & demi? Comme quoi c'est pas parce qu'on relit un livre qu'on y trouve rien de nouveau.

J'avais énormément aimé *Mémoires*, & *La force de l'âge* reprend là où le premier tome s'était terminé. Nous sommes en 1929, Simone vient tout juste de passer l'agrégation qui lui permettra d'enseigner la philosophie ; elle passe le plus clair de son temps avec Sartre, & leurs vies sont déjà comme irrémédiablement, merveilleusement entremêlées. Leur relation tient une place centrale dans le récit que Simone fait de sa vie (si ce n'est que parce que Sartre est pratiquement *toujours* avec elle), mais, & c'est une chose qui m'a frappé, l'auteure n'essaie jamais d'expliquer l'intimité particulière qu'ils partagent, ou même d'y faire pénétrer le lecteur. Le lien qui les unit est présenté comme quelque chose qui va de soit, & qui n'a pas besoin d'être expliqué ; d'un autre côté, on saisit immédiatement toute l'ampleur de l'influence qu'ils ont l'un sur l'autre. Sans jamais vraiment comprendre ce que Simone faisait avec Sartre (qui m'a semblé, je sais pas, perpétuellement pédant & condescendant...?), j'ai pas pu m'empêcher d'éprouver une drôle de fascination frustrée pour le couple qu'ils forment dans *La force de l'âge*.

Mais il n'y a pas que Sartre dans ce deuxième tome des mémoires de Simone (...heureusement), tome qui couvre une période fertile, bouillonnante d'idées & de changements, de 1929 jusqu'en 1945. On assiste aux débuts de la carrière d'enseignante de l'auteure, tout d'abord dans des lycées de province, puis à Paris ; on a droit au récit de ses amitiés, à l'élargissement progressif de son cercle de connaissances dans le milieu intellectuel-bohème qu'elle a choisi ; on la suit dans tous ses voyages à l'étranger & ses excursions en montagne, de longues randonnées où elle s'éreinte avec une passion grande comme ça. On apprend à connaître la France des années 30 -- la France, mais surtout Paris, dans descriptions où Simone mêle joliment la nostalgie qu'elle éprouve au moment de revisiter ses souvenirs & la fébrilité enthousiaste que les débuts de sa vraie vie d'adulte lui avaient, à l'époque, mis dans le cœur. Mais dès la fin de cette décennie il y a la guerre qui pointe, puis l'occupation, puis les privations & la frustration qui précèdent la libération. Avec toujours, en parallèle, l'éclosion d'une écrivaine & d'une intellectuelle, qui travaille de façon acharnée dans tous les coins de café qu'on veut bien lui laisser occuper.

C'est un gros livre épais, avec quelques longueurs pas toujours agréables -- je pense ici à tous les passages qui détaillent les avancées philosophiques de Sartre -- mais j'y ai pris un plaisir particulier, un plaisir tout en admiration pour un personnage aussi intéressant, qui sait se raconter sans fioritures ni excès.

Vilja says

Ei yhtä hyvä kuin muistelmien ensimmäinen osa; ajoittain väsyttävän yksityiskohtaista oman ajan pikku-uutisten ja kulttuuritapahtumien kuvailua, joka ei oikein enää aukea. Kuvaa kuitenkin ajattomasti kirjailijan henkistä kehitystä, harvinaislaatuista suhdetta Sartreen ja hidasta havahtumista(/kieltäytymistä) havahtumasta) toisen maailmansodan uhkaamaan todellisuuteen.

Emily says

After being blown away by the first volume of Simone de Beauvoir's memoirs last September, I knew I had to get to the second installment as soon as possible. Let me just say, it did not disappoint. Covering the years from 1929, when Beauvoir graduated from college and first lived on her own as an adult, through the development of her ideas and interpersonal relationships of the 1930s and into the war years to the liberation of Paris in 1944, *La force de l'âge* (translated into English as *The Prime of Life*) is seven hundred pages of densely-packed insight, and a new favorite for me.

