

Analysis of the paratexts of Simone de Beauvoir's works in Turkish

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Abstract. Paratexts played a significant role in the translations of Simone de Beauvoir's works in Turkey between 1962 and 2001, particularly in the way they reflected ideological stances on "the woman question" and feminism within the Turkish cultural climate. The concept of "paratext" as used by Gérard Genette refers to the verbal or other materials (prefaces, postfaces, titles, dedications, illustrations etc.) accompanying a text and presenting it. The study of translational paratexts is particularly important because they offer valuable insights into the presentation and reception of translated texts within the target historical and cultural climate. This article analyzes eleven specific examples, focusing on the uses of paratexts and their connections to the cultural context.

Introduction

A literary work moves across linguistic and cultural boundaries not on its own but through cultural mediators, including translators, editors, publishers, and critics who contribute to the "rewriting" of literature for its new destination. As André Lefevere argues, "rewriting manipulates, and it is effective" (1992: 9). Since translation is a type of rewriting, it may create different images for authors and/or their oeuvre in another culture. The factors of the rewriting process are issues like the choice of texts translated at a certain time, the translators who translated them, the way they translated the texts, indigenous texts written about the author, or the paratextual material provided with the translations. The socio-cultural context at a certain time in the target system shapes these factors and in turn they offer us clues about the nature of the reception of a certain foreign work within this context.

The present paper is concerned with the way paratexts—situated somewhere "between the inside and outside of the text" (Genette 1997: 2)—were used in the translations of Simone de Beauvoir's works in Turkey between 1962 and 2001, particularly the way they reflect the ideological stance towards "the woman question" and feminism within the Turkish cultural climate.

The concept of “paratext” as used by Gérard Genette refers to the verbal or other materials (prefaces, postfaces, titles, dedications, illustrations etc.) accompanying a text and presenting it (Genette 1997: 1). In other words, the paratextual elements reach the reader even before the actual text does. For this reason they may exert a considerable influence on the reader’s reception of the text (Tahir-Gürçağlar 2002: 45). Accordingly, the rewriting process covers not only the translated text but also the paratextual elements which both surround and present it as a book. The study of the paratexts of a translated text is particularly important because paratexts offer valuable insights into the presentation and reception of translated texts within the target historical and cultural climate. They reflect the conventions of the target culture at a certain time (Kovala 1996: 120). This article emphasizes that we need to study the function of the paratextual material within a wider cultural context (cf. Kovala 1996; Tahir-Gürçağlar 2002).

Simone de Beauvoir’s oeuvre in Turkish

This paper will dwell on all the Turkish translations of Simone de Beauvoir’s works published in book form and their impressions and editions from 1962 to the present. Nineteen of her works have been translated into Turkish and published in book form.¹ The number of the translations and retranslations in book form since 1962 are thirty-one and their re-editions thirty-nine. These thirty-one translations include three retranslations of some parts of and four excerpts from her work *Le deuxième sexe*. Twenty-two of these translations and/or retranslations were first published between 1962 and 1980, eight of them between 1980 and 2000, and one in 2001. Eighteen re-editions were published in the 1970s, twelve in the 1980s, and nine in the 1990s.

Especially during the 1960s and 1970s, when Jean-Paul Sartre exerted a profound influence on Turkey’s intellectual community, Turkish people started to hear Simone de Beauvoir’s name. She soon became popular, as the number of her works in Turkish indicates. However, her popularity to a great extent came to her as “the woman writer who gives love and inspiration to Jean Paul Sartre” on the covers of two translations in the early 1960s.

