

UNCOVERING THE HIDDEN ACTORS WITH THE HELP OF LATOUR: THE ‘MAKING’¹ OF *THE SECOND SEX*

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Abstract

This paper seeks to respond to current and on-going criticism of the first and only English translation of Simone de Beauvoir’s *Le deuxième sexe*. It reconsiders the translator-publisher dynamic by applying Bruno Latour’s sociological framework in order to arrive at more detailed and comprehensive conclusions. After briefly presenting the publication, reception, and the criticism of the English translation, this paper investigates into the case study with the help of Latour and the letters from the Smith College Archives. The study was based on the reading of historical documents – more than a hundred letters between the translator, Howard M. Parshley, and the publishing house, Alfred A. Knopf. A brief overview of Latour’s Actor-Network Theory (ANT) is presented and then followed by two examples of application of the theoretical framework. The paper concludes by insisting that the involvement of multiple actors and their influence on translation products should receive more attention when considering the work of translators.

Resum

Aquest article vol respondre a les crítiques actuals a la primera i única traducció a l’anglès de *Le deuxième sexe* de Simone de Beauvoir. Replanteja la dinàmica traductor-editor aplicant el marc sociològic de Bruno Latour per tal d’assolir conclusions més detallades i de major abast. Després d’una breu presentació d’aquesta publicació, de la recepció i de la crítica de la traducció a l’anglès, l’article investiga l’estudi de cas amb l’ajuda de Latour i de les cartes dels arxius del Smith College. L’estudi es fonamenta

1. Refers to the article by Hélène Buzelin entitled “Translations in the ‘making’” (2007).

en la lectura de documents històrics: més d'un centenar de cartes entre el traductor, Howard M. Parshley, i l'editorial, Alfred A. Knopf. S'ofereix també una breu revisió de la Teoria Actor-Xarxa de Latour, seguida de dos exemples d'aplicació al marc teòric. L'article conclou insistint que la implicació de múltiples agents i la seva influència en els productes traduïts hauria de rebre major atenció en examinar el treball dels traductors.

Keywords

Sociology of translation. Actor-network theory. Letter correspondence. *The Second Sex*. English translation.

Paraules clau

Sociologia de la traducció. Teoria actor-xarxa. Correspondència postal. *El segon sexe*. Traducció a l'anglès.

1. Introduction

This paper seeks to respond to current and on-going criticism of the first and only English translation of Simone de Beauvoir's *Le deuxième sexe*. Published in 1953 under the title *The Second Sex*, the English translation has been widely read in the English-speaking countries, mainly as private reading or as part of the Women's Studies programs. Since the American and European feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s, *The Second Sex* has been referred to as the "feminist bible" or the foundation of modern feminism (Moi 2008, Gillman 1988). Interestingly, the work has not been studied sufficiently in the academic circles of philosophy departments. I have discussed elsewhere (Bogic 2009b, forthcoming) the circumstances surrounding the translation and the philosophical mistranslations, which were largely a result of the translator-publisher dynamic. What is more, the "packaging" of the translation not as a philosophical treatise on women, but rather, as a scientific study was explained to be a result of the publisher's view of the book and the belief that a scientific study would be more commercially successful (Bogic 2009a, 2009b; Englund 1992, 1994). Consequently, Beauvoir's glaring absence from the philosophical canon can partly be explained by a deficient English version that mistranslated the philosophical content. In view of this context, this paper will reconsider the translator-publisher dynamic through the reading of letter correspondence and by applying Bruno Latour's sociological framework in order to arrive at more detailed and comprehensive conclusions.

2. Publication and Reception of *The Second Sex*

Following its publication in 1953 in the United States, *The Second Sex* was received with mixed reviews. Both criticized and praised, the work became a bestseller and was reviewed in American journals and newspapers, such as *The New Yorker*, *Newsweek*, *The Nation* and *The Saturday Review of Literature*. In *The Nation*, Patrick Mullahy wrote that *The Second Sex* "is in many ways a superb book, brilliantly written with a broad scope and keen psychological insight;" however he warned that "because of certain political leanings Mme. de Beauvoir has to be read with critical caution" (Mullahy 1953). In

a lengthy, ten-page article, the American literary critic and writer Elizabeth Hardwick wrote an engaging review in which she admitted that the book was “an accomplishment”. Nevertheless, she developed a long list of criticisms that, among others, included a severe critique of the fantastic size and scope of the book that in the end “lacks a subject”.

