The voice of the implied author in the first Norwegian translation of Simone de Beauvoir’s *Le deuxième sexe*

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This chapter presents the findings of a study of how the implied author’s voice in the first Norwegian translation of Simone de Beauvoir’s “Introduction” in *Le deuxième sexe* (1949) from 1970 differs from the implied author’s voice both in the source text and in the second Norwegian translation from 2000. The analysis shows that the way in which the reader may construct the implied author’s voice in the 1970 translation is affected by how the existentialist vocabulary is translated and by omissions and mitigation of critical comments, sarcasm, and cultural references. The textual analysis is supplemented with considerations of paratextual elements. The chapter argues that the 1970 translation portrays a “Beauvoir” that is more didactic and less severe than the one of the source text and the 2000 translation.

**Keywords:** translation, voice, implied author, Simone de Beauvoir, existentialism, French, Norwegian Bokmål

1. Introduction

A reader of the first Norwegian translation of Simone de Beauvoir’s *Le deuxième sexe* from 1970 would claim to have “read Beauvoir,” and so would a reader of the second
Norwegian translation from 2000, as would, obviously, a reader of the French source text from 1949. However, their conceptions of “Beauvoir” would be very different from one another. In this chapter, I argue that this is because readers will construct very different “voices of the implied author” from the three texts, as any translation will influence the makeup of this voice.

The concept of voice has been used in different ways in Translation Studies. For the purpose of this chapter it is understood as textually manifested traces of the agents involved in the translation process (see for instance Alvstad and Assis Rosa 2015) in the text on the basis of which the reader constructs an image of the author, in this case Beauvoir – presumably without necessarily distinguishing between the historical person Beauvoir, the narrator Beauvoir, and the implied author Beauvoir (more on this below). The aim of this chapter is to pinpoint the characteristics of the implied author of the 1970 translation by comparing it both to the source text and to the 2000 translation. In so doing, I aim to show how the most striking changes and omissions affect the voice of the implied author toward a more didactic and less severe voice, and to explore to what extent this voice may serve the goal expressed in the 1970 translator’s preface of reaching a broader audience (Eliassen 1970:9).

The concept of an implied author is a much-debated one, also in Translation Studies. While some have abandoned it, others have found it useful (see for instance Richardson 2011). The concept, in Schmid’s definition (2009:161), has turned out to be well suited for the purpose of this chapter: “The concept of implied author refers to the author-image contained by a work and constituted by the stylistic, ideological, and aesthetic properties for which indexical signs can be found in the text.” This definition suggests that the implied author can be present anywhere in the text. It is, as Schmid (2009:167) puts it, a construct that “has no voice on its own” but is “formed
by the reader on the basis of his or her reading of the work.” What we could say, is
that agency, identity, and voice are in fact assigned to the implied author by readers.

There is a je, an “I,” present in Simone de Beauvoir’s *Le deuxième sexe* from
the very first sentence of the work: “J’ai longtemps hésité à écrire un livre sur la
femme” (Beauvoir 1950:11; “I hesitated a long time before writing a book on woman,”
Beauvoir 2010:3).¹ The narratological je is likely to be understood and identified by
the reader as Simone de Beauvoir, the real-life historical person, although we know
that the “I” of the text is not identical with the historical person.² Based on the
narrator Beauvoir, readers construct an author image, i.e. the implied author Beauvoir.
Similarly, the jeg (‘I’) in the Norwegian translations will also be read as the historical
person Beauvoir, and the voice of this implied author as her voice. However, as noted
by Alvstad (2013:207; see also Schmid 2009), “though often unaware of this, readers
of a translation do not have direct access to the voice of the author of the original. The
voice that reaches the reader is the translator’s.” In other words, the author-image will
be different in different translations. None of these perceived “Beauvoirs” are of
course to be found in the real world. They are rather representations of her persona,
constructed by the readers based on perceptions of her values, thoughts, and ideology,
gained from reading the translated work.

When discussing voice in re-translation, Alvstad and Assis Rosa (2015:5; see
also Alvstad 2014:273–276) conclude that the notion of the implied author works in
very much the same way in translated as in non-translated texts, and moreover that
“the implied author of a specific target text is likely to be qualitatively different from
the implied author of its source text because of minor and major shifts on all textual
levels.” This may for instance happen on the sentence level, as when the two
Norwegian translations interpret *se persuader* differently as either the active ‘convince himself’ or the passive ‘easily get the idea’:

(1) FR (Beauvoir 1950:27; 2010:14): Il peut donc se persuader qu’il n’y a plus entre les sexes de hiérarchie sociale.