Genette states that the value of a paratext may be verbal, iconic, material, or factual. By factual, he means a fact which is known to the public and

¹ Pyrrhus et Cinéas, *Le deuxième sexe*, *Faut-il brûler Sade?*, *La pensée de droite aujourd’hui*, *Le sang des autres*, *Les Mandarins*, *Une mort très douce*, “Brigitte Bardot”, *La force de l’âge*, *La force des choses*, *La vieillesse*, *Tous les hommes sont mortels*, *Les mémoires d’une jeune fille rangée*, *L’invitée*, *La femme rompue*, *La cérémonie des adieux suivi de Entretiens avec Jean-Paul Sartre*, *août-Septembre 1974*, *Simone de Beauvoir aujourd’hui: Six entretiens*, by Alice Schwartz, *Les belles images*, *Lettres à Sartre I*, *Lettres à Nelson Algren*.

has an impact on the reception of the text by the reader. One of the examples he gives for the factual value is the sex of the author (1997: 7). “Do we ever read ‘a novel by a woman’ exactly as we read ‘a novel’ plain and simple, that is, a novel by a man?” (7). Besides the verbal and iconic paratexts this paper will discuss later, factual paratexts such as Simone de Beauvoir’s relationship with Sartre and her sex played a significant role in her reception in Turkey, at least in the 1960s and 1970s.

However, the situation has changed in the 1980s when Beauvoir was regarded as a feminist writer by the Turkish feminist circles. Şirin Tekeli, a Turkish feminist activist, draws attention to the translations published by Payel Yayınevi (Payel Publishing) one after the other in the 1970s. She argues that the impact of these translations was only felt in the 1980s, because those women who were within the feminist movement in the 1970s were dealing with the woman question from the Marxist perspective (1989: 36). For instance, in 1982 the weekly periodical *Somut* devoted a page to feminist writings where interviews with Simone de Beauvoir and translations of her articles occupied a significant place (Çaha 1996: 145).

The socio-political context of Turkey and stances on the “woman question”

The shift in the reception of Simone de Beauvoir obliges us to look more closely at the socio-political background of Turkey from the 1960s to the 1980s. The Democrat Party (rightwing and conservative), which ruled between 1950 and 1960, scarcely tolerated freedom of thought (Kaplan 1999: 217). In 1960, a military takeover took place towards which the general attitude throughout the country was one of content. With the new constitution of 1961 respectful nearly to all the freedoms guaranteed by contemporary counterparts (Tanör cited in Turan 2002: 61), to no surprise “the 1960s saw a lively intellectual debate about all kinds of political and social issues” (Zürcher 1993: 267). This liberal period also nourished a translation effort to present the West to the Turkish intellectual world. However, increasing political polarization and crisis marked the following decade, ending in the 1980 military coup. The military regime that followed the coup imposed some restrictions on Turkish politics. It put an end to the activities of all political parties, dispersed political groups, and also cancelled the 1961 constitution and replaced it with the 1982 constitution.

During the 1960s and 1970s, left-wing ideologies offered Turkish women a place in the fight against class domination (Sirman 1989: 16). However, this fight was strictly against the class system and aimed to establish socialism, leaving no place to any other ideology such as women’s rights (Sirman 1989: 16; Tekeli 1989: 36). Thus, especially in the late 1970s when Turkey witnessed political antagonisms and ideological polarization, feminism was a peripheral issue. Nevertheless, people sought new concep-

tions of democracy and individuality in the 1980s (Sirman 1989: 15). In the context of the changing political structure under the military rule, the rise of liberalism in the 1980s brought individualism to the fore (Arat 1995: 87). Within the cultural climate of the early 1980s when other political voices were forcefully silenced, the insistence on the personal stimulated also a search for female identity (Sirman 1989: 15). Women started to problematize their status in society as well as in private life, and feminism and women became an important item on the agenda (Sirman 1989: 4). Even though the 1980s was not the first time feminism came onto the agenda in Turkey,² only during this decade we see “a self-contingent women’s movement” (Öztürkmen 1998: 276). Therefore, a women’s movement under the influence of feminist movements in the West emerged in Turkey (Arat 1993: 125) with a fifteen or twenty-year delay (Tekeli 1989: 39). As a result of this feminist awakening along with its feminist activism, publications and panels, women’s issues emerged as an important point of focus (Arat 1993: 125–126).