Despite the criticism of the immediate reception, the book became a quick bestseller and sold 22,000 copies in the first week of its publication (Galster 2007: 186). However, the discussions on the book fell silent shortly after the first wave of reception, and for the remainder of the 1950s there were no significant studies of *The Second Sex*. It was not until the early 1960s and later 1970s that Beauvoir’s ideas resurfaced when American feminists like Betty Friedan (*The Feminine Mystique*, 1963) and Kate Millett (*Sexual Politics*, 1970) produced pivotal feminist literature that propelled women’s liberation movements on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. Their works and others further developed Beauvoir’s ideas but applied them to a new context. In the United States, an increasing number of women were choosing professional careers, and significant advancements in law and legislation, such as contraception and abortion rights, were being fought for. The book that they read and were inspired by was an English translation completed and published in 1953 by a small, respected, family-run publishing house, Alfred A. Knopf – a publishing house that would later become one of the most prestigious and successful publishers in the US.

Knopf’s view of the book placed more importance on the scientific aspects as opposed to the author’s philosophical, existentialist framework and terms. As discussed in a fascinating study by Sheryl A. Englund (1992, 1994), the Knopf firm “packaged” and later promoted the English version in ways that would amplify its scientific cachet in the belief that this approach would generate higher sales. Furthermore, Knopf’s understanding that the book was “a modern-day sex manual for women” (Bair 1990: 432) reinforced a more sensationalist promotion: “[They] sold the book by subtly fostering the prurient interest they hoped the topic would naturally engender as an aside to de Beauvoir’s argument, while simultaneously taking pains to validate the work with intellectual cachet” (Englund 1992: 103). While this was the view of the publishing house, the translator’s view, a zoology professor Howard M. Parshley, was much more appreciative of Beauvoir’s complex work: “Simone’s book is no superficial, popular treatise; it is for literate and serious readers. I feel it would be a crime to try to jazz it up” (Parshley’s letter to Blanche Knopf, February 25, 1950). The letter correspondence between Parshley and Knopf clearly shows that Parshley was fully aware of the philosophical content in

the book but was discouraged by the publisher to render it in English.² While *The Second Sex* did become a bestseller in its immediate reception and a steady seller afterward, the criticism of its translation would come much later.

3. Criticism of the English Translation

In 1983, an American philosophy scholar, Margaret A. Simons, published a groundbreaking article entitled “The Silencing of Simone de Beauvoir: Guess What’s Missing from *The Second Sex*”. Simons conducted a comparative study of the source text and the target text and discovered that 10 to 15% of the original was missing and that numerous cuts, condensations, philosophical mistranslations and *contresens* made Beauvoir sound like an incoherent and confused philosopher. What is more, she claimed that Parshley’s translation voided the book’s philosophical content and was thereby guilty of “obscuring [Beauvoir’s] links to a philosophical tradition” (Simons 1983: 563).

Following this article, Beauvoir’s official biographer Deirdre Bair produced an article in 1987 discussing the same issues regarding the deficiencies of the English version. Through her argumentation, Bair also placed the responsibility of the text’s poor quality on the translator, Parshley. Joining her in this effort, other scholars followed with their work in the 1990s and 2000s, in which they exposed an array of different shortcomings of the translation all the while placing the spotlight on the translator. For example, Elizabeth Fallaize presented her analysis of the cuts she found in Beauvoir’s chapter entitled “The Married Woman” (Fallaize 2002). Fallaize listed the results of her careful analysis of all the cuts in the section on housework and evaluated the loss for the English-speaking readers. Specifically, she commented on the removal of quotations and individual testimonies which, in the source text, enriched Beauvoir’s study with intimate, women’s experiences.

Similarly, in another examination of *The Second Sex*, Meryl Altman (2002) discovered that the English version did not contain nearly as many references to Stekel’s psychiatric case studies as Beauvoir included in her French text. Another highly influential article by a Beauvoir scholar, Toril Moi, entitled “While We Wait: The English Translation of *The Second Sex*” put forth the argument that the philosophical incompetence of the translation is detrimental

2. Given the space/length restriction, this paper will not go into all the details regarding the arguments, tensions and conflicts discovered in the letter correspondence. However, the complexity of the translation process was thoroughly analyzed in my thesis project *Rehabilitating Howard M. Parshley: A Socio-historical Study of the English Translation of Beauvoir’s Le deuxième sexe, with Latour and Bourdieu*.

not only to Beauvoir as a philosopher, but also to feminist philosophy in general. Specifically, she presented numerous examples where Parshley not only cut and omitted parts of the original text, but also sections where he rewrote Beauvoir's text. In place of deleted quotations, Parshley sometimes provided a summary of the content of the quote. Clearly showing frustration, Moi openly asks the question: "What could possibly justify such editing?" (1011). However, what appears to be missing from this article is any inquiry into the role of Harold Strauss, the editor-in-chief, or Blanche Knopf, the vice-president, or the numerous editors and copy editors who revised the text thoroughly before releasing it for printing.