[He can thus convince himself that there is no longer a social hierarchy between the sexes.]

NO1 (Beauvoir 1970:24): Han kan derfor lett få den oppfatning at det ikke lenger er noe sosialt hierarki mellom kjønnene.

[‘He may therefore easily get the idea that there is no longer any social hierarchy between the sexes.’]

NO2 (Beauvoir 2000:45): Så han kan overbevise seg selv om at det ikke lenger finnes noe sosialt hierarki mellom kjønnene.

[‘So he can convince himself that there no longer exists any social hierarchy between the sexes.’]

The phrasing in the 1970 translation makes the criticism appear less severe, which along with similar examples adds up to a less critical voice, which in turn will affect the reader’s image of the implied author. In the 1970 translation, responsibility is not attributed directly to men; their notion of equality becomes something that they passively experience. In the 2000 translation, as in the French source text, men are described as actively convincing themselves that there is no such thing as a social hierarchy between the sexes. What the readers of these three different texts “hear” are thus the voices of different implied authors.
I restrict the comparison to the introduction of Beauvoir’s text, and the findings are therefore based on only a small part of one of the two volumes of the book. It should also be mentioned that the list of examples presented in the chapter is not exhaustive even in regard to the introduction. However, if one is to select only a section of *Le deuxième sexe* for such a comparison of the voice of the implied author, the introduction is the best part to choose, as it is where Beauvoir presents her main ideas for her essay. The introduction is also usually what gives the readers their first impression of the text and therefore also of the implied author. Furthermore, according to Moi (2002:1007), the introduction is “particularly widely used in interdisciplinary feminist contexts,” so to study how the implied author’s voice may be constructed in this part of the text is therefore particularly relevant.

According to Alvstad and Assis Rosa (2015:5), the voice of the implied author is based on the text as a whole, so that translational shifts that affect the perception of the implied author’s voice will be found “on all textual levels.” This chapter will focus on the indexical signs in the text; cover illustrations of the different editions of the first translation and statements in the translator’s preface will supplement the analysis. The cover illustrations serve as indicators of how the status of the author and her work changed between the first and second translations. Furthermore, different cover illustrations set different frames for interpretation and may thus affect the reader’s perception of the voice of the implied author.

2. Versions of *Le deuxième sexe* in Norwegian
Simone de Beauvoir’s two-volume feminist and existentialist text *Le deuxième sexe* (1949) was published in Norwegian for the first time in 1970. Lawyer and women’s rights activist Rønnaug Eliassen translated the first volume and most of the second, in addition to writing a preface. She first contacted the Pax publishing house in 1966 and suggested translating an abridged version of *Le deuxième sexe*, ³ which became her first translation. As stated in the colophon, Atle Kittang, who was later to be professor of literature at the University of Bergen, translated the last two chapters plus the conclusion of the second volume, possibly together with his wife, librarian Oddlaug Kittang.⁴ This first translation was a severely shortened version of the text, abridged to about one-third of the French text, as entire chapters as well as selected paragraphs and sentences (and clauses and phrases) were omitted. In her preface, Eliassen (1970:9) provides an explanation as to why the translation is so abridged: “Now that the book is available in Norwegian it is in the form of a severely shortened edition – this has been done with the intention of reaching a broader audience.”⁵ As this chapter aims to show, this intention may explain several translation choices in the 1970 translation.

Translational norms (Toury 1995, 2012) concerning large-scale omission as an acceptable translation choice have changed between the first and second Norwegian translations of *Le deuxième sexe*. What was accepted in terms of omissions in 1970 was at the time of the second translation unimaginable, and when the latter was published in 2000, reviews and articles covering the publication emphasized as a positive aspect that this, as opposed to the 1970 translation, was an unabridged translation.⁶ But not all agents taking part in the translation and publication of the 1970 translation agreed to the extent of the practice either, or to how it was carried out.
IdaLou Larsen, who went from being a secretary at Pax to chief editor during the period it took to translate and publish the book, recalls the process as quite a struggle:

> Rønnaug Eliassen and I fought tooth and nail to expand the original manuscript to at least two volumes, instead of one as planned. We made it. But when the book came out, there was nonetheless not much left of the most fundamental work written about being a woman in our Western culture.⁷

(Larsen 1999:188)

This statement may seem odd, given that Eliassen intended it to be an abridged version from the start, but correspondence between the translator and various employees at Pax indicates that there was a continuous discussion regarding how much to omit, and that some editors wanted an even more drastically shortened version than Eliassen. In short, there was never a question of whether or not the work should be abridged, only how much. In the correspondence, there are sometimes references to meetings that have no written résumés or minutes, and one can assume that discussions continued and decisions were made at these meetings. Because of the multiplicity of agents involved in the process, what Jansen and Wegener (2013) call “multiple translatorship,” it is difficult to be certain about who decided what and when.