Paratexts in action

This section will focus on three test cases from Simone de Beauvoir’s works in Turkish to explore the uses of paratexts and their connections to the cultural context, with a special emphasis on the stance towards “the woman question” in Turkey. In the following cases, we can observe how different editions of the same translation and those of two different translations of the same work differ from one another paratextually and how these paratexts reflect the changing stances towards the woman question and feminism before and after the 1980s. Special focus will be on the visual layout of covers, titles, series, prefaces and blurbs.

Translational paratexts of Les Mandarins

Altın Kitaplar (Golden Books), a publishing company active mainly in the field of translated bestsellers, published *Les mandarins* in Turkish twice—in 1966 and in 1972.

On the front cover of the first edition there is a portrait of a young woman. The top part features the author’s name and the title “Mandarinler”, and the lower part the name of the publisher. The back cover presents a young couple kissing each other. In the lower part we see the title “Mandarinler”, the author’s name, and a blurb stating that the characters of this novel are real people—people from Simone de Beauvoir’s own love life.

² Actually it has its roots in the late 19th century-Ottoman society (Sirman 1989; Arat 1991; Tekeli 1995)

The second edition in 1972 has a different cover. On the front cover there is a photograph of a young woman in white. The top part features the author's name and the title. The title for this edition is "Kadınca" (From the Perspective of Woman). The work's original title follows it in a smaller font size. The blurb on the back cover, somewhat longer than that of the previous edition, introduces Simone de Beauvoir and includes a short description of the work. Unlike the first edition, it does not mention anything about the reality of the story. On the other hand, both editions have the same short preface which is rather a note by the translator on the parallelism between the novel and Simone de Beauvoir's love life.



Figure 1. Front cover of the first edition of the Turkish translation of *La Femmes rompue* (1973)

The paratextual strategies in these two editions launched the work as a romance novel and tried to attract the reader by presenting it as a real love story. These verbal and iconic paratextual strategies reflect the amount of attention the author's person receives, and are in perfect line with the factual paratexts, i.e. the fact that the author is a woman and at the same time Sartre's lover.

In 1991 another publisher, Afa, published a retranslation of *Les mandarins* and included it in their series of "Contemporary World Literature". The cover of the book is quite plain, without any illustration. The front cover introduces the name of the author, the title "Mandarinler", the publisher's

name, and the series title. The blurb on the back cover implies it is a real story; however, the novel is now considered as a documentary on the struggle of the intellectuals in the post-war Europe, and a romance novel as well. All these paratexts surrounding the new translation try to present a serious novel written by a woman and address to a new readership different from that of the previous translation.

Translational paratexts of La femme rompue

La femme rompue was first translated into Turkish in 1973. On the front cover there is a somewhat “modern” portrait of a woman (Figure 1). The author’s name, the title, and the publisher’s name are under the picture. There is no preface. The back cover consists of Simone de Beauvoir’s description of the work.

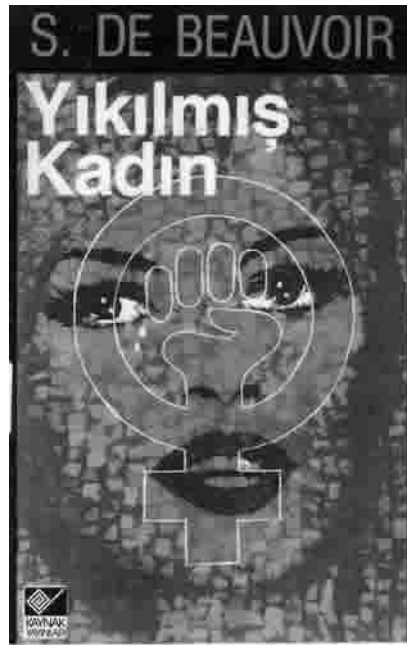


Figure 2. Front cover of the second edition of the Turkish translation of *La Femmes rompue* (1983)