The critics have been vocal in their calls for a re-translation and have accused Parshley of "sexist selecting" (Simons 1983: 561) and ideologically motivated cuts (Moi 2002: 1010). Twenty-seven years after the public revelation of the deficiencies in the translation, the Knopf firm has finally authorized and commissioned a new translation. The new rendition of Beauvoir's philosophical treatise is expected to be released in April 2010 by Knopf Doubleday Publishing.³

4. Investigating with the Help of Latour and the Letters from the Archives

This paper presents a study that was based on the reading of historical documents: more than a hundred letters between the translator, Howard M. Parshley, and the publishing house, Alfred A. Knopf.⁴ In this epistolary exchange, Parshley conducts a dialogue with the editor-in-chief, Harold Strauss, the vice-president, Blanche Knopf, and the president, Alfred A. Knopf. These exchanges constitute the primary content of the correspondence; however, there are letters between the translator and book reviewers and other writers that are revealing of the translator's opinions and beliefs.

In the investigation of the conditions surrounding the English translation of Simone de Beauvoir's *Le deuxième sexe*, the letter correspondence is an extremely important source of information that can provide answers within the

3. The following description of the new translation can be found on the Knopf/Doubleday website: "This long-awaited new translation pays particular attention to the existentialist terms and French nuances that may have been misconstrued in the first English edition, and reinstates significant portions of the "Myths" and "History" chapters, including Beauvoir's accounts of more than seventy historical female figures that were originally cut due to length". <http://www.randomhouse.com/catalog/display.pperl?isbn=9780307265562>

4. The letter correspondence is kept at the archives of a women's private college, Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, USA, where Parshley taught for more than thirty years. The letters were kindly donated by Parshley's daughter, Elsa Parshley Brown.

context of Translation Studies. Interestingly enough, the so-called “invisibility” of the translator, so often criticized by Translation Studies scholars and stemming mainly from Lawrence Venuti’s pioneering work (*The Translator’s Invisibility: A History of Translation*, 1995) is brought to the table yet again by this particular case study. Although the correspondence shows that Parshley fought for his recognition since he wanted to have his name printed on the covers and dust jackets of *The Second Sex* – and thus against “invisibility” –, Parshley became a very visible target of fierce criticism by the international scholarly community, specifically Beauvoir scholars. This kind of negative visibility is perhaps exceptional, but is nonetheless an illustration of the other extreme, the flip side of visibility; such cases should also be studied further. The calls for a re-translation have repeatedly pointed to the weaknesses of the English translation in order to make a worthwhile case for the new translation. This study does not dispute these calls for the re-translation, but wishes to remind that the role of the publisher must be taken into serious consideration as well. The translator whose work has been maligned stood as the sole participant in the translation process. The correspondence that spans a period of more than three years offers an insight into the “manufacture” of the translation. From this perspective, Hélène Buzelin suggests:

Similarly, analysing the process of translation from the viewpoint of a work’s manufacture allows for documenting the editorial and revision work done on the manuscript delivered by the translators and thereby better understanding the role of actors who participate in the making of the text but whose actions and practices have so far received little attention (Buzelin 2007b: 141).

Basing her study on Bruno Latour’s “sociology of translation,”⁵ Buzelin applies the idea of “manufacture” to the production of literary translations. Such an approach to Translation Studies, and in this particular case study of *The Second Sex*, can yield fruitful results. Moreover, it can benefit from the recent work completed by Translation Studies scholars who have been focusing on the introduction of sociological theories (Bourdieu, Latour, Luhmann) to Translation Studies and who have been advocating the “social turn” in the discipline (Buzelin, Gouanvic, Simeoni, Inghilleri, Wolf, Heilbron, Sapiro). Specifically, recent publications such as *Constructing a Sociology of Translation* (2007), *Übersetzen – Translating – Traduire: Towards a “Social Turn”?* (2006), and Jean-Marc Gouanvic’s 2007 work entitled *Pratique sociale de la traduction*:

5. Latour’s “sociology of translation” is not to be confused with the current “social turn” in Translation Studies and the development of what has been termed as a “sociology of translation”. In order to avoid confusion, Latourian concept of translation will be separated by quotation marks.