Although abridged versions were common practice at the time, it is not unlikely that the publisher’s financial situation in part influenced the length of the translation. A shorter text is less expensive to translate and print, and it is no secret that Pax had continuous financial challenges during their early years (Helsvig
2014:109–111). This can explain the large-scale omissions of entire chapters, but it
does not fully account for the minor omissions within the introduction.

The 1970 translation was a successful publication for the small publishing
house, as it helped shape their profile as a publisher of socialist and feminist literature,
in addition to their interest in philosophy (Helsvig 2014:136). Second editions of
volumes one and two were published in 1973 and 1974, respectively. Although the
content had not changed, the book was now marketed under the headline “questions
on sexuality,” alongside books on abortion, contraception, (women’s) sexuality,
pornography, and feminism. During the 1990s, the work regained interest, causing
In 1996, a hardback edition was published in the series Århundrets bibliotek (The
library of the century), published by Den Norske Bokklubben, a popular, Norwegian
book club. The reasons for this upsurge in interest include the contribution from Toril
Moi, a US-based and Norwegian-born professor of literature and romance studies, to
the recognition of Beauvoir as a philosopher in her own right, not just a disciple of
Sartre. Ever since Moi became internationally acclaimed, her voice has been a strong
one in the Norwegian public sphere.8 Among other publications, Moi’s book Simone
de Beauvoir: The Making of an Intellectual Woman from 1994 contributed to the re-
actualization of Simone de Beauvoir and her works both internationally and in
Norway, as it was published in Norwegian one year later.9 Another reason for the new
editions may be that a new group of readers emerged in the 1990s, as an enormous
increase in the number of students between 1988 and 1996 followed in the wake of
the rising unemployment rate at the time in Norway (Helsvig 2014:301).10 Many of
those who would have been unemployed took to the universities, but they did not
flock to the hard sciences. Instead, they found their way to the humanities, especially
to arts and philosophy. This represented a new market for literature on philosophy, one that allowed Pax to reestablish its profile as an intellectual publishing house and an important publisher of philosophical works (Helsvig 2014:303). Yet another factor that may have played a role is the expansion of women’s studies at Norwegian universities and the establishing of centers for gender studies. One such center was founded at the University of Oslo in 1986.

In 2000, four years after the edition for Århundrets bibliotek was published, Pax published a complete retranslation, here understood as “a second or later translation of the same source text into the same target language” (Koskinen and Paloposki 2010:294). Le deuxième sexe was now translated in its entirety by Bente Christensen, a well-established professional translator with a doctoral degree in literature, who furthermore was head of the Norwegian Association of Literary Translators from 1994 to 2000. Just as for the 1990s editions of the first translation both volumes were published in one book, but this time with an introductory essay by Toril Moi, making it a more scholarly edition. The editor was Live Cathrine Slang, who, while working at Bokklubben before joining Pax, had been involved in the establishment of the Århundrets bibliotek series (Slang, pers. comm.). This edition too turned out to be a very successful publication for the rather small Norwegian publishing house, as it sold 20,000 copies during the first few months (Skre 2000b; Moi 2002:1032). At this point, Christensen had translated Beauvoir’s Une mort très douce (En lett og rolig død, Solum, 1982) and Mémoires d’une jeune fille rangée (En velopdragen ung pikes erindringer, Pax, 1996). After translating Le deuxième sexe, she went on to translate several of Beauvoir’s other works.11
In the following I present the findings of the analysis, with an eye toward showing how changes in voice in the 1970 translation may affect the reader’s construction of the implied author.

3. A more didactic and less severe implied author

Most of the following findings can be explained by the goal explicitly stated in the translator’s preface in 1970, that of reaching a broader audience (Eliassen 1970:9). In other words, changes made to the voice of the implied author are related to the fact that the first Norwegian translation targeted a wide readership.

The most significant changes affecting the voice of the implied author regard the translation of existentialist vocabulary and the omission or mitigation of critical comments, sarcasm, and cultural references. They are, as will be seen, changes that in many ways serve the same purpose, and/or omit the same type of textual elements, and that can therefore be grouped together fairly logically.

