

Question and Answer Session

Jan Bardsley: I'd like to thank our two discussants for very interesting comments. One of the things that Aya brings up is the importance of shedding light on the differences among women. This reminds me of the Meiji period when there were New Women like Hiratsuka Raichō who opposed the ideology of *Ryōsai-kembo* but there were working class women who yearned to become middle-class "good wives, wise mothers." In every era, there are always differences among people. I would say with the royal wedding in 1959, the magazine *Fujin Kōron* was the only women's magazine at the time that tried to damp down the romantic quality of the event and actually showed different attitudes among Japanese people towards the royal wedding. They tried to illustrate the idea of diversity beyond the romance and opposition to the emperor system.

Julia Bullock: I also want to echo my thanks to Aya for her very important point here about the differences among women. I would like to add that it's very possible that an individual woman may have wanted to be simultaneously a princess and a philosopher. Women were presented with many options and each of them had consequences. They had a very difficult set of choices to make. That's probably still true of many young women in that situation. But particularly at that time, given the timing so close to the end of the occupation and the fact that the changes that the occupation attempted to render in Japan were very uneven in many ways in terms of their effects. So that women had a very broad variety of conflicting options to choose from. I think that the presentations today get that complexity.

Q1: Do we have any further detail about Sartre and Beauvoir's lecture tour of Japan?

Julia Bullock: This was evidently organized by Sartre's publisher Jimbun Shoin in cooperation with academics at Keio University. One of those academics was a fellow named Asabuki Sankichi who was one of the older brothers of Asabuki Tomiko. Actually I am not entirely sure what level of involvement he had here but I would like to think that it's not a coincidence that he and his sister were very well acquainted with Beauvoir and Sartre and their intellectual community. Shirai Koji, a very famous scholar of French literature and also of Sartre in particular, was another organizer. There was a kind of a collaborative effort that also then expanded to many other universities, particularly in the Tokyo area. Beauvoir and Sartre did visit many different campuses. They were also invited by publishers such as Asahi Shimbun and maybe *Fujin Kōron*. There were a number of other sponsors that invited them to give talks. They gave lots of talks.

Q2: Was there any actual interaction between Beauvoir and Princess Michiko?

Julia Bullock: Not to my knowledge. I do know that while Beauvoir and Sartre were in Japan they met with many intellectuals and political activists, for example, representatives of Beheiren, the anti-Vietnam War organization. They were both very much sort of leftist activists and they were very interested in meeting people like them. Beauvoir also was really interested in meeting women workers and she actually met with women dock workers and construction workers. She was really interested in women and labor. She wanted to meet people from all walks of life, but I don't think she managed to meet the princess. And I am actually not sure how that interaction would have happened, but it would have been a fascinating conversation I think.

Jan Bardsley: One thing occurs to me, because it's such an interesting question, what would Beauvoir and the princess discuss? When I was teaching class in the United States on women writers in Japan, for the final essay students had to write imaginary conversations. For example, Enchi Fumiko might talk to Beauvoir or Murasaki Shikibu or Madame Butterfly. Students were instructed to pull quotes from what they said or had written. So it wasn't totally imaginary, but students had to create what were the possibilities of these people meeting. Their essays were always interesting.

Q3: Nowadays people seem to be more interested in computers than philosophy. How can we make people reconsider existentialism as means to think about human existence?

Julia Bullock: Obviously existentialism had a moment in the 1950s and 1960s. Ironically, by the time Beauvoir made it to Japan, the existentialist philosophy had kind of fallen out of favor in Europe. It was a bit passé already in France and attention had moved on to other things like post-modernism. Having said that, I will limit my response to Beauvoir rather than existentialism as a whole because it's a very broad question. Actually her thought was shaped by many strands of philosophy, and existentialism was one. She also was very much interested in phenomenology and drew very much from that brand of philosophy as well as many others. She was very much shaped by socialism as well. So she was eclectic and chose widely from different philosophical strands. But I do think one of the reasons why there has been a rethinking of Beauvoir in recent years is that women are discovering that many of the problems she highlighted are ones which we are still dealing with. The issues, for example, of the incompatibility between career and family, the lack of support in society for childcare or for the specific needs of mothers in particular. These are questions that I know Japan is struggling with, the US is struggling with, and many other advanced nations are also struggling with. I think that the specific aspects of Beauvoir's thought may have been grounded in the time that she

wrote *The Second Sex* in 1949, and some of the broader problems that she grapples with are still very much relevant.

Q4: Do you think that Beauvoir impacted lesbianism in Japan as well?

Julia Bullock: This is such an important question. I really appreciate the opportunity to talk about this. Beauvoir has certainly been criticized for her reluctance to speak out about her own experiences with other women and also more generally about queer issues. Ursula Tidd, a scholar of Beauvoir, has written about this issue and one thing that she highlights is that Beauvoir actually was in danger of prosecution for her relationships with other women. The police investigated her in France. Her choice not to write about her own experiences, I think, was a self-protective one, because French society at the time was very homophobic and it was illegal to have a relationship with members of the same sex. It was actually quite a scandal when the police began investigating her because she had relationships with her own students. She actually quit teaching for this reason. Considering those circumstances, we can understand why she might not have wanted to be explicit about her sexuality in her memoirs. Having said that, it really is a missed opportunity, isn't it? Here is one of the greatest feminist philosophers of all times who has this personal experience that enables her to speak on a very deep level about these issues of sexuality and she couldn't.