Le roman réaliste américain dans le champ littéraire français (1920-1960) have been setting the path.

Moreover, Buzelin's 2005 article "Unexpected Allies. How Latour's Network Theory Could Complement Bourdieusian Analyses in Translation Studies" has encouraged new approaches in the sociology of translation: "I believe that ANT has the potential to help us move one step further in the direction already taken by Bourdieu translation scholars" (215). So far, there have been many studies within Translation Studies which have successfully applied Bourdieu's sociology. However, Latour offers a great potential in orienting Translation Studies scholars toward a more process-oriented approach and a fundamental reconfiguration of the *translating agent* to include multiple mediators.

Application of sociological theories to Translation Studies, in this particular case, is guided by the following objective: to identify all the individuals involved in the translation process and to reveal the extent to which they affected the target text. Highlighting the weighty influence of the publishing house on the translator, and consequently on the translation, this study follows the discipline's shift away from the comparative textual analysis to the agents of the translating act, while attempting to keep the target text within focus.⁶ The conflictual nature of the relationship between the translator and the publishing house surfaces in the letters and requires methodical and careful examination.

The letters serve as the window into "those moments of the translation's 'genesis' that document 'from within' the selection and promotion of a foreign text as well as the translation and editing procedures" (Wolf and Fukari 2007: 24). As suggested by Buzelin, studies of translation "in the making" can disclose information that is hidden, once analysed retrospectively (24). This particular case study of the English translation of Beauvoir's *Le deuxième sexe* is indeed occurring more than 55 years after the fact; but the controversy that still seems to be the subject of numerous attacks on the work ethic and motivations of the translator invites a more thorough look into what could possibly be "hidden" by this complex activity of translation.

6. Michaela Wolf remarks: "The text-bound paradigm which began to be transcended in the approaches that followed the 'cultural turn' seems, in the course of an evolving sociology of translation, to have slipped out of sight of the translation researcher, bringing about the danger of a sociology of translation existing without translation" (Wolf & Fukari 2007: 27).

Before applying Latour's sociological grid on the case study, this paper provides a brief overview of the main concepts in order to clarify the theoretical workings.

5. Brief Overview of Latour's Actor-Network Theory

Since the late 1970s Bruno Latour, together with Michel Callon and John Law, has been developing the actor-network theory (ANT), a theory originally conceived as a tool in science and technology. One of his most recent publications, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, attempts to provide a definitive explanation of actor-network theory since its terms (especially, the concept of *network*) have often been misunderstood.⁷ Focusing on the sociology of science, Latour places his theory in opposition to traditional sociology, which he labels "the sociology of the social," and sides with the school of thought he names "the sociology of associations". According to Latour, traditional sociology (including Pierre Bourdieu) is concerned with studying society and social forces, believes in the undeniable existence of these social forces, and places the emphasis on human actors.

In striking opposition to this stance, Latour wishes to interpret sociology "not as the 'science of the social,' but as the *tracing of associations*" (Latour 2005: 5). In this context, society is a consequence of associations and not their cause; a society needs new associations in order to continue existing. What represents a major departure from traditional sociology is Latour's inclusion of objects and "quasi-objects" side by side with subjects. Objects need to be taken into account as well. Fittingly, translations as inanimate objects would be seen as having a particular role and particular associations.

The underlying theory of the sociology of associations is actor-network theory (ANT), according to which social forces are the result of other entities that influence. The first concept, *actor*, is "something that acts or to which the activity is granted by others" (Latour 1998: par. 16). The term *actor* is limited to humans whereas *actants* encompasses both humans and non-humans.⁸ The actor is not necessarily a point, but a star-like shape "that is made to act by a large star-shaped web of mediators flowing in and out of it" (Latour 2005:

7. Latour discusses the misinterpretations of his theory in "On Actor-Network Theory: A Few Clarifications" at <http://www.nettime.org/Lists-Archives/nettime-l-9801/msg00019.html>.

