



Beauvoir and The Second Sex: Feminism, Race, and the Origins of Existentialism

Margaret A. Simons

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In a compelling chronicle of her search to understand Beauvoir's philosophy in *The Second Sex*, Margaret A. Simons offers a unique perspective on Beauvoir's wide-ranging contribution to twentieth-century thought. She details the discovery of the origins of Beauvoir's existential philosophy in her handwritten diary from 1927; uncovers evidence of the sexist exclusion of Beauvoir from the philosophical canon; reveals evidence that the African-American writer Richard Wright provided Beauvoir with the theoretical model of oppression that she used in *The Second Sex*; shows the influence of *The Second Sex* in transforming Sartre's philosophy and in laying the theoretical foundations of radical feminism; and addresses feminist issues of racism, motherhood, and lesbian identity. Simons also draws on her experience as a Women's Liberation organizer as she witnessed how women used *The Second Sex* in defining the foundations of radical feminism. Bringing together her work as both activist and scholar, Simons offers a highly original contribution to the renaissance of Beauvoir scholarship.

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