of the ways in which patriarchal culture has constructed women as the Other and denied them freedom as autonomous individuals. The book explores—and explodes—the often contradictory myths of femininity, as well as the concrete social, economic, and political structures of patriarchal oppression.

The Second Sex also shows how women under patriarchy are led to internalize a belief in their own inferiority and to adopt values that are inimical to them. Moi argues that Beauvoir, in her emotional and intellectual subservience to Sartre, is the prime example of this, though she fails to recognize it. In fact, many of the views expressed in The Second Sex illustrate this very point. Reading it today, we may find ourselves responding alternately with appreciative recognition, outrage, and embarrassment. The book juxtaposes male and female sexuality, consistently idealizing the former and presenting the latter with evident distaste. Taking over the frequently sexist language of Sartrean Existentialism (in which the basic human "project" of "throwing oneself forward into the future" consistently relies on an imagery of male erection and ejaculation), Beauvoir somehow arrives at a scheme of values in which childbirth, being "immanent," is inferior to warfare and murder, which are "transcendent." Accepting as "universal" a particularly French, male, received view of literary excellence, Beauvoir flatly denies the existence of any great women writers, placing Jane Austen, George Eliot, and Virginia Woolf far below Edgar Allen Poe and T. E. Lawrence (while never even mentioning Mme. de Lafayette). "Living marginally to the masculine world, [woman] sees it not in its universal form but from her special point of view." Instead of finding strengths in women's special viewpoint as, for example, Woolf did, Beauvoir saw it simply as an impediment to creativity. Indeed, the notion that the male position and point of view are somehow "universal" is one Woolf takes particular delight in puncturing. Much of what seems dated today in The Second Sex underscores the wisdom of Woolf's insight into the danger of being "locked in."

Still, when it was published some fifty-odd years ago, The Second Sex had a far-reaching, liberating impact and, Moi writes, "literally changed thousands of women's lives." Despite striving for a phantom "universality" in its rhetoric and its values, despite its sexist language, denigration of female sexuality, and underestimation of various women writers, it emphasized that nothing that existed in current society followed inevitably from differences in biology; nothing in the social state, The Second Sex argued, was in itself "natural." It contained a scathing critique of bourgeois marriage and of social and economic inequality, and was rightly read as a rallying cry for women's liberation.

For Moi, the contradictions in Beauvoir's work and life illustrate the paradoxes inherent in being an intellectual woman in our century. Using life and work to illuminate each other, and setting both in their cultural and institutional context, Moi's book skillfully negotiates the reader through the complexities of the French educational system, the arcane terminology of Existentialism, and the vagaries of Beauvoir's and Sartre's multiple loves. It is an impressive and rewarding work of cultural criticism.

Moi pays less attention to the novels than to The Second Sex and to Beauvoir's abundantly recorded life, moving gracefully among the multi-volumed autobiography, the letters, diaries, published interviews, and biographical studies. Although Beauvoir did not explicitly think of herself as a feminist until she joined the woman's movement when she was in her sixties, the ground-breaking impact of The Second Sex justifies Moi's description of her as "the greatest feminist theorist of our century."

If I have compared her here to Woolf, this reflects my own internal debate with Moi's unqualified claim concerning Beauvoir's preeminence. Yet while Woolf may strike us today as more consistently "right," her impact was delayed and her readership has been more limited. Taken together, Woolf and Beauvoir illustrate the poles of a feminism of difference and a feminism of equality. We are still learning from them both.

EN GUISE D'AMANTS: POÈMES CHOISIS


par Dominique O'Neill

C'est une vie entière que récapitule ce petit livre qui, sans en avoir même, recense plus de cinquante ans d'écriture. Choisis parmi les poèmes de The Last Landscape, publié en 1992, et de Collected Poems qui lui-même compilaient onze recueils de poésie ainsi que des inédits, soixante-quatre poèmes profilent l'œuvre d'une des grandes dames des lettres canadiennes. Miriam Waddington explique ainsi l'abondance de son œuvre poétique: «La poésie est au cœur même de ma vie [...] une constante source de plaisir et d'émerveillement, qui m'a engagée toute entière, à tous les niveaux. [...] Elle a toujours été présente en filigrane dans mes autres activités et rôles dans le monde: ceux de femme, mère, amante, amie et professeure.»