8. Latour distinguishes between actors (usually humans) and actants – a general concept that brings together both humans and non-humans in one and the same entity, for example, an organization like UN, "the UN declared that..." or an abstract concept like "destiny" as in "overcome by destiny".

217). *Network*, the second term in actor-network theory, represents the movement or the traces of the actor; it is a tool for description. Together, actor and network form a unified concept that is conceived as a star-shaped web intertwined with other actor-networks, influenced by them, but not compelled by them – it always comes down to a choice. Put within the context of the case study, the translator would then be seen as an actor-network intertwined with editors, publishers, critics, source-text authors, source texts, translations, letters, reviewers, readers, etc. as other actor-networks, and all of their associations could be traced to reveal their “constantly shifting interactions” (Latour 2005: 68).

The actor-networks are so intertwined that it is difficult to trace the origins or causes of their action. The interactions are unpredictable, and there is a great deal of uncertainty. Therefore, ANT focuses more on practice, on following/tracing the actors in order to arrive at an understanding of what is taking place. It asks the question of *how* something is done in order to face the unpredictability and the uncertainty. According to Latour, ANT does not make any assumptions or try to predict associations; rather, it qualifies what the observer should suppose in order to follow associations.

Two key concepts in ANT are “intermediaries” and “mediators”. Intermediaries are actants that transport meaning or force without transformation. Mediators “transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry” (39). A central notion in ANT is the notion of “translation”, which has a specific, technical meaning: “a relation that does not transport causality but induces two mediators into coexisting”. “Translation” then constitutes “the methods by which an actor enrolls others” (Buzelin 2005: 194-95) or “a process of mediation, of the interpretation of objectives expressed in the ‘languages’ of different intermediaries engaged in an innovative project/process – intermediaries whose viewpoints and interests are not, initially, necessarily the same” (Buzelin 2007b: 137).

ANT has been criticized for being too rooted in the local situation and local causes that no general principles can be derived from it. Its project being to get closer to the original experience, ANT is based on the ethnographic approach of collecting data: following actors, interacting with the observed, inquiring and producing descriptions. What seems to be of interest to the case study of the English translation of *Le deuxième sexe*, however, is the idea of following the actors through the letter correspondence. Moreover, Latour’s emphasis on *how* something is being done can be a useful tool in discovering just how much and what kind of revision and editing *The Second Sex* was subject to and by whom. This invitation to go behind the “closed doors”

of the translation and publishing process can certainly reveal disagreements and strategies that perhaps would not be easily shared by a contemporary publisher.⁹

The historical aspect implies that this investigation is already “after the fact”, and therefore, the ethnographic approach of interviewing and interacting with the observed by the researcher is limited to the historical documents. Nonetheless, by the same token, the historical aspect also implies that the main medium of communication in the early fifties was the epistolary exchange: all the discussions and decisions between the translator and the publisher were recorded in the letter correspondence and in the manuscripts. At the time, telephone conversations were rare and expensive (one conversation between Alfred Knopf and Parshley in the fall of 1949).

ANT theory is slowly gaining in popularity among many other disciplines and is moving away from sciences into humanities, including Translation Studies (Buzelin, Tahir-Gürçağlar, Córdoba Serrano, Abdallah).

6. A Critical Analysis of the Translation Process and its Multiple Actors: Parshley as One of Many

The appealing aspect of the Latourian perspective is the focus on *how* something is done or accomplished. Looking at how the English translation was executed reveals not only the decisions the translator made but also the work of other participants in the translation process. As argued by Buzelin, the difference between the *translator* and the *translating agent* is a significant and telling one: the *translating agent* can consist of several individuals and does not equal the *translator* (Buzelin 2005, 214). This differentiation between the two terms can be developed further to signal the involvement of publishers and editors in the translation.¹⁰

What makes ANT interesting for the case study is the notion of mediators who transform things: input does not equal output. As well, the idea of many actors intertwined with each other, all influencing each other in an entangled net of movements and traces can be useful in interpreting the letter correspondence. Although the letters represent the only “reality” from which

9. Buzelin’s research is based on the contemporary study cases, and her articles have discussed the more or less challenged possibility of acquiring access to information.

10. Olga Castro Vazquez suggests in her article (2008) the terms paratranslators and paratranslations in order to highlight the ideological repercussions for the English translation of *Le deuxième sexe*. However, relying on the letter correspondence, this paper posits that actors other than the translator were much more involved in the translation process – beyond the peritexts, for example.

data can be collected, they can be viewed as the (historical) landscape against which movements can be traced. Reading the letters then is equivalent to following the actors. The tracing of their movements and interaction with each other can be mapped out. Their working together can be viewed as the process of “translation” where both the translator and the publisher are mediators who are changing the input. The letters and this research based on the letters treat the translator as the focal point: the actor whose movements are being traced while significant attention is paid to the object, or the target text.