3.1 Explanatory additions and paraphrase in the 1970 translation

In the 1970 translation, existentialist vocabulary tends to be either paraphrased or supplemented by an explanatory addition, to the effect that the implied author’s voice that is being constructed in the text becomes a more didactic one than in the French source text. Example (2) contains one of the first occurrences of the terms *transcendance* and *immanence*, two terms that are both previously explained in the translator’s preface. The example is taken from the end of the introduction, and the
quote is related to the idea that instead of measuring one’s own and other people’s “happiness,” existential ethics urges people to fulfill their freedom by transcending, so when transcendence lapses into immanence, it is considered a moral flaw:


[Every time transcendence lapses into immanence, there is degradation of existence into “in-itself,” of freedom into facticity.]

NO1 (Beauvoir 1970:26): Hver gang denne utadgående bevegelse stagnerer, dvs. hver gang transcendensen faller tilbake i immanens, blir eksistensen degradert til noe tingliggjort, frihet blir til tvang.13

[‘Every time this outward movement stagnates, i.e., every time the transcendence lapses into immanence, the existence is degraded to something objectified, freedom becomes force.’]

Example (2) shows that in the 1970 translation, the central concepts of *transcendance* and *immanence* are explained by the use of everyday words, while at the same time the existentialist terms are introduced. The notion of *existence en “en soi”* is not translated as such, but is paraphrased into ‘something objectified.’

In example (3), we see that the explanatory additional paraphrase to immanence, *stagnasjon* (‘stagnation’), reoccurs in the 1970 translation, even though it appears on the same page as example (2). Furthermore, the words *transcendance*/*transcendée* are paraphrased:

[An attempt is made to freeze her as an object and doom her to immanence, since her transcendence will be forever transcended by another essential and sovereign consciousness.]

NO1 (Beauvoir 1970:26): Alle krav går sammen om å gjøre henne til objekt og vie henne til immanens, stagnasjon, idet hun hele tiden vil bli hindret i sin aktive utfoldelse av en annen bevissthet som er den vesentlige og høyeste.

[‘All demands join forces to make her an object and dedicate her to immanence, stagnation, as she constantly will be hindered in her active expression by another consciousness that is the essential and greatest one.’]

Again, in the source text, there are no explanatory additions. In addition to these two examples, the word *transcendance* occurs twice on the same page in the 1970 translation and is then translated as *transendens*, in both cases with the added explanatory paraphrase *å nå utover seg selv* (‘to reach beyond oneself’). By contrast, the 2000 translation follows the source text very closely in the matter of existentialist vocabulary and adds no further explanations.

Another central existentialist concept is *Mitsein*, the ‘being-with.’¹¹⁴ This term is transferred, in the 1970 translation, as a German loan word with the explanatory addition *samliv om felles oppgaver* (‘cohabitation based on shared tasks,’ Beauvoir 1970:18). Likewise, the term *alterité* is translated following the same strategy. It is either paraphrased, such as “det å være det andre” (‘being the other,’ Beauvoir 1970:28), or translated directly, but with an additional explanatory phrase, such as
“alteriten – idéen om det Andre” (‘alterity, the idea of the Other,’ Beauvoir 1970:17).

Moi (2002) compares the source text with the English translation from 1953, explaining origins of words and concepts and pointing out pitfalls when translating existentialist vocabulary. According to Moi (2002:1013), “The most striking thing about existentialist vocabulary is that it often uses words that also have a perfectly ordinary everyday meaning.” Such is the case for (in-)authentique:

Authentique, for example, is a common French word, which usually can be translated as “genuine,” “real,” “original,” or “authentic,” according to context [. . .]. But in Beauvoir and Sartre’s vocabulary, an “authentic” act is one that is carried out in good faith, that is to say, one that does not try to deny freedom and the responsibility that comes with freedom. To be “inauthentic” is to be in bad faith, which means trying to escape the awareness of choice, responsibility, and freedom. (Moi 2002:1014)

Authentique is in the 1970 translation paraphrased as virkelig (‘real,’ Beauvoir 1970:14) or egentlig (‘actual,’ Beauvoir 1970:26). Its existential meaning seems to have gone by unnoticed by the translator, and it is thus not accessible to the reader of this translation. In the 2000 translation it is quite consistently translated by the Norwegian equivalent autentisk, thereby keeping open the possibility of retrieving the philosophical meaning of the word.
3.2 Omissions and mitigation of critical comments, sarcasm, and cultural references

Omissions are, as was pointed out, an important trait of the 1970 translation. Chapters, paragraphs, sentences, and words were left out from the books, with about one-fifth of the introduction being omitted. Although omissions and mitigation of sarcastic comments tend to coincide with omissions of critical comments and of cultural references, I will first give examples of omissions of each category separately.

