

*Waterfall*, where Stovel does not fully allow for the complicated interplay between Jane Gray's artistry (as poet and as the novel's narrator) and her sexuality. Sometimes, too, the explication of a given symbolic pattern leads to reductiveness: Stovel's examination of the rock/flower opposition in *The Needles Eye* does not quite encompass the novel's moral subtleties and may be the cause of one of the few factually inaccurate statements in the book: that Simon's mother is responsible for burdening him with harsh biblical texts (116) and thus hardening his nature. Stovel's metaphors sometimes appear forced: do other readers agree that in *The Ice Age* Alison is England as a land and Anthony (before his conversion) the exploiter of that land (155)? Similarly, the excremental vision/aerial view antithesis seems too narrow to fit *The Middle Ground*; even when stretched to include amputation as a form of the excremental, it does not account for Hugo's experience, for instance, and it fails to accommodate the novel's intentional randomness and inconclusiveness.

Finally, Stovel's approach leaves little room for exploration of Drabble's postmodernism—in particular, of the extent to which her novels record the problems of narration by displaying and commenting on their own processes. And (a related issue) while it is always gratifying to see Drabble taken seriously as an artist, it is a little disappointing to find so little account taken of her sense of fun—of the playfulness of her text. Nevertheless, within its self-imposed parameters this is a painstakingly researched, thoughtful, informative study which provides ample evidence to support its claims for what the dust jacket calls "the other side" of Drabble's genius, "the [symbolic] moralist beneath the realist."

Shimon Sandbank

*AFTER KAFKA; THE INFLUENCE OF KAFKA'S FICTION*

Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1989. Pp. 182

Reviewed by Kurt Fickert

The title suggests a monumental work, not this slim (and tastefully designed) volume. Nevertheless, Shimon Sandbank does provide a trenchant, if terse, commentary on a generous number of authors who would seem to have taken a stand on the Kafka canon by either adapting it to their own purposes or rejecting its premises. At the same time, he has interpolated his own illuminating reading of Kafka's arcanelly meaningful fiction.

Sandbank pays particular attention to Kafka's influence on French novelists which manifests itself in their theorizing about the transmissibility of "truth or theme" through narrative. Sartre, to whose work (principally *Nausea*) Sandbank devotes a chapter, is represented as depicting, like Kafka, desperation as the human condition. In contrast to Kafka, however, Sartre posits that an act of consciousness—writing—can create order where there is chaos. For Sandbank, Kafka contrarily provides no way out: "Kafka, a doomed man addressing doomed men, has only one subject—doom" (28). Acknowledgment of the hopelessness of this kind of plight can also be found, so Sandbank proposes, in the novels of Camus, particularly in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, which Sandbank relates to Kafka's exposition of the Prometheus legend; Camus, in contrast to Kafka, sees his mythic figure as symbolizing the triumph of the in-

tellec over life or the absurd, i.e., the Kafkaesque. another French author Alain Robbe-Grillet, makes, as Sandbank would have it, the physical properties of a Kafkaesque world—e.g., walls, stairways—the basis for his fiction but will not allow them to point beyond themselves. Modern life in its preoccupation with things is also evoked in Ionesco's plays, which Sandbank considers in the light of Kafka's prose; he concludes that Ionesco has a closer relationship to Kafka than to Robbe-Grillet, since the objects the playwright characterizes (for instance, in *The Chairs*) have a significance over and above their physical presence.

In evolving answers to the question of the influence of Kafka's work on these (and the other) authors so knowledgeably interpreted in this book, Sandbank has carefully taken into consideration their own commentary on Kafka's fiction. Understandably, most are reluctant to admit that they have been unduly—if at all—involved with it. A case in point is that of Beckett, who claims only to be familiar with *The Castle*. Sandbank lists telling similarities between it and Beckett's novel *Watt*, but concludes that Beckett's sense of futility arising from the impossibility of writing with significance contrasts sharply with Kafka's compulsion to write in order to find significance.

Borges and S.Y. Agnon, with whom Sandbank begins the non-French section of *After Kafka*, are at opposite ends of the spectrum in regard to acknowledging their indebtedness to Kafka: for Borges it is extensive, for Agnon, slight. Sandbank has devised a formula which aptly pertains to Borges's close relationship to Kafka; "the paradox of the 'commonplace secret' and the paradox of 'negation as a part of affirmation' " comprise the electric point of contact between the two authors of world renown. Sandbank finds Kafka's achievement to be the greater one. In order to demonstrate Kafka's influence on Agnon, who writes in modern Hebrew, Sandbank has appended a translation of his story "Abandon." It would seem to nullify Agnon's disclaimer of any similarity between his work and Kafka's.

Quite as apparent are the blatant as well as superficial likenesses between the novels of the English leftist writers Rex Warner and Ruthven Todd, who used Kafkan motifs as instances of the ills of a society oppresses by a capitalistic bureaucracy. On the other hand, the contemporary American novelists discussed by Sandbank, John Barth, Thomas Pynchon, and Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., are seen to have only a subtle but therefore more meaningful relationship to Kafka's fiction. Uniting these many and diverse authors, about whom Sandbank writes so perspicaciously and lucidly, is the theme of the search for truth through literature, a quest which Kafka's work proves paradoxically to be doomed but essential.

Elizabeth Fallaize

*THE NOVELS OF SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR*

London and New York: Routledge, 1988. Pp. 200

Reviewed by John Fletcher

Surprisingly, there was no book devoted to Simone de Beauvoir's novels until this one was published, so if you think Beauvoir is an important novelist