The following two examples will serve as illustrations of instances where the translator was in communication with other participants who transformed the input into a different output. In other words, they acted as mediators and the translation was the object that partook in the exchange.

6.1. *Searching for the Missing Quotations*

As argued in the article by Margaret Simons (1983), the English translation is missing a large number of quotations (used by Beauvoir in the source text) from literary, scientific and general texts. Simons criticized Parshley for “[hacking] away with abandon, especially in those sections that bored or irritated (in this case) him” (Simons 1983: 562). In addition, she claims: “He eliminated most of Beauvoir’s quotations from the journals of Sophie Tolstoy, which provide her primary source of illustration for the ‘annihilation’ of woman in marriage” (562).

As mentioned above, Meryl Altman analyzed Beauvoir’s references to Stekel’s case studies and their absence in the English version. Altman studied the influence of psychologists and psychoanalysts and their work in Beauvoir’s essay. But when basing her results on the English text, she was astounded to find a significant reduction in references and quotations: “Sur l’ensemble des cas [de Stekel], Parshley en a omis cinq cas et coupé sept, mais surtout, il a eu tendance à les remplacer par une ou deux phrases de résumé” (Altman 2002: 86). In contrast to the target text, the source text contains 56 references to Stekel’s case study and nine quotations of Stekel. Out of the nine quotations, the English version keeps only one in its entirety. In another critical account of Parshley’s work, Toril Moi wrote: “He also eliminates her copious literary references and has little time for psychological or psychoanalytic evidence” (Moi 2002: 1009).

The extent of these cuts can still be seen today in the criticisms of Beauvoir’s thinking by scholars who have read the English translation. For example, Moi notes that “hostile critics of Beauvoir” can claim “that she was uninterested in women, and therefore ‘male-identified,’ yet even the most cursory

reading of the French text shows that this accusation could not be more unfair” (1010). This kind of criticism raises the question: Could the same be true for the translator? Could the reading of the letters reveal that Parshley indeed fought for the inclusion of the quotations, but in the end had to yield to persistent demands made by the editor-in-chief, Harold Strauss?

The following excerpts from the letters are examples of the on-going dialogue on the topic of quotations that span across several letters:

March 27, 1951 Strauss to Parshley: “As a general rule today, the method of fragmentary quotation is not what it used to be. In this technological world, educated people – except for a few Great Books fanatics – are not members of a common republic of letters with a broad common background”.

March 31, 1951 Parshley to Strauss: “As for the quotations from the authors, how else could one give an equally valid notion of their attitudes? [...] Your remarks regarding fragmentary quotation certainly apply to classical authors, but in our case it is not a question of a common republic of letters, for precisely what de Beauvoir is doing is to supply enough of her poets’ and novelists’ own words to enable any reader to get the drift, as it seems to me”.

April 3, 1951 Strauss to Parshley: “I don’t agree with you at all that the quotations give a valid notion of the attitude of these authors [...] American readers will be quite prepared to take general statements from De Beauvoir regarding the opinions of these authors as valid [...] I certainly cannot be dogmatic on the removal of all quotations. I have to give you some leeway”.

March 15, 1951 Strauss to Parshley: “Therefore I think it is essential to do everything possible to lighten the burden of the American reader”.

The correspondence contains more discussions on the removal of quotations and is instrumental in understanding the back-and-forth arguments between the translator and the editor-in-chief. The excerpts are a striking illustration of the decision-making process – discussions on topics that had direct impact and lasting consequences on the content and form of the target text.

6.2. *Piecing the Cuts Together*

Another recurrent argument by the critics of the English translation states that Parshley “dispensed” and “hacked away with abandon” while translating Beauvoir’s work (Simons 1983). However, the reading of the letters reveals a more nuanced view of the issue. From the beginning of the project, even before the translation and publication rights were acquired by Knopf from Gallimard (in November 1949), Alfred Knopf was inquiring about the possibility of cuts. It appears to be one of the first issues discussed in the correspondence beginning in the summer 1949. When Parshley was sent a copy

of *Le deuxième sexe*, he was expected to read and review the book not only for the evaluation of its content and translatability but also for insight into how much cutting and condensing was indeed possible.