Omitted critical comments typically involve criticism of unsuccessful or all too polemic arguments on both sides in the gender debate (Beauvoir 1950:28) and of women “misrepresenting” feminism, such as in example (4), which was omitted entirely from the 1970 translation:

(4) FR (Beauvoir 1950:13; 2010:4): Une femme écrivain connue a refusé voici quelques années de laisser paraître son portrait dans une série de photographies consacrée précisément aux femmes écrivains : elle voulait être rangée parmi les hommes ; mais pour obtenir ce privilège, elle utilisa l’influence de son mari. Les femmes qui affirment qu’elles sont des hommes n’en réclament pas moins des égards et des hommages masculins. Je me rappelle aussi cette jeune trotskyste debout sur une estrade au milieu d’un meeting houleux et qui s’apprêtait à faire le coup de poing malgré son évidente fragilité ; elle niait sa faiblesse féminine ; mais c’était par amour pour un militant dont elle se voulait l’égale. L’attitude de défi dans laquelle se crispent les Américaines prouve qu’elles sont hantées par le sentiment de leur féminité.
A few years ago, a well-known woman writer refused to have her portrait appear in a series of photographs devoted specifically to women writers. She wanted to be included in the men’s category; but to get this privilege, she used her husband’s influence. Women who assert they are men still claim masculine consideration and respect. I also remember a young Trotskyite standing on a platform during a stormy meeting, about to come to blows in spite of her obvious fragility. She was denying her feminine frailty; but it was for the love of a militant man she wanted to be equal to. The defiant position that American women occupy proves they are haunted by the sentiment of their own femininity.

This passage contains several instances of criticism of women who are “doing it wrong,” and by consistently leaving out such critical comments, the 1970 translation inevitably changes the voice of the implied author into a less critical one.

Another strategy in the 1970 translation is to mitigate such criticism, as shown in example (1) above, where men passively “get the idea” rather than actively convince themselves that there is no gendered hierarchy. Example (5) shows something similar, but this time it is women who are criticized more mildly in the 1970 translation than in the original and the 2000 re-translation:


[The man who sets the woman up as an Other will thus find in her a deep complicity.]
NO1 (Beauvoir 1970:20): Derfor vil mannen, når han konstituerer kvinnen som det Andre, ikke møte mye motstand hos henne.
[Therefore, the man, when he constitutes the woman as the Other, will not encounter much resistance in her.]

NO2 (Beauvoir 2000:12): Mannen som gjør kvinnen til en Annen vil altså møte en dyptgripende medskyldighet hos henne.
[The man who makes the woman an Other will thus encounter a deep-reaching complicity in her.]

In the 1970 translation, women carry far less responsibility for their being the Other than women in the source text and in the 2000 translation, where they are described as accomplices. It seems reasonable to ask whether this could have been a strategy from the publisher’s side in 1970: to underplay women’s and men’s responsibility lest they should offend readers or make them uncomfortable.

Omitting these sentences and paragraphs affects the voice of the implied author to a great extent. In example (6), omitted entirely from the 1970 translation, there is an amusing comment on the concept of femininity:

[Is femininity secreted by the ovaries? Is it enshrined in a Platonic heaven? Is a frilly petticoat enough to bring it down to earth? Although some women zealously strive to embody it, the model has never been patented. It is typically described in vague and shimmering terms borrowed from a clairvoyant’s vocabulary.]

The omission of these sentences clearly changes the voice of the implied author. In example (6), sarcasm is being used as a tool to ridicule the idea of “femininity” as something nature-given and eternally cemented in culture. An implied author who does not ridicule or use the “weapon” of sarcasm will be read as kinder, as less harsh.

In example (7), Beauvoir ridicules how people sometimes describe women, attributing certain qualities to the ovaries and the uterus:


[Some even say she thinks with her hormones.]

In the 1970 translation this sentence has been omitted, while the sentences before and after it are translated, which could indicate that the sarcastic voice is systematically avoided.

