the development of tragedy had already come to an end. Be this as it may, unfortunately for the readers of his *Rangordnung*, Hösle seems to presuppose familiarity with his early 1984 work, because he gives few details regarding the reasoning behind his position, although he believes that he is explaining his view more clearly in the present text. Presumably, anyone really interested in further elucidation should try to locate Hösle’s *Vollendung* book.


*Review by Kristin Rodier, University of Alberta, and Emily Anne Parker, Santa Clara University*

A new translation of Simone de Beauvoir’s landmark feminist philosophical work of 1949, *Le deuxième sexe*, appeared in April of 2010. The 1949 two-volume Gallimard edition unprecedentedly raised the question of woman: what is the ethical status of this name? This dynamic question, Beauvoir notes, endures after centuries of changing political preoccupations, economic situations, religions and scientific revolutions. Beauvoir asks why women do not pose this question for themselves—in terms of their own lived singularity, as each woman exists for herself—but rather always according to ill-fitting and contradictory myths.

Retranslations of this philosophical text are inevitably important. After H.M. Parshley’s 1952 translation a series of errors came to light, but a lack of will on the part of Knopf and Random House publishing meant that they did not sign a deal to start a new translation until 2006. As translators Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier themselves point out, all translations become easily dated because of the inevitable traces of the translator’s own voice. If that is true, the Parshley translation is about as out of date as a bowler hat. On the other hand, new translations based on improvements in scholarship are always necessary to reintroduce a classic to new generations of readers who cannot read the text in its original language.

It has been argued that in 1929, in a car near Luxembourg Gardens, Simone de Beauvoir became convinced that she was not a philoso-
pher. In what Toril Moi has argued constitutes a “primal scene” between Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, Beauvoir’s life is understood to have undergone a turning point. Moi’s interpretation of that scene, in her 1994 *Simone de Beauvoir: The Making of an Intellectual Woman*—a scene recorded by Beauvoir herself—has shaped the reception of Beauvoir’s work in both feminist and non-feminist circles. It is now clear that Moi overestimated the importance of that night’s philosophical encounter with Sartre, and it is important to revisit the question of influence and philosophical independence between Beauvoir and Sartre for interpretive and political reasons. The publication of this new translation speaks to that need. Beauvoir’s work continues to be haunted by a reception that overestimated the influence of Sartre on her thinking, a process identified by Clare Hemmings in *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory* as heterocitation. In heterocitation a female feminist thinker is citationally tied to her male intellectual precursor(s). For example, Judith Butler’s work might be cited as influenced by Michel Foucault rather than Monique Wittig, Simone de Beauvoir or Luce Irigaray. The relationship is represented as primary and exclusive, used as a way of marking a departure from feminism, and signifies the thinking in question as catalysed by male antecedents. Heterocitation has operated in Beauvoir studies through her over-association with Sartre, marking her work as passively moved by the thinking of others.

While there is still much interpretive dispute regarding *The Second Sex*, there are many reasons to affirm that no matter how shattering the conversation in the Luxembourg Gardens might have been, Beauvoir contributed an unmatched philosophical vocabulary to gender studies, existential phenomenology as well as literature. As Beauvoir puts it in her *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*, finding out that one’s “opinions were based only on prejudice, dishonesty, or hastily formed concepts” (344) is the catalyst of most all philosophical thinking (one need only to think of Hume awakening Kant from his dogmatic slumber). The conversation in the gardens with Sartre shows the power of reflective conversation to awaken ideas and challenge preconceptions, a skill that Beauvoir surely possessed before that day. Margaret Simons has made clear that we no longer have reason to take this story as proof that Beauvoir deferred to Sartre. In part due to the persistence of Simons, but also due to Beauvoir’s consent and Sylvie le Bon’s willingness to carry out Beauvoir’s wishes, a series of books has been released this year that further attests to
her ingenuity as a thinker. Beauvoir’s *Wartime Diary, Diary of a Philosophy Student, Literary Writings* and *Political Writings* are part of a series put out by the University of Illinois Press. They will complete, in English, the publication of Beauvoir’s previously unpublished works. It is hard to say how the new translation will couple with these new volumes, but if the impact on Beauvoir scholarship is anything like the re-orientation that followed the release of *Philosophical Writings* in 2004, the new volumes promise re-evaluation in multiple disciplines.