In both volumes I've read, what sets Beauvoir's autobiographical writing apart is her concern with both the specific details of her own life at any given time (standard memoir fare), and also with drilling down into the

ontological state of *being* a 5-year-old girl, a 23-year-old intellectual, a 32-year-old novelist, and so on. In *Mémoires*, for example, she describes the gradual process she went through in order to understand the nature of signifier and signified, believing at first that the word "vache" was uniquely and innately bound to the actual cow-object, and only later coming to accept that language and other systems of thought are arbitrarily imposed by humans in order to divide up and make sense of the world around them. Similarly, in *La force de l'âge* Beauvoir delves into her persistent perception, throughout her 20s, that her own subjectivity and way of being in the world is "true"—the subjectivity of others being a persistent myth which she might believe intellectually but for which she saw little viscerally convincing evidence. She, like so many people in their teens and early twenties, perceives herself at this time as the center of her universe: she is vaguely threatened when she encounters people who cannot be "annexed" to her own circle of friends or way of being, and is frankly incredulous at the idea that any serious catastrophe could ever happen to her. She calls this irrational but stubborn mode of thought her "schizophrenia," and analyzes throughout the book the different ways in which it manifested and developed over the years.

Ainsi, nos aînés nous interdisaient-ils d'envisager qu'une guerre fût seulement possible. Sartre avait trop d'imagination, et trop encline à l'horreur, pour respecter tout à fait cette consigne; des visions le traversaient dont certaines ont marqué *La Nausée*: des villes en émeute, tous les rideaux de fer tirés, du sang aux carrefours et sur la mayonnaise des charcuteries. Moi, je poursuivais avec entrain mon rêve de schizophrène. Le monde existait, à la manière d'un objet aux replis innombrables et dont la découverte serait toujours une aventure, mais non comme un champ de forces capables de me contrarier.

Also, our elders forbade us to envisage that a war was even possible. Sartre had too much imagination, and that too inclined to horror, to respect this ban completely; visions passed through his mind of which some featured in Nausea: cities in a state of riot, all the shop gates pulled down, blood in the intersections and in the butcher's mayonnaise. Me, I continued cheerfully in my schizophrenic dream. The world existed, in the manner of an object with innumerable folds whose discovery would always be an adventure, but not as a force field capable of thwarting me.

Beauvoir examines the ways in which this "schizophrenic dream" is facilitated by her unacknowledged privilege: the world never seems to deny her the things she really cares about, so she imagines that it is not capable of doing so. Similarly, the deprivations she suffers in the pre-war period (she and Sartre are living paycheck-to-paycheck, without much luxury) are things about which she never cared in the first place, and are more than made up for by the freedoms inherent in the belief that nothing truly bad will happen to her. This ability to live the life that best suits her own nature, in turn engenders a philosophy of extreme individualism in the young Beauvoir: throughout their 20s she and Sartre distrust any political organizations, identifying as liberal intellectuals but limiting themselves to the role of witnesses when, for example, the Front Populaire wins the 1936 elections and institutes the 40-hour work week and paid vacation. Although this complaisance is threatened on a number of occasions and evolves over the years, it isn't until the outbreak of the Second World War that Beauvoir's insularity is truly overturned, and that she accepts on a fundamental level her solidarity with other people, and the uncertainty of all human lives. I know this passage is long, but I find it so beautiful I have to share.

[N]on seulement la guerre avait changé mes rapports à tout, mais elle avait tout changé: les

ciels de Paris et les villages de Bretagne, la bouche des femmes, les yeux des enfants. Après juin 1940, je ne reconnus plus les choses, ni les gens, ni les heures, ni les lieux, ni moi-même. Le temps, qui pendant dix ans avait tourné sur place, brusquement bougeait, il m'entraînait: sans quitter les rues de Paris, je me trouvais plus dépaycée qu'après avoir franchi des mers, autrefois. Aussi naïve qu'un enfant qui croit à la verticale absolue, j'avais pensé que la vérité du monde était fixe... [...]

Quel malentendu! J'avais vécu non pas un fragment d'éternité mais une période transitoire: l'avant-guerre. [...] La victoire même n'allait pas renverser le temps et ressusciter un ordre provisoirement dérangée; elle ouvrait une nouvelle époque: l'après-guerre. Aucun brin d'herbe, dans aucun pré, ni sous aucun de mes regards, ne redeviendrait jamais ce qu'il avait été. L'éphémère était mon lot. Et l'Histoire charriait pêle-mêle, avec des moments glorieux, un énorme fatras de douleurs sans remède.

Not only had the war changed my relationship with everything, but it had changed everything: the skies of Paris and the villages of Brittany, the mouths of women, the eyes of children. After June 1940, I no longer recognized things, or people, or hours, or places, or myself. Time, which for ten years had revolved in place, suddenly moved, and carried me away: without leaving the streets of Paris, I found myself more disoriented than I had been after crossing the seas in former times. Naive as a child who believes in the absolute vertical, I had thought that the truth of the world was fixed ... [...]

