

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

you will be grateful to Elizabeth Fallaize for writing it. She does an excellent job. The approach is straightforward and unfussy: after an introduction explaining how Beauvoir's views on women's issues developed over the years, there are individual chapters on the five novels and one on the short story cycles *When Things of the Spirit Come First* and *The Woman Destroyed*. A concluding chapter, "Points of Departure," argues that the story of Beauvoir's fictional writing is the story of an ever-increasing reduction of plurality of voice, and a loss of the authority conceded to the female voice: ". . . the evidence that she shared the perception of fiction as a male domain and that she had little sense of connection to a female tradition of writing is unmistakable . . . Beauvoir sought to place her writing in a masculine intellectual tradition" (179). Nevertheless, "almost despite herself," Fallaize concludes, "the treacherous woman's word creeps to the fore, and makes [Beauvoir's] writing part of the tradition of [what Doris Lessing terms] 'a literature or our own'" (184).

The book makes a good case for taking Beauvoir seriously as a novelist, but the question remains: is Beauvoir really a novelist at all? She is of immense importance in the history of women's liberation, not only for her book *The Second Sex*, but also for her courageous public stance on abortion when most terminations were illegal and severely punished in France. And she is of almost equal significance as a recorder of the social, cultural, and intellectual history of her country in the middle decades of the twentieth century, for her *Memoirs* will rank among the most valuable in French literature, on a par with Saint-Simon's.

But as a novelist she barely makes the third division, any more than Sartre or Drieu la Rochelle do. In this century, Camus, Gide, Malraux, Mauriac, and Simon are all a lot better than they, and are comfortably in the second division. But the first division is small indeed, with probably only Proust and Céline securely in it. She is in fact a victim of that peculiarly French intellectual's delusion, that any writer is capable of becoming a novelist. Other countries know better: a novelist is a writer, but not every writer is a novelist.

Naomi Lindstrom.

JEWISH ISSUES IN ARGENTINE LITERATURE: FROM GERCHUNOFF TO SZICHMAN

Columbia, MO.: The University of Missouri Press, 1989. Pp. 205. \$24.00

Reviewed by Robert DiAntonio

Through the long history of the Diaspora, Argentina stands as both a safe haven and a land of contradictions for its 300,000 member Jewish community. While, in general terms, Jewish life has flourished, there also have occurred violent anti-Semitic riots and subtler pressures brought to bear against Jews during eras of national tensions. From 1976-1983 many Jews were singled out by a dictatorial military regime whose atrocities against civil rights and personal freedoms are now widely documented.

From a literary perspective, but always considering the ever-changing sociopolitical undercurrents of the past century, Naomi Lindstrom analyzes eight representative works by important Jewish Argentine authors: "The eight texts