The following excerpts illustrate this argument, but also show Parshley's noticeable frustration.

October 9, 1949, Simone de Beauvoir wrote to Blanche: “[je] suis en principe d'accord pour quelques coupures, bien entendu, je tiens seulement à être consultée. Je suppose qu'il n'est pas question de supprimer le passage sur Montherlant auquel j'attache beaucoup d'importance [...]”.

November 9, 1949 Alfred to Parshley: “The next question before the house is that of cutting. She has agreed in principle to consider what you would recommend. But we have to show her precisely what you do recommend”.

March 18, 1951 Parshley to Blanche: “Cuts or no (more) cuts, the book is bound to be a big one and, in places, as Mr. Strauss says, a tightly reasoned and difficult one; but the author is dealing with profound and difficult ideas, and it is therefore not to be made simple without misrepresentation of the original work”.

September 30, 1951 Parshley to Strauss: “I hope that you will bring up in your editorial conferences my strong belief that this work is in its way a classic and that any further considerable cutting would be detrimental to it and would indeed justify the author in the fears she expressed in her letter to me and would go far toward relieving her ‘of all responsibility’ – something that I would by no means want to do and that the cuts so far made do not do”.

Beauvoir was informed about the cuts, through the letters, and she also either agreed or disagreed with the proposed changes. Both Alfred and Blanche were actively involved in acquiring her approval and as a usual practice by a “respectable publishing house,” they intended to comply with all the legal obligations. No cuts were to be executed without the author's agreement. However, the intricacy and the “messiness” of the translation process, which was highly influenced by the constant pressure by, paradoxically, the same actors who advocated compliance with the legal aspects, led the translator into a translation practice of cutting more than was initially allowed. In May 1951, Parshley admitted in a letter to Blanche that he had cut more than was originally approved by Beauvoir:

I have a problem to submit. In doing the actual translating I find a good many (mostly brief) passages that I am condensing or, in the case of quotations, even cutting, beyond those for which we have la Beauvoir's specific permission [...] It would be difficult to disentangle all of them so as to write the author for specific permission, and I wonder how you feel about the matter.

Blanche composed her reply the same day, May 16, 1951 and advised Parshley to immediately write “a tactful and very explicit letter to [Beauvoir] explaining” the complications. Parshley wrote immediately to Beauvoir with his concerns and explained that, since his translation had progressed beyond the middle of Volume II, “I find it desirable to condense a good many brief passages and to cut some of the quotations you cite, beyond those for which you have given specific permission”. He assured her that this did not involve omitting or changing her ideas, and he continued: “I hope, with Mrs. Knopf, that you will agree to leave these minor reductions to our judgement, as it would be difficult to refer to them all specifically”. He concluded the letter by once again assuring Beauvoir that his translation left her ideas “intact”. Alfred, Blanche and Strauss were fully aware of the legal implications of Beauvoir’s authority. However, they placed such demands, often deemed “unrealistic” by Parshley, that the translator found himself in a situation where he had to choose between editorial requests and legal restrictions.

Finally, the tension-filled relationship between the translator and the editor-in-chief was well illustrated in one of the letters Strauss wrote to Parshley. The pressure that Strauss was placing on the translator during their three-year collaboration was also the pressure he himself had to face. However, he explained in the following terms: “I’m afraid you’re right about the tension, but it wasn’t and isn’t directed particularly at you. I simply, now as almost always, have more work than I can possibly handle”. He then provided the following explanation:

“When a book is as complicated as DeBeauvoir [*sic*], and especially when the correspondence concerning it achieves such massive, complex and repetitious characteristics, I find it best quite deliberately to get mad, let my adrenal glands function, and bull it through. You can see for yourself that the process is working as it usually does”. (January 24, 1952)

Once the translation was completed, the president, Alfred Knopf, wrote to Parshley acknowledging his work and revealing a rather unflattering view of the book but maintaining the commercial objective:

“I am reading the Beauvoir and I must say I think you have done a magnificent job on the lady. She certainly suffers from verbal diarrhea – I have seldom read a book that seems to run in such concentric circles. [...] I can hardly imagine the average person reading the whole book carefully. But I think it is capable of making a very wide appeal indeed [...]”. (November 27, 1951)

These examples, and ample evidence from the correspondence, confirm the high level of involvement by other participants or actors, in Latour’s words, who transformed the target text.