Most of the omitted sarcastic sentences and paragraphs are aimed at ridiculing or criticizing someone or something, and they often make specific references to texts, debates, and so forth. Thus, many cultural references are also omitted. Their omission adds to the overall didactic effect: leaving them out narrows down the number of topics, some of which may have been considered unnecessarily confusing. In this way
the accessibility of the main ideas presented in the work is increased. The cultural references in question are mainly names and titles (of books, magazines, and other texts). Additionally, references to -isms, such as conceptualism, sophism, nominalism, and rationalism, are omitted.

When more than one of these three aforementioned categories (critical comments, sarcasms, and cultural references) coincide in one paragraph, it is likely to have been omitted, as in example (8), where author and journalist Claude Mauriac and his article in *Le Figaro Littéraire* is criticized in quite a sarcastic way:

(8) FR (Beauvoir 1950:25–26; Beauvoir 2010:13): C’est ainsi qu’en septembre 1948 dans une de ses articles du *Figaro Littéraire*, M. Claude Mauriac — dont chacun admire la puissante originalité — pouvait (note : Ou du moins il croyait le pouvoir) écrire à propos des femmes : “*Nous* écoutons sur un ton *(sic!)* d’indifférence polie... la plus brillante d’entre elles, sachant bien que son esprit reflète de façon plus ou moins éclatante des idées qui viennent de *nous*.” Ce ne sont évidemment pas les idées de M. C. Mauriac en personne que son interlocutrice reflète, étant donné qu’on ne lui en connaît aucune ; qu’elle reflète des idées qui viennent des hommes, c’est possible : parmi les mâles mêmes il en est plus d’un qui tient pour siennes des opinions qu’il n’a pas inventées ; on peut se demander si M. Claude Mauriac n’aurait pas intérêt à s’entretenir avec un bon reflet de Descartes, de Marx, de Gide plutôt qu’avec lui-même ; ce qui est remarquable, c’est que par l’équivoque du *nous* il s’identifie avec saint Paul, Hegel, Lénine, Nietzsche et du haut de leur grandeur il considère avec dédain le troupeau des femmes qui osent lui parler
sur un pied d’égalité ; à vrai dire j’en sais plus d’une qui n’aurait pas la patience d’accorder à M. Mauriac un “ton d’indifférence polie”.

[Thus, in one of his articles in *Le Figaro Littéraire* in September 1948, M. Claude Moriac – whom everyone admires for his powerful originality – could write about women: “*We listen in a tone [sic!] of polite indifference . . . to the most brilliant one among them, knowing that her intelligence, in a more or less dazzling way, reflects ideas that come from us.*” Clearly his female interlocutor does not reflect M. Mauriac’s own ideas, since he is known not to have any; that she reflects ideas originating with men is possible: among males themselves, more than one of them takes as his own opinions he did not invent; one might wonder if it would not be in M. Claude Mauriac’s interest to converse with a good reflection of Descartes, Marx, or Gide rather than with himself; what is remarkable is that with the ambiguous “we,” he identifies with Saint Paul, Hegel, Lenin, and Nietzsche, and from their heights he looks down on the herd of women who dare to speak to him on an equal footing; frankly, I know more than one woman who would not put up with M. Mauriac’s “tone of polite indifference.”]

The entire paragraph was omitted from the 1970 translation. The quote gives a distinctive layer of wit and sarcasm to the representation of the implied author, whose voice is changed by the omission of this paragraph, toward a milder and less critical voice.
4. Concluding discussion

The findings presented in this chapter indicate how the 1970 translation tends to explain and paraphrase existential vocabulary and to either omit or mitigate cultural references and sarcastic and critical comments. Although it is quite impossible to know for certain why the 1970 translation was translated the way it was, it is interesting to consider these changes in relation to the translator’s stated goal of reaching a broader audience (Eliassen 1970:9). By paraphrasing and adding explanations to existentialist vocabulary, the translator made the text more immediately comprehensible, thus making it more accessible for readers who were not familiar with these terms. In 1970, it is unlikely that existentialist terms were assumed to be part of the vocabulary of the entire range of target readers, as the concepts they signify were less widely known at that time than they were when the text was re-translated in 2000. The terms were quite new when Le deuxième sexe was initially translated into Norwegian, and reaching a broader audience would involve succeeding at making the text accessible to both highly and less educated readers. Moreover, for social movements of the time the spreading of ideas to the masses – such as the feminist ideas in Le deuxième sexe – was considered a virtue.