Another publisher launched the second edition of the same translation in 1983, but with another cover alluding to something different: women’s liberation (Figure 2). This reflects the new stance to the woman question in the 1980s in Turkey. Şirin Tekeli, a feminist activist quoted above, wrote an eighteen-page preface to the text. She states at the beginning that ten years previously when the first edition of the book was published, in Turkey we

had not heard the echoes of feminism yet. She goes on to say that the idea of feminism has just reached the Turkish woman and it is under discussion. She then gives information on the life of Simone de Beauvoir, her works and her place within the feminist movement. The preface fulfills the function “to ensure that the text is read properly” (Genette 1997: 197) within the feminist framework. The connotations of the cover illustration and the preface by Tekeli overlap with the new stance to the woman question in Turkey at the time and tell us a great deal about how the publishers presented the same translation ten years after its first edition.

Translational paratexts of Le deuxième sexe

Le deuxième sexe enjoyed a large number of retranslations and editions between 1970 and 1990. Some excerpts were first translated in the 1960s. Later on, in 1970, this work, originally in two volumes, appeared in Turkish in three volumes. The first volume, which was first published in 1969 had eight impressions till 1993, and the second and third volumes first published in 1970 had seven impressions.

Düşün Yayınevi (Düşün Publishing House), established by two prominent writers, published the first partial translation of *Le deuxième sexe* in 1962, in the lively intellectual climate of Turkey. On the front cover of this book there is a somewhat “modern” picture depicting almost the arms and hands of a woman. Its title is “Kadın Nedir?” (What Is Woman?). In the preface, the translator introduces the text and states that Simone de Beauvoir, not as famous as Jean-Paul Sartre in Turkey, is also an advocate of existentialism. Thus, the paratextual strategies of this publisher—which published a number of translations from Sartre’s oeuvre as well—were to present Simone de Beauvoir as an existentialist writer.

However, two other later excerpt translations from *Le deuxième sexe* by another publisher, Altın Kitaplar, differ from the first book in terms of paratextual features. The front covers of the both include a picture of an “attractive” woman and a statement identifying Simone de Beauvoir as “the woman writer who gives love and inspiration to Jean Paul Sartre”. As for the titles, the first translation has the title “Kadınlığın Kaderi” (The Fate of Femininity) and the other “Kadın Bu Meçhul” (Woman, the Unknown). These paratextual features offer us clues about how these books were marketed and received—they were romance novels written by a woman who is Sartre’s lover.

In the early 1970s Payel Yayınevi, which published a number of translations from Jean-Paul Sartre’s works as well, produced the complete translation of *Le deuxième sexe* in three volumes. Each volume has a different subtitle—the first volume being “Genç Kızlık Çağı” (Maidenhood), the second “Evlilik Çağı” (Marriage) and the third “Bağımsızlığa Doğru” (Towards Liberation)—and a general title which is “Kadın: İkinci Cins”

(Woman: The Second Sex). Even though there is no difference in the front covers of the editions from the 1970s to the 1980s and later, the series title changes in the latter editions; the publishing house no longer promotes the book within the “Knowledge Series” as it was in the 1970s, but within the “Contemporary Woman’s Books Series”. This is a significant clue about how Simone de Beauvoir’s works were marketed and received in the 1980s, against the background of an increasing awareness towards what feminism is.

Conclusion

This article has focused on paratextual “rewriting” (like Kovala 1996), i.e. on the way paratextual strategies are used to rewrite a translated book. These paratexts have been further contextualized to uncover the messages, as “the paratextual messages change depending on period, culture, genre, author, work, and edition” (Genette 1997: 3). The analysis of the paratextual elements of the translations from Simone de Beauvoir’s oeuvre has furnished us with interesting information on how the paratextual strategies mirror the shift in the stance towards the woman question and feminism in Turkey in the 1980s. In the three case studies above, the comparison at the paratextual level between the editions of the 1960s-70s and those of the 1980s demonstrates some of the changing strategies that the publishers used to guide the reader. However, the clues the paratextual level offers might pave the way for further questions in the translations themselves, in Turkish writings about Simone de Beauvoir and her works, and in the profile of the translators.

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