



A Disgraceful Affair: Simone de Beauvoir, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Bianca Lamblin

By Bianca Lamblin

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In this intimate memoir, Bianca Lamblin tells the story of her menage a trois with Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre, and their abandonment of her, a Jew, at the onset of World War II.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In this tell-all memoir, Lamblin evens the score between herself and renowned French thinkers-and lovers-de Beauvoir and Sartre. Their menage a trois-begun in 1938 when Lamblin was a 17-year-old student of de Beauvoir (who was 29)-ended when Sartre dismissed her, at de Beauvoir's instigation, right after the outbreak of WW II. The two women maintained a 40-year friendship after the war, but later Lamblin became enraged at de Beauvoir's humiliating account of their threesome in *Letters to Sartre*, published posthumously, although Lamblin's real name was not used. She also declares the two failed to appreciate the danger to which she was exposed during the war because she was a Jew, and she takes issue with many of the details in Deirdre Bair's *Simone de Beauvoir*. Whatever one may conclude from the affair, this memoir is fueled by spite rather than insight. Photos not seen by PW.

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From Library Journal

Arguably moving on the one hand and controversial on the other, this work involves two of the most prominent French thinkers of this century, Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir. It is the story of Bianca Bienenfeld, a 17-year-old student who was seduced by her philosophy professor, de Beauvoir, and then passed on to de Beauvoir's partner/lover Sartre. The three lived in a menage 'a trois between 1939 and 1940, when the relationship ended and the teenager was abandoned. The shock of being let down wasn't easy for the Jewish youngster to bear, especially during those menacing and politically dangerous years. Following the war, Bianca Lamblin, now married, resumed a platonic friendship with de Beauvoir. The former teacher and student met every month for 40 years. After de Beauvoir's death, Bianca was in for yet another disappointment. In the posthumously published *Letters to Sartre* and *War Journal*, de Beauvoir contemptuously ridiculed Louise Vedrine, a pseudonym for Lamblin, who found her portrait by someone she thought a close friend vulgar, full of hypocrisy, and upsetting. Always candid, this exceptional account brings to light some intimate?and not too surprising?aspects of the life of Sartre and de Beauvoir.

Recommended for large collections.?Ali Houissa, Cornell Univ., Ithaca, N.Y.

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From Booklist

Bianca Bienenfield Lamblin is finally in control of her own story. As she says, she needs at last to be the "subject" of a memoir, not the "object" of further biography. This account is her response to the 1990 publication of Simone de Beauvoir's posthumously published *Letters to Sartre* and *War Journal*, in which the author unveiled the depth of her hypocritical disgust toward her protege. At age 17, Bienenfield, a Polish Jew, entered an intellectual and sexual affair with Beauvoir, her professor at the Lycee Moliere. Soon, Beauvoir widened the seduction to include her partner, Jean-Paul Sartre. In 1940, following a two-year menage atrois, Bienenfield was unceremoniously dumped by her two lovers. Her emotional destruction served as a bleak accompaniment to the collapse of her adopted country by Hitler's invading forces. After the war, Lamblin and Beauvoir resumed a relationship that continued platonically for 40 years. Lamblin's memoir recounts the details of her involvement in the infamous threesome, balanced by the counterpoint of her later, loving marriage to Bernard Lamblin. A valuable inside look at the gurus of existentialism and a fascinating perspective of Jewish life during the German occupation. *Patricia Hassler*

Users Review

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