The fact that the same existentialist terms, in the 1970 translation, were explained in an inconsistent way, by means of different words and phrases, may suggest, however, that their meaning was only approximately understood by the translator. Moi (2002:1022) states that for philosophers reading the English translation from 1953, the lack of “clarity of thought and consistency of concepts,” stemming in part from the existentialist vocabulary being inconsistently translated, must have led them to think that “in spite of her brilliance, Beauvoir must be a
careless and inconsistent thinker.” As discussed in the previous section, however, paraphrase does seem, at least in the Norwegian 1970 translation, to have had a benevolent, didactic purpose. Paraphrasing in different ways may give the reader a variety of clues as to how to understand the terms, with one way making sense for some and another making sense for others. In addition, it might send a signal to the reader that despite the foreign vocabulary and technical terms, the meaning is accessible to all – so accessible, in fact, that you can easily paraphrase it in different, yet quite synonymous ways. The explanatory additions in the 1970 translation thus portray an implied author’s voice that is more didactic than that of the source text.

As mentioned, a new market opened up for philosophical works around the time of the Norwegian re-editions in the 1990s and the subsequent retranslation in 2000, following a marked increase in the number of arts and humanities students. For the 2000 translation, it is quite likely that explanations were found to be unnecessary for words like *transcendance*, *immanence*, and *en-soi*, given prospective readers’ assumed knowledge of Beauvoir and the key philosophical concepts.

Concerning the omission of culture-specific references, Davies (2007:62) writes that “the extent to which omission is considered a valid solution may depend on the status of the source text.” She gives the example of three Spanish translations of Dashiell Hammett’s *The Maltese Falcon*, as studied by Franco Aixelá, who showed that “omission is used much more in the version which presents the book as a work of popular entertainment than in the other two versions, which view it as a piece of canonical literature” (Davies 2007:62). Considering the process of canonization that took place between the publishing of the first and the second translation, this observation is transferrable to the Norwegian translations of *Le deuxième sexe*, adding another layer to the explanation of why a fuller translation should appear in 2000.
The mentioned canonization process is also reflected in how the work was presented visually in a different way in the 1990s than in the 1970s. In 1970, the cover illustration was of a naked, faceless woman against a bright orange background, while the second edition from 1973–1974 featured a photograph of an egg cup shaped like a naked woman laying on her back, one arm behind her head – the breasts were salt and pepper containers, and there was a hole between her legs where the egg was to be placed. In the 1992 and 1994 covers, by contrast, these polemic and provocative cover illustrations – which pointed to the issue of objectification, a key part of the problem the work addressed – were replaced with a black-and-white close-up photograph of Beauvoir’s face. Thus, while the feminist cause was in focus in the 1970s, these later close-ups put the author in focus. The new visual profile of the editions published by Pax in the 1990s is an indication that the publishers were aiming at a new readership, for whom Beauvoir would be a well-known author.

In the 1996 edition in the Århundrets bibliotek series, which published explicitly canonized works, the translator’s preface from 1970 was omitted, and the dust jacket showed only a blue, marble-like surface with the author’s name and the title written in capital letters. Underneath the dust jacket, the book was covered in deep-green textile and had golden lettering, as did all the publications in the series.
These changes, and the very inclusion of the work in the series Århundrets bibliotek, are clear signals that the work and the author were now indisputably part of the canon.

The development of the status of the work and its author is reflected in what is central in the visual framing in the different decades, moving from the cause via the author to her work and ideas. Likewise, some of the key features of the 2000 translation reflect this change of status: in 2000, omissions were not acceptable in a translation of Beauvoir’s most well-known work, and the preface was an essay written by the prominent scholar Toril Moi. Furthermore, this development, which also reflects the emergence of new target readers, points to the fact that the different versions and translations fulfilled different functions. Schmid (2009:162) contends that “depending on the function a work is believed to have had according to a given reading, the implied author will be reconstructed as having predominantly aesthetic, practical or ideological intentions.” From this it follows that the translator as reader will interpret the implied author’s voice, as such interpretation is an inherent part of translation, and that the 1970 translation suggests a reading of the implied author Beauvoir as having practical and ideological intentions, as it is to the point and has a strict focus on the cause. In 2000, at a later stage of the gradual change of status for Beauvoir and her work as philosopher and author of fictional works, the aesthetic functions are brought to the forefront, placing focus on the author’s style by adhering to strict norms of closeness to the source text. That is not to say that this retranslation is a close replica of the French source text, but it does indeed follow a different set of norms than the first translation.
When critical comments that could be interpreted as offensive toward readers were omitted or mitigated, could it be that the publishers were afraid that such criticism would indeed offend the readers? As Davies (2007:63) points out, justifications for omission are tied to the context of the translation, as “those who are translating for a specific target culture during a particular historical period are likely to bow to the expectations and tolerance levels of their target audience.” She writes that when the success of a given translation is seen as depending on how the target audience receives the work, omissions can be justified on that basis, even if it means judging its success not only on closeness to the source text in regard to style, effect, and content. According to Davies (2007:63), “if the translation offends, irritates or embarrasses the target audience, they may quite simply decide not to continue reading it.” A small publishing house like Pax would be particularly dependent on keeping their readers, and would probably not want to drive them away by mocking or ridiculing them. Additionally, the sarcasm reflects a rather stereotypically “unfeminine” quality of feminists. It is not unlikely that omitting sarcasm and mitigating or omitting critical comments was a way to avoid reproducing prejudices against feminists as “angry” or “harsh.” In doing so, an implied author’s voice that appears milder and kinder is reconstructed.