Interpretations of *The Second Sex* took a sharp turn in 1985 when *Hypatia* held the Women’s Studies International Forum—a special symposium to mark the release of the English translation of *The Second Sex* more than thirty years earlier. Before the symposium, a few pivotal works published on Beauvoir coloured the landscape of interpretation and mostly interpreted her as a student of Sartre or as having applied his ontology to the situation of women. As the philosophical insensitivities, inaccuracies and deletions of the Parshley translation were under discussion, and as scholars came to see the richness of *The Second Sex*, reception and commentary began to shift towards a more charitable and phenomenological reading of the work (rather than as a sociological or personal text on “women’s issues”). Jo-Ann Pilardi’s essay in *History and Theory, “The Changing Critical Fortunes of the Second Sex”* (vol. 32 no. 1), historically situates the critical reception of *The Second Sex*. There she remarks that subtler interpretations are increasing, and that it was the early onslaught of criticism that caused Beauvoir’s ideas to lay dormant for so long. In fact, regarding the original English translation, Beauvoir said, in a 1985 interview with Margaret Simmons published in her *Beauvoir and The Second Sex: Feminism, Race, and the Origins of Existentialism*:

> When I put philosophy in my books it’s because that’s a way for me to view the world; and I can’t allow [translators] to eliminate that way of viewing the world, that dimension of my approach to women, as Mr. Parshley has done. I’m altogether against the principle of gaps, omissions, condensations, which have the effect, among other things, of suppressing the whole philosophical aspect of the book…. (93–94)
Beauvoir goes on to say that she asked Parshley to include in the volume her protest against the abridgement (which was apparently demanded by Knopf, as Toril Moi points out in her 2002 important review of the Parshley translation), but Parshley did not honour this request or signal it in his translation.

The new translation by Borde and Malovany-Chevallier is similarly badly packaged. In the Introduction, biographer Judith Thurman makes a caricature of feminism by asserting that the modern feminist reception of the Parshley translation discredited him for reasons of lacking a second “X” chromosome. (xiii) It would seem that the important missing factor was instead an interest in feminism. But the introduction also distorts Beauvoir’s intellectual work by asserting that Beauvoir’s work traces the “objectification” of women “since time began.” (xiv) Using “objectification” here problematically aligns Beauvoir with the history of her Anglo-American reception in second-wave feminism, which serves to further distort her intellectual contributions to feminist theory. Beauvoir, it could be argued, is asking precisely that women’s bodies be understood as the ambiguous objects that they are. Furthermore, Thurman inaccurately attributes *Les Temps Modernes* to Sartre alone and concludes by calling *The Second Sex* a “personal meditation.” further downplaying the philosophical contributions found in the work by passing off careful research and existential-phenomenological methodology as irrelevantly limited experiences. For these reasons, the Introduction masks the scholarly legitimacy of the volume.

On the other hand, the translation itself makes numerous improvements. Important mistranslations by Parshley have been corrected. For example in the closing pages of the conclusion, “une sensibilité singulière” is now translated as “a singular sensitivity” rather than as “a sensitivity, of a special nature.” As Beauvoir had already explained in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, singularity is not Hegelian particularity; it is irreducible alterity. In *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir argues that women’s experiences of becoming inessential are neither reducible to men’s own experiences of the existential gaze, nor are they reducible to those of other women. Of course we cannot reference the English translation of *The Ethics of Ambiguity* in making this point because it, like Parshley’s translation, mistranslates this crucial intervention of the notion of “singularity” as “particularity,” the very thing that Beauvoir explains it is not. That the new translation renders this gesture of singularity visible is in-
dicative of many of the welcome changes that bring to the fore Beauvoir’s contributions to existential-phenomenology.

Likewise, in the much beleaguered biology chapter, there are some improvements worth noting. Parshley’s translation of “Le dépassement de l’individu vers l’espèce” as “the projection or transcendence of the individual toward the species” has been changed to “The surpassing of the individual toward the species” (23). Later in the chapter “le phénomène de la reproduction comme ontologiquement fondé”, translated by Parshley as “the phenomenon of reproduction as founded in the very nature of being,” is now more aptly put as “the phenomenon of reproduction can be considered as ontologically grounded.” (24)

On the other hand, this translation is not the translation Beauvoir scholars had hoped for. Whereas Parshley’s translation of “elle ne se maintient qu’en se dépassant, elle ne se dépasse qu’à condition de se maintenir” as “it can be maintained only through transcending itself, and it can transcend itself only on the condition that it is maintained” uses the philosophical force of the term “transcendence,” Borde and Malovany-Chevallier opt for “surpassing.” To insist that a literal translation is adequate misses the degree to which every translation is an interpretation of the original text. Translations can be better or worse, but, like the ever ambiguous intentionality of which Beauvoir herself writes, a translator cannot avoid the philosophical decision-making that interpretation requires.

