

# CHRISTIE'S

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## SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR LETTERS TO HER MOTHER AND SISTER UNKNOWN AND UNPUBLISHED



*Unpublished correspondence with her mother*  
Estimate: €280.000-350.000



*Unpublished correspondence with her sister*  
Estimation: €80.000-120.000

**Paris** – The *Book & Manuscript* department is pleased to announce the sale of two previously unknown correspondences of Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986); one addressed to her mother Françoise (comprising 353 letters), the second to her sister Hélène (“Poupette”) (92 letters). These remarkable and unseen series offer a new perspective on de Beauvoir’s relationship with her family.

The long letters of Simone de Beauvoir to her “dear little mother”, written between 1918 and 1957 lift the veil on almost forty years of her life, from her years as “well-behaved little girl” to her life as an activist philosopher, emancipated from her bourgeois upbringing.

She discusses her day-to-day life, her travels, her reading, the people she meets and the progress of her writing. Not much given to confidences and idle gossip, and anxious above all not to wound her mother, Simone de Beauvoir provides in these letters a factual autobiography, leavened with white lies and intentional concealments. In the course of this epistolary conversation, we see her personality define itself, whilst her emancipation and choice of life materialise. In letters written from Marseille, Rouen, Paris, Italy, Greece, Spain, Germany, North Africa and the USA, amongst others, her family circle gradually disappears, creating space for the “little family” whose names frequently appear: Jean-Paul Sartre, Jacques-Laurent Bost, Olga the “little Russian”, Merleau-Ponty, Nizan, the Leiris, and others.

She is however careful to avoid mentioning her romantic relationships with Sartre, Bost, Nelson Algren or indeed Claude Lazmann, 27 years her junior (estimate: €280.000-350.000).

In parallel with the letters to her mother, Simone also wrote extensively to her sister Hélène, between 1924 and 1968. More spontaneous and talkative than with her mother, she confides in her younger sister, affectionately nicknamed Poupette, revealing more details and anecdotes regarding the life she lives, her writing and particularly the long development of her novel *The Mandarins* and the mixed reception accorded to *The Second Sex*. She also enquires with interest about exhibitions planned by her sister, an artist.

Her inner circle, who are mentioned only in passing in her letters to her mother, suddenly come to life: Sartre, the “little man” who has “such a complicated private life” and whose writing she regularly mentions, Bost, Olga, Genet, Soupault who she suspects of being in love with her sister, the “sumptuous” Rita Hayworth to whom she “obviously” has nothing to say, Merleau-Ponty and the founding of the journal *Les Temps Modernes*, Montherlant who considers her as “the greatest female brain”, her new lover Claude Lazmann, Violette Leduc, and others (estimate: €80.000-120.000).

These extraordinary letters, carefully preserved by Hélène over several decades, reflect the ambivalence of Simone de Beauvoir’s relationship with her mother, whom as a child she considered as her own rival and who was eventually to become entirely dependent on her daughter. “I was the family support, in some manner her son”, as de Beauvoir confided in *Une mort très douce*. The letters also reflect Simone’s tenderness and kindness for her sister Poupette, convinced that “the bonds of childhood can never break” (4 January 1964), and offer a surprising image of Simone de Beauvoir, faithful to the end to her family despite her proclaimed independence.

**Sale: Wednesday 30 April at 14:30 pm.**

Public viewing: 25, 26, 28, 29 & 30 April from 10 am. to 6 pm.

Christie’s: 9, avenue Matignon, 75008 – Paris

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*\*Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and do not reflect costs, financing fees or application of buyer's or seller's credits.*

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*Images on demand*

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