In sum, the goal to “reach a broader audience” that was explicitly stated by translator Rønnaug Eliassen in her preface to the first translation of Le deuxième sexe into Norwegian (1970:9) did not just mean making the work shorter and thus cheaper to buy. It also meant making it more accessible at the level of content and presentation. The existentialist vocabulary was explained, and critical comments, sarcasm, and cultural references were to a certain extent omitted or mitigated. It was perhaps not her intention, but omitting and mitigating such content altered the voice
of the implied author, away from the “harsh criticism” of the “angry feminist intellectual” toward a more didactic and less severe voice, one that was not in danger of offending readers or making them feel uncomfortable. Whether the change of the implied author’s voice played a role in the decision to retranslate the work needs further investigation. Several re-editions of the 1970 translation were published and these are still easily available. Yet a proper retranslation appeared already in 2000, a mere four years after a re-edition of the first translation was published. As the translation norms prescribing closeness to the original became stronger, it might be that the abridged 1970 translation was regarded not only as quantitatively insufficient but also as no longer qualitatively acceptable.
Translations into English of the French source text of *Le deuxième sexe* are from the English retranslation, *The Second Sex*, by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevalier (Beauvoir 2010). Translations from Norwegian are my own.

Because this is a non-fictional work, it is likely that readers to an even larger extent than for fictional works link this author image to the real-life author.


“Når [boken] nå foreligger på norsk, er det i sterkt forkortet utgave, – en har dermed ment å nå et bredere publikum.”

“First complete edition in Norwegian” (Skre 2000a); “the main work of the French philosopher, *The Second Sex*, comes out in its entirety in Norwegian” (Bugge 2000); “it is a literary happening when Simone de Beauvoir’s epoch-making work *The Second Sex* is now available in Norwegian in its entirety” (Emberland 2000); “fifty years after the original publication, *The Second Sex* is published in its entirety in Norwegian” (Solberg 2000).

“Rønnaug Eliassen og jeg kjempet med nebb og klør for å utvide det opprinnelige manuskriptet til iallfall to bind, i stedet for ett som planlagt. Vi klarte det. Men da boka kom, var det likevel ikke mye igjen av det mest grunnleggende verket som er blitt skrevet om det å være kvinne i vår vestlige kultur.”

Moi’s voice also resonates within the retranslation, as translator Bente Christensen consulted Moi regarding the translation of existentialist vocabulary.


The number of students at the University of Bergen rose from 8,000 to 16,000 from 1987 to 1994, and at the University of Oslo the number increased from 20,000 to over 38,000 between 1988 and 1996 (Helsvig 2014:301).
La force de l’âge (I moden alder, 2004), L’Amérique au jour le jour (Amerika fra dag til dag, 2005), L’invitée (Gjesten, 2006), and Pyrrhus et Cinéas and Pour une morale d’ambiguïté (Pyrrhos og Cineas / Tvetydighetens etikk, 2009), all published by Pax and all edited by Live Cathrine Slang. In 2016, Christensen’s translation of La vieillesse (Alderdommen) was published by Vidarforlaget.

It should be noted that the paraphrase and explanation of existentialist vocabulary seems to be inspired by how this is done in the Danish translation of Le deuxième sexe, which was a secondary source text for the Norwegian translator (Solberg, 2016).

This is a mistranslation of “facticity” (facticité) as “force.”

The concept refers to being in a world shared with others, in a Mitwelt. Gothlin (2003:57–58) wrote that for Beauvoir, this means being born into a world of others, where life can be lived “in separation and conflict, or in friendship and solidarity.”