I should maybe retract that last thing a little bit by saying that in *The Second Sex* she actually does have a chapter on lesbianism. So she wrote about it in an academic and theoretical way, avoiding talking about personal experience. For the scholar who is interested in this question and in Beauvoir's relationship to issues of sexuality beyond the heterosexual frame, one can certainly look to that chapter of *The Second Sex*. I do know that it was omitted in some language translations. I don't think Japanese was one of them. There is also a treasure trove of letters that she wrote to Sartre in particular but also to other members of a close knit circle. Those letters were preserved and published after her death and this was really when people became aware of her bisexuality. So she wrote about this in private correspondence that was then collected by the woman who inherited her estate, and it has been translated. That's available if those of you who are interested in this question want to probe more deeply into that.

Q5: The complexity of meaning can be lost in translation but to a certain extent you have to make a story simple in writing, otherwise that idea will not come across well or be widely understood. How do we strike a proper balance between simplification and the complexity of the original?

Aya Kitamura: My talk about the complexity and diversity of Japanese women is never well received. When people ask, "What are Japanese women like?" I start saying, "Well, which

Japanese women are you talking about?" People don't like to hear my talk because I don't answer the question in a simple way. It is true that the demand for simplified, less complex stories is very strong.

Julia Bullock: I am becoming more and more interested in the field of translation studies for this reason actually. One of the things that is both frustrating but also perhaps exciting is that there is no good translation, and very often there is no bad translation. There are different translations. I think the key here is to be mindful when one chooses words for translation as to what they imply. I know this sounds like an indecisive answer, but I think it's really true particularly when we get to the question of gender, that is, how to translate gendered experiences, how to translate experiences related to sexuality. These problems are already fraught, so finding words to accurately convey what an author wants to say about them is extremely difficult. I always worry when I give a talk like this that I am going to sound too critical about the translators. That's not my intention. Mostly what I want to point out is just what is at stake when we try to translate something and how we can think about the process in a rich way, so that we keep open the possibility for texts to mean multiple things at the same time.

Jan Bardsley: I really love translating and I translated a lot of women writing in *Seitō* magazine, the Blue Stockings. It was so difficult. I would take my drafts to various Japanese friends, going over them with different people. Because I wanted to see if I really understood the original and then I wanted to make it very accessible to English readers. For the final drafts of the translation, I put away the Japanese and just looked at the English and I would read the English aloud and then change it to sound natural and to flow well. I thought that was the best service to a Japanese document. As Julia was mentioning, the most difficult part was the ambiguity. You wonder whether it's actually ambiguous or you're just missing something, and when it is ambiguous, you struggle to capture that same ambiguity in the translation.

And then a really interesting problem is what you do with dialects. For example, let's say you are translating a conversation between speakers in Tokyo dialect and Kansai dialect. How can you differentiate these two dialects in English? Tanizaki Junichiro's *Kagi* (The Key) is another example of a similarly interesting problem. In this novel, the husband writes in katakana and the wife writes in hiragana. What do you do with it? There is always a little bit lost in translation.

Gaye Rowley: When you come across a problem like dialect or katakana - hiragana, I think the only thing you can do is despair, really. But I think your approach to what you did with the *Seito* translation is wonderful, figuring that in the end you have to put the Japanese away, you have to look and listen, and hear the English in your head. How this sounds as English is what the audience wants. As you said, that's the best service you can do with the Japanese that you are translating from. I completely agree with you there, I think that's wonderful.

Aya Kitamura: I have been wondering whether there can be a neutral translation, as you, Julia,

said there is no good or bad translation. Similarly, I have been wondering if I can be a neutral ethnographer — going into a place and describing things neutrally. I haven't given up on that and what I try to do is to write [to let the reader know] who I am, who is writing what, and from what perspective. I wonder if the positionality of a translator might be an important aspect to translation. Translators cannot be machines.

Julia Bullock: I think that may be perfect as a response to Aya; the members of the 1997 translation team were very open about this. In the *Afterwards* of two volumes of the translation they describe in detail what they did and why they did it. We can disagree or agree with translators but at least we know what they did and why they thought that was a good idea. This is something the first translation was missing, and we only discovered much later that there were many parts of the text that had been changed dramatically. So yes, it was helpful that they laid out very clearly the interventions they made into the text.

Q6: How did academics in Japan discuss the mistranslation about *The Second Sex*?

Julia Bullock: I am not sure I can answer your question completely but I will give it a try. As for the first translation by Ikushima Ryoichi, the one from 1953, for many generations of women that was the only Japanese translation of *The Second Sex*. And it became definitive for many people in their understanding of what Beauvoir had to say. You can imagine that by 1997 when the second translation was released, the translators had quite a difficult road in terms of changing opinions of what people perceived to be Beauvoir's message. This translation team started their work in 1980s. It took a really long time. This is a very long text, and they were writing and publishing about it before they published the translation itself. They wrote a lot of essays in various academic journals, in particular trying to expose the problems with the first translation, to explain why it needed to be retranslated, and to promote the second translation as what they called definitive. Obviously there were many people who heard this message because you can see some change in academic scholarly writing about Beauvoir after that point. People like Sato Hiroko quoted the translators' published works in their own analysis. Interestingly enough though, there were also plenty of people continuing to write in the mid '90s criticizing Beauvoir's work on the basis of the first translation. For example, in 1995 a very famous woman writer of literature Saegusa Kazuko wrote a series of critiques of *The Second Sex* and much of her criticism seemed to be based on that first translation and all the problems that were associated with its mistranslation. It's interesting to me that even in the mid '90s there were many women writing negatively about Beauvoir having maybe not received the message of what was wrong with the first translation. Some scholars were influenced by the second translation, some didn't pick up on it right away or didn't fully get the message. In terms of readers learning about Beauvoir with that 1997 translation, there is a generational difference, and the reception has been very different because of that.