What a misunderstanding! I had lived through, not a fragment of eternity, but a transitory era: the pre-war. [...] Even victory would not reverse time and restore some provisionally disarranged order; it would begin a new era: the post-war. No blade of grass, in any field, under any gaze of mine, would ever return to what it was. The ephemeral was my lot. And History barreled along pell-mell, with glorious moments, an immense jumble of grief with no cure.

This trajectory from individualism to solidarity is just one thread running through *La force de l'âge*, and is linked with many more: the need for autonomy and connection; Beauvoir's burgeoning feminism and the ways in which she balances that with her long-term relationship to Jean-Paul Sartre; her fear of and eventual partial acceptance of death, and the ways in which she realizes that catastrophes can happen to her as well as to other people. This is all examined with an intelligence both patient and passionate, and makes Beauvoir's narrative far more memorable than a simple catalog of events.

At the same time, there is also plenty of the kind of thing that makes standard biography and autobiography interesting. Beauvoir chronicles the voyages she and Sartre took all over Europe during the 1930s, traveling in Spain in 1931 (still giddy with the rise of the Second Spanish Republic), Italy in the early 1930s (where they saw their first Fascist), Berlin shortly after Hitler's rise to power, Greece in the late 30s, France's Free Zone during the war. She describes her long backpacking trips in France and elsewhere, in which she takes off alone on foot for weeks at a time, armed with her wine-skin and espadrilles. She writes about the couple's non-traditional romantic arrangements, their decision to eschew legal marriage and monogamy and the struggles and benefits that result from that. The second half of the memoir, which deals with the war years, provides a vivid account of the everyday chaos, uncertainty, shifting moods and sudden devastation of life in Paris during the German occupation.

There are, of course, pages on Beauvoir's and Sartre's famous friends, among them Albert Camus and Alberto Giacometti. She describes exhaustively the plays and films she saw from year to year, and her reactions to painting, sculpture, and music. Unsurprisingly, she also writes with insight about the books that she and Sartre read and discussed during those years, going into great detail at times about why the work of novelists like Faulkner and Dos Passos was so important to her, both as a writer and as a person. Beauvoir acknowledges beautifully the way in which the discovery of a book can be a pivotal life event.

Of course, she also records her own writing life and that of Sartre, both from an artistic-development standpoint and from a perspective of publishing, critical reception, and political engagement. I look forward to revisiting these passages when I'm more familiar with both of their novels and essays. Even without that familiarity, though, I was impressed with the frankness Beauvoir brings to a discussion of her own work: she is not easy on herself, and in retrospect she finds herself guilty of many serious flaws. At the same time, she does not hesitate to point out the elements which she still, after 20 or more years, finds powerful or effective. She gives the impression of taking herself seriously, but not more seriously than she would any other writer. So too, she examines the ways in which one book lead to the next for her, each one being a reaction to and against its predecessor.

I've spent almost a month with *La force de l'âge*, and although I am ready to be done with this volume for now, I also feel a tiny bit sad to put it on the shelf; I know it will be one I return to many times in the future. I also feel so lucky to be about to visit Paris and Rouen, where Sartre and Beauvoir lived and taught. I hope to pick up more of her work while I'm there!

Angéliquecd says

<http://allaroundthecorner.blogspot.fr...>

Audrey Saltarelli says

A little dry at first but it gets better towards the end

Julie says

Even more wonderful on the second reading.

Ça?la Özden says

"Kad?nl???m?n Hikayesi" yazar?n kendi hayat?yla ilgili tuttu?u notlardan olu?uyor. Bir bak?ma günlük. Yaz?m süreci, Sartre ile olan ili?kisi, kitaplar?ndan ve hayat?ndan beklentileri, gezip gördü?ü baz? yerler, Castro ile tan???mas?, Hitler Almanyas?'n?n Fransa ve kendi çevresine olan etkileri, sol görü?ü nas?l benimsedi?i... Kült üçlemesinin ard?ndan özellikle erkek yazarlar taraf?ndan nas?l yerden yere vuruldu?u okurken bile sinir bozuyor. Ayr?ca kendisine y?llarca "Kitaplar?n?z? Sartre yaz?yor de?il mi?" sorusu

sorulmu?. Bir kad?n?n felsefe, siyaset, edebiyat alan?nda bu denli yetkin olabilmesi zorlar?na gitmi? belli ki. Okuyun, okutun.