Et ce sont à leur tour ces rôles qui nourrissent ses poèmes. Elle puise dans le quotidien pour y trouver sa matière et pose sur sa vie et celle de ceux qu'elle ouvre un regard lucide, poignant ou ironique, souvent relevé d'humour noir («Les vieilles femmes devraient vivre comme les vers sous la terre / et ne sortir / qu'après une bonne averse.»)

Ces thèmes sont donc d'actualité: l'identité, la femme, l'amour, l'environnement. Canadienne et juive de souche russe, elle s'interroge sur la multiplicité de cette identité, évoquant avec amour son enfance à
Voix dialogue avec un
Winnipeg et se
sans espoir: le seul aboutissement de
suis moi et tu es toi
fils
emportant avec lui leur jeunesse, le
mouvement,
notent
unique moisson
l'œuvre,
grande
elle en
blanc.

Je suis seule maintenant » écrit-elle
en 1976 (« Poème de forêt »). Mais en fait, on est conscient d'une
grande solitude au cœur même de
l'œuvre, un manque si profond que
l'amour ne saurait le combler: « Car je
suis moi et tu es toi / C'est là notre
unique moisson. » Ce manque est
sans espoir: le seul aboutissement de
la vie est la vieillesse qu'elle maudit, et
la mort qui la guette et la nargue. La
mort qui la termine ainsi:
La mort qui la guette et la nargue. La
mortalité-les
l'œuvre,
comprendre
l'années 60 et 70, c'est-à-
der la disposition graphique des mots
sur la page et la coupure—qui se
voulait choquante mais dont on se
fatiguait vite—entre deux mots qui
s'apparentent.

On ne peut faire à cet ouvrage
qu'un petit reproche: Collected Poems
était nanti d'un index détaillé,
comptant l'année, le titre et sous-
titre de l'ouvrage dans lequel chaque
poème avait paru. En guise d'amants,
lui, ne donne aucun indice chrono-
logique, ce qui semble dommage
puisqu'une date discrète à la fin de
echaque poème ou même dans l'index
nous aurait permis de retracer le
cheminement de la pensée de la poète.

**CLUB CHERNOBYL**

Dianne Warren. Regina: Coteau

*by J. Rochon*

Reading a play can be a far more
ticking challenge than watching
it being performed. Finding the
content and the drama in a play on
the page can feel like an excavation,
from the directions and setting
descriptions. This is certainly not so
with *Club Chernobyl*, the newest play
by the Saskatchewan playwright,
Dianne Warren. Her play contains
minimal stage commands and allows
for a freely imaginative read. Even on
the page, the content is dark, strangely
real, in its danger and nervous ten-
sion-building techniques. With their
added eccentricities, her characters
come to life easily in their everyday
roles. They are accessible, yet intrigu-
ingly complex and unknowable.

The play opens with a dramatic
bedroom scene; Dallas is having a
nightmare and Billie, his wife, is try-
ing to wake him from his tortured
sleep. Dallas is screaming and cov-
ered in sweat, which in his dream
state he believes is blood. He doesn't
recognize Billie or his surroundings;
she knows the screams and intimate
movements of her frightened hus-
band exactly as he plays them out—
this occurrence is a common one. In
his wakeful state she tries to get him
to talk about his recurring dream and
what it might mean, but he won't
discuss it with her and leaves for a
drink. The mystery remains until the
concluding scene.

Dallasthe owner of Club
Chernobyl, where the majority of the
play is set. He designed it as a “con-
cept club”; the interior is made to
resemble a damaged nuclear reactor.
Danger is the marketing campaign to
create *Club Chernobyl* as a hip, dark,
novelty club. It's opening night in the
club and it is virtually empty. A storm
hits town and draws together an un-
likely mix of characters. Warren
cleverly employs the ex-
treme weather conditions of the outside world to
illuminate the inner psychological
worlds of her characters.

The storm fills the streets, bring-
ing Gina into the club, and floods the
basement, giving rise to Veronica.
Gina is the innocent virginal charac-
ter in this play; “inexperienced” is her
repeated description of herself. She is
released from her inhibitions and
gathers confidence through the
extreme and intense interactions in the
club. She joins the craziness of life,
gaining a passport to the real world
through her encounter with Dallas
and the others. Ironically, she experi-
ences her self fully for the first time in
Billie's little black dress. Veronica is
Gina's polar opposite. This character
has a deep understanding of the darker
side of life and its inherent danger;
she lives it. She is a reminder and
warning to the characters and to the