The correspondence between Beauvoir and Parshley concerning the cuts, omissions and condensations does not however reveal the extent or the nature of participation of other actors. On the contrary, they remain invisible. The translator had to request Beauvoir's approval and to explain the extent of his cuts, all the while convincing the author that his cuts left her ideas intact. The full context was ignored, and Parshley turned himself into a highly visible and easy target for the future critics and Beauvoir herself, leading the author to proclaim in an interview with Margaret Simons: "I begrudge him a great deal" (Simons 1999: 94).

Ultimately, Beauvoir replied to Parshley's request for further approval but with a request of her own: to be relieved of all responsibility and to indicate that the translation is in fact an adaptation. Such a request, however, was deemed "ridiculous" by Blanche and Parshley, and since there was no more correspondence regarding this complication between the translator/publisher and Beauvoir, who was preoccupied with her own personal matters,¹¹ the Knopf firm decided to go ahead with their original plans.

7. Conclusion

The reading of the correspondence can provide a glimpse into the "manufacturing" process of the text. During the three years, the target text circulated between Northampton, MA (Parshley's residence) and New York, NY (Knopf's location) several times before its publication. Once the translation was done by hand by Parshley, it was typewritten by one or two typists hired by him (who sometimes also made errors). The manuscript would then be sent to Strauss and proofread by him. Parshley and Strauss discussed details via letters and then Parshley would have to change it accordingly and mail it again to the Knopf firm. Blanche would also review the text on occasion and discuss it with Strauss. The copyeditors would receive instructions from Strauss and would change and correct the manuscript. Later, it was circulated around with the in-house readers who supplied their comments. Strauss would receive their feedback as well as the other editors' feedback.

It is rare that translations are only touched by the hands of translators, and perhaps an occasional reviser, before they are printed.¹² On the contrary,

11. In her article (1992), Yolanda Patterson suggests that at this time Beauvoir was highly involved in her transatlantic affair with an American writer and journalist, Nelson Algren.

12. Depending on the publisher's practices and the size of the publication output, some publishers will indeed print works as completed by the translator. However, the general practice of larger and influential publishing houses indicates that the publisher

most major publishing houses consist of numerous departments which are concerned with the specific stages of book publication. Closer examinations of the interaction between different actors, and in this case the translator-publisher dynamic, can often disclose information that is not particularly pleasant. Publishers who are the financial and marketing agents backing the operation certainly have an interest in publishing a saleable book. But, their work and the extent of their involvement must not then be anonymous.

While it should be recognized that publishers assume great financial risks when they publish books, their influence and involvement should receive more attention. Since its conception in 1915, Alfred A. Knopf Inc. has been viewed with high esteem for the quality literature it has published. In his book on the changes of the last sixty years in the American publishing industry, *The Business of Books: How International Conglomerates Took over Publishing and Changed the Way We Read*, André Schiffrin describes how financial pressures and bottom-line oriented management have had detrimental effects on publishing houses. The Knopf firm has not been exempt from this trend: “Even the highly profitable Knopf list gradually jettisoned the more demanding translations and works of philosophy and art criticism on which it had built its reputation” (Schiffrin 2000: 100).

Such financially conservative circumstances could partially explain why Knopf has been so reluctant to invest in a new translation of *Le deuxième sexe*. Likewise, such circumstances should also be kept in mind when considering the quality of the 2010 English translation and the actors involved.

The application of sociological theories can assist in providing more detailed and encompassing examinations. Placing the primary interest with the actors around the translator and their interaction can yield fruitful results that may in turn require further investigation into historical documents. Latour's concepts can be employed to paint a larger picture of the relationships that directly shaped the English translation. The calls for a re-translation are justified by the deficiencies found in the 1953 translation. However, before we put aside the first translation and focus our attention on the second, “beautiful, smooth and true”¹³ translation, perhaps it would be useful, if not wise, to consider the conditions of the “making” of the first English version. This article has aimed to draw some potentially vital lessons regarding the translator-

is more often than not very much involved in every step of the translation process, determining style, tone, vocabulary, etc., according to their view of the target audience.

13. Borrowed from the title of an article by Luise von Flotow, “This time ‘the translation is beautiful, smooth, and true.’ Theorizing Re-translation with the Help of Beauvoir” in *French Literature Series* 36 (forthcoming, 2009).

publisher dynamic in the hope they serve as reminders when considering the work of any translator.

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