Selene says

"Penetrar tan adentro en las vidas extrañas que la gente, al oír mi voz, tenga la impresión de hablar consigo misma: he aquí lo que deseaba"

En este libro, encuentro en Simone alguien con quien siento gran empatía, a pesar de las circunstancias diferentes de nuestras vidas. Las interrogantes que se hace acerca del mundo y su lugar en el, el paso del individualismo hacia el colectivismo, el crecimiento de su sentido de responsabilidad política, y la contradicción que es querer darse a alguien enteramente y a la vez estar completa y definida por si misma... su franqueza es encantadora. Durante el libro, varias veces me detuve a pensar "si una persona tan eminente como Simone de Beauvoir se ha sentido y comportado así, si ha tenido esta clase de dudas... ¿quizás yo no esté tan mal despues de todo!"

Lo que escribe Simone (y mi propia experiencia) me sugieren que lo importante no es intentar transitar por un camino consistente, sino contener la consistencia dentro de uno mismo. El libro más bien sugiere que la vida (a diferencia de la mera existencia) emerge de la interacción entre un individuo constantemente en definición, y un mundo indiferente, que no deja de avanzar.

"...mi vida no era una historia que me contaba a mí misma, sino un compromiso entre el mundo y yo "

Heyyonicki says

Quel livre magique !! Simone de Beauvoir à remis le couvert pour me faire vivre quelques semaines exaltantes avec cette lecture de son deuxième livre autobiographique. C'est avec passion que j'ai découvert les années d'avant guerre et jusqu'à la libération au cœur du quotidien de Simone, Jean-Paul Sartre et d'autres intellectuels et artistes dont notamment, Giacometti, Camus, Genet... Je trouve que ce récit permet vraiment de se rendre compte des circonstances ayant mené à la seconde guerre mondiale, notamment l'ultra pacifisme. De plus, comparé au Mémoires d'une jeune fille rangée, ce roman m'a parut moins long et moins ennuyeux, bien que je déplore tout de même quelques longueurs à certains moments.

Raquel says

Simone demuestra una vez más que se infravaloraba al no considerarse una "filosofa" a sí misma. Este segundo volumen de sus memorias combina con una honesta profundidad clases de historia, de teoría de la literatura, de arte, de amistad, de pensamiento y, sobre todo, de aquello que más la obsesionó: las relaciones humanas. Aunque confieso que en ocasiones se me hizo un poco largo por la exhaustividad de sus descripciones es éste un libro imprescindible, con fragmentos inolvidables, para conocer un poco mejor a esta extraordinaria mujer invadida por la plenitud de su vida.

Razmuzeta says

I love Simone, but this second diary lacks the moral conflict that made the first one such a great read....it actually lacks any conflict or psychological depth at all. It seems she removed most of the personal info regarding her interactions with Sartre and all relationship-related inner conflicts (because please... I can't believe they had 10 years of perfect relationship, no silly daily or more serious conflicts at all...like the subject of Olga is treated in a really rational way...no feelings exposed....) thus transforming this diary in a more or less plain inventory of their journeys, work places, friends, cafes/museums visited, books read and movies seen. This recreates very beautifully the era she lived in, which I liked reading about, but also made me lose touch with her evolution as a person and made the whole read very impersonal ... artificial ... as if she was talking about someone else's life.

Sara says

A día de hoy me pregunto por qué no he dado cinco estrellas a todos y cada uno de los libros de Simone, especialmente a sus memorias, porque sinceramente en mi cabeza todos y cada uno de ellos son totalmente invalorable, las cinco estrellas se quedan siempre cortas.

El momento en que un libro de Simone cayó entre mis manos, es, sin duda, determinante. O puede que lo fuera aquel día que me reafirmé infinitamente en el feminismo, aquel día en el que tuve que leer en una biografía de Simone aquello de: pensadora mujer de Sartre. Verdaderamente penoso e indignante.

Lo cierto es que he leído este tomo de las memorias para hacer un trabajo sobre Simone, concretamente sobre la influencia de Simone en Sartre, pero en realidad puede que simplemente el trabajo haya resultado justificable y necesario mientras lo leía.

Las memorias de Simone además de acercarte infinitamente a lo que ella fue, son siempre una clase de historia, donde narra los sucesos de su época y la forma e influencia que tuvieron para ella.

Este libro posee una parte que a mi parecer es esencial en la figura de Simone: la ruptura que se produce en ella con el individualismo que había cultivado durante toda su juventud, hasta la guerra. Entonces se produce un cambio que indudablemente marco su vida y tanto su obra literaria como filosófica.