In fact, Toril Moi has criticised the new translation in the London Review of Books for being so literal as to be unreadable (February 11, 2010). Two examples of such stark literalism come to mind. For example, the phrase “on vient de voir que dans son dépassement même il se sépare et se confirme en lui-même” is translated as “in his very surpassing, he separates himself and is confirmed in himself.” (36) Here Parshley’s translation is in fact preferable: “in his transcendence toward the next generation he keeps himself apart and maintains his individuality within himself.” Additionally, the original French “elle coïncide avec elle-même” in the new translation reads, “she is consistent with herself.” (43) Borde and Malovany-Chevallier have not taken the context of the discussion into account here. The context is that the post-menopausal woman no longer feels her body to be as uncontrollable as when she was regularly subject to the overwhelming experiences of menstruation and
hormones. The relief following menopause is then better described by Parshley who interprets the passage as “she and her body are one.”

The new translation is thus not the scholarly edition and retranslation that Beauvoir scholars had been anticipating. Certainly, it is the first unabridged English translation, but it repeats the misleading representation of genre as did the first. Furthermore, it does not convey the precision of Beauvoir’s weave of the philosophical with the personal. Despite the expressed aim “to transpose [Beauvoir’s] philosophical style and voice into English.” (xix) this book remains in English strictly the “deep and urgent personal meditation” to which Judith Thurman restricts it. (xvi) In other words, Thurman’s Introduction colludes in keeping the reader unaware of how the volume fits into Beauvoir’s larger philosophical body of work. Likewise, while Borde and Maloney-Chevallier insist on “bringing into English the closest version possible of Simone de Beauvoir’s voice, expression and mind” (xvii), they translate *The Second Sex* as if it were the only philosophical text Beauvoir wrote. But how can we understand the (dis)continuities of Beauvoir’s thought in *The Second Sex* without the years of study necessary to understand Beauvoir’s intellectual projects? Toril Moi has argued in detail, in the review of the book mentioned above for the *London Review of Books*, that this translation is in fact worse than Parshley’s because of its unthinking literalism. In our view, however, it is most problematically not a translation of Beauvoir. For example, the question of whether to translate “la femme” as “woman” or “the woman” (“Woman,” “wife,” “Wife,” “The Woman” etc.) and similarly of how to translate the famous opening line of the second part, are not questions of mere syntax but of “voice, expression and mind.” That is to say, questions such as these simply cannot be reduced to questions of syntax or isolated definition; they require interpretation within a philosophical topography that dates back to Beauvoir’s diaries and stretches through all of the important writings leading up to *The Second Sex*. Any translation must interpret a text; as Luise Von Flotow argues in her “Translation Effects: How Beauvoir Talks Sex in English” (published in Hawthorn’s *Contingent Loves: Simone de Beauvoir and Sexuality*), “no change is innocent, but is part of a (sometimes deliberate) ideological or cultural agenda on the part of the translation/translator.” (15) In our view, the translation itself as well as the annotation should reflect on the inherent interpretation involved in translation. For this one must be conversant with Beauvoir’s oeuvre and with what is at stake in
the feminist theoretical questions that occupied her. In retreating from
the interpretative side of translating, we wonder if Borde and Malovany-
Chevallier have overcorrected for Parshley’s heavy-handedness. Is this a
“defensive” translation—one which attempts to remain innocent of the
sins of interpretation? In trying to remain faithful to the logic of her
prose, we fear that the translators have lost sight of themselves as inter­
preters and of their responsibility to Beauvoir’s philosophy, beyond The
Second Sex.

Thus this new translation, while significant, cannot bear witness
to the multifaceted appeal of Beauvoir’s body of work. Borde and Ma­
loney-Chevallier offer their own translation as the basis for a future an­
notated volume, but another translation by a scholar or scholars conver­
sant with feminist, psychoanalytic, anthropological and philosophical
discourses will have to be commissioned. It will take a scholar of Beau­
voir’s work to produce the English translation of Le deuxième sexe that
continues to be missing. Drawing on these debates and the new devel­
opment in Beauvoir’s scholarship, a new translation could unearth the
connections Beauvoir makes with other philosophers while remaining
true to the rich ambiguities of Beauvoir’s French.

Knopf and Random House seem to have no appreciation for the
importance of the work whose copyright they own until 2056. The Sec­
ond Sex is a work of intimate meditation and popular appeal—but it also
an exceptional work of feminist philosophical expertise. Though the two
are not mutually exclusive, the present translation’s literalness is not
scholarly enough for Beauvoir scholars and not subtle enough to allow
nonacademic English readers to appreciate the complexity of her work.
The ultimate error in judgment in our view is the failure on the part of
the publisher to commission a proper scholarly translation. This remains
lost on Knopf and Random House, though it is not lost on those who are
acquainted with the original. The publishers have failed to consider the
present and future students and scholars who unwittingly rely on them.