Es entonces cuando Simone reconoce aquella esfera que quienes nos dedicamos a la filosofía no podemos negar: la ética y la política. Con este cambio aparece un concepto fundamental en la filosofía existencialista y especialmente en el existencialismo de Simone, se introduce así el peso de la responsabilidad de la existencia auténticamente asumida (aquello de lo que nos habla Heidegger aunque no entendamos demasiado bien nada de lo que dice)

Este concepto es para mí uno de los más importantes en la filosofía de Simone, expone con una claridad mucho más evidente que Sartre lo que representa la responsabilidad en el existencialismo.

Algo de lo que desgraciadamente nadie parece percatarse y de lo que es mejor no hablar en clases de existencialismo, no vaya a ser que descubramos que existen mujeres filósofas, o mejor aún, que quebreemos esos cánones filosóficos que como dice uno de mis profesores, deben ser forjado en una sala con luz bastante tenue y repleta de hombres occidentales blancos con gafas de sol y trajes negros. Si no eres hombre, blanco y occidental estás fuera de la filosofía, quedas relegado a aquello que conocemos como silencios de la filosofía, que dicen mucho sobre su historia.

Este libro, además de conceptos fundamentales ofrece los datos necesarios para alcanzar la comprensión necesaria de cómo y por qué se efectuó el nacimiento de éstos en su creadora. Ya por la época que se nos narra en este tomo Simone empezó a percatarse de la condición femenina, condición que sin embargo dado la vida que ella había elegido, le era ajena y que por ello tardo en aparecérsele como verdadera.

Sepideh Salarvand says

??????? ?? ???? ?? ??? ???? ?? ?????? ??????? ???? ?????? ?? ????? ?????? ?????. ??? ?? ???? ?? ???
???????????? ???? ???? ??? ?????? ?? ?????? ?? ?????? ?? ?????? ?????. ??? ?? ? ?? ?? ??? ?????? ?????? ????
????? ??????? ???? ? ???? ??????. ?? ??? ??? ?? ?????? ?????? ??? ?? ?? ?? ???? ???? ????
?????? ???? ? ?????? ?? ????? ??????...

Maria says

The Prime of Life is Simone de Beauvoir's memoirs of her 20's and 30's in the pre-war and then occupied France until the liberation of Paris in 1944. She recollects her youth with Sartre and the bohemian circle of friends they were a part of. I found her style of writing very appealing - it is honest and simple, but there is also dignity in it that perhaps precludes her from writing too directly about her friends. She never claims to be a higher moral authority and there is little to no judgment in her stories about her young self and others. Simone de Beauvoir is considered a mother of modern feminism, but this book has little of her views on it. Instead one can glimpse her philosophy in the way she lived and recollected her youth. When one considers the social conventions of her time, it becomes clear that her choice not to marry or live with a man, not to have children, to travel on her own through Europe, to remain independent both emotionally and financially required considerable courage. She does not seem burdened by the judgments of others, at least not as much as can be glimpsed in her writing.

I found her descriptions of travels through Europe particularly charming - she would put any backpacker and budget traveler to shame in 2015. She recollects sleeping in sheds and haystacks and on hotel roofs to cut down the expenses, hiking for miles to get to the next town, and spending all of her money so that she'd have nothing to buy a morsel of food with. She traveled with friends, acquaintances, and on her own on trains, buses, cars, bicycles and on foot carrying a simple rucksack and wearing cloth espadrilles to see places as they are, without the glamor of touristic attraction. She seems to have found cities, villages, treks through hills and mountains equally fascinating.

Equally engrossing are her tales of friendships with Sartre, and their close circle of friends, including Olga who became both her and Sartre's lover. Although de Beauvoir is not blunt on this subject, she does talk about the emotions that all three of them experienced, albeit somewhat indirectly. She also describes her relationships with some of her students and others who were close to her in one manner or another. I found the interludes about theatrical performances, books, and movies of the time hard to connect to, so I skipped over some of them. They made me realize that certain instances of art lose relevance very quickly, but it is almost impossible to tell which ones will remain in people's collective memory. The authors she mentioned were mostly unfamiliar to me, let alone the actors or performers of the time.

She does write directly about feminism in a few places, one in particular stuck with me where she talks about the misconceptions about her novel *The Second Sex*. I think this quote sheds light on one of the main misunderstandings in feminism: what equality of men and women means. "... Have I ever written that women were the same as men? Have I ever claimed that I, personally, was not a woman? On the contrary, my main purpose has been to isolate and identify my own particular brand of femininity. (...) I did not deny my femininity any more than I took it for granted: I simply ignored it. I had the same freedoms and responsibilities as men did."

The book is a long read, but I highly recommend it to anyone interested in the intellectual society during some of the most turbulent years of 20th century.

