



INSTITUTIONEN FÖR
SPRÅK OCH LITTERATURER

GENDER INDETERMINACY IN ENGLISH TO FRENCH TRANSLATION

Case Study of Leslie Feinberg's *Stone Butch Blues*

Caroline Grand-Clement

Essay/Degree Project:	15 hp
Program or/and course:	EN1321
Level:	First cycle
Term/year:	Ht/2022
Supervisor:	Gunnar Bergh/Mats Mobärg
Examiner:	Anna-Lena Fredriksson
Report nr:	xx (not to be filled)

Abstract

Title: *Gender indeterminacy in English to French translation: Case study of Leslie Feinberg's Stone Butch Blues*

Author: Caroline Grand-Clement

Supervisor: Gunnar Bergh/Mats Mobärg

Abstract: This essay explores how characters' gender indeterminacy in English fiction texts can be translated into French, and which translation choices are available to achieve its preservation. The translation of Leslie Feinberg's *Stone Butch Blues* by Hystériques & AssociéEs is made the focus of this essay, as the gendering in French of the main character, Jess, is examined. By studying each gendered instance and the choices made by the translating collective, multiple strategies were brought out, at different levels of the text. The main strategy identified is one that alternates feminine or masculine forms throughout the text, varying frequencies of each depending on the narrative arc.

Keywords: Leslie Feinberg, *Stone Butch Blues*, gender indeterminacy, English to French translation, queer literature, grammatical gender, gender agreement

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	1
1.1. Encoding conceptual gender into language.....	2
1.1.1. Overview	2
1.1.2. English.....	2
1.1.3. French.....	3
1.1.4. “Écriture inclusive” – towards a more neutral French?.....	3
1.2. Translating gender indeterminacy in <i>Stone Butch Blues</i>	4
2. Aim and Research Questions	6
3. Background	7
3.1. Translation and its goals.....	7
3.2. Gender indeterminacy	8
3.2.1. Rose’s ‘Revealing and concealing the masquerade of translation and gender’	8
3.2.2. English to French specifically	9
4. Material and Method.....	13
4.1. Material	13
4.2. Method	14
4.2.1. Collecting the material	14
4.2.2. Analyzing the data.....	14
5. Results.....	15
5.1. Different ways of translating.....	15
5.1.1. Translating adjectives.....	15
5.1.2. Translating nouns	16
5.1.3. Translating verbs	17

5.1.3.1. Movement/position and feeling verbs.....	17
5.1.3.2. Translating verbs where Jess is the goal.....	18
5.1.4. Translating reciprocal pronouns and determiners	21
5.2. Frequency and distribution.....	22
5.2.1. Gender forms	22
6. Discussion.....	25
6.1. Translation strategies at an instance level.....	25
6.2. Translation strategies at a text level	26
6.3. Motivations & <i>skopos</i>	27
7. Conclusion	29
References.....	30

1. Introduction

Several thousands of spoken languages exist across the world, with hundreds of written languages, and they all differ from one another in one way or another. Yet, humans have found ways of communicating across linguistic communities, building bridges to transmit and translate concepts, meanings, and forms from one language into another. Translation could be said to be that bridge connecting languages to each other; and at the heart of translation can be said to lie difference: linguistic, cultural, textual difference.

The different language systems which translators must navigate lead to obstacles which hinder the translators' capacity of expressing concepts and meaning in the target texts equivalent to those present in the source text. These obstacles can be faced in varying ways, by making different translation choices, and almost always lead to the prioritization of one aspect of meaning or form over another. One can speak of a certain "deficiency" (Brisset, 2012, p. 282) of the target language, which fails to translate every facet of a source text both on a linguistic or semantic level, but also on a cultural one, as connotations and subcodes differ between the languages, influenced by the cultural context in which these languages evolve.

Linguistically, differences can arise in a multitude of components. They can appear in verb tense (e.g., the existence of a progressive form in English which lacks in Swedish), in grammatical cases (e.g., English only has two cases, common and genitive, while German has four, Ukrainian has seven, and Chinese has none), or grammatical genders for nouns (e.g., Spanish has a masculine/feminine grammatical gender system, German has a masculine/feminine/neuter one, and Swedish has a common/neuter one).

Indeed, languages encode gender using different systems, and it is important to keep in mind that gender in language can refer to two different concepts: that of conceptual gender, and that of grammatical gender, briefly mentioned above. The distinction between the two appears most clearly within languages which have almost no marks of different grammatical genders, such as English, in which nouns such as 'a mother' is not "distinguished grammatically for gender" (Nelson & Greenbaum, 2016, p. 40), but references a female conceptual gender. Conceptual gender points to the sex (and/or social gender, in the case of human beings) of an animate entity and is often encoded accordingly into the word referring to the entity in languages such as French, where content words are all encoded with either a masculine or feminine gender. Grammatical gender, on the other hand, refers to the gender marking of nouns

as lexical elements only, when the referent is not an animate entity and thus has no sex or social gender to correspond to (Vigliocco & Franck, 1999).

1.1. Encoding conceptual gender into language

Conceptual gender is thus encoded into language, but in varying degrees and in different ways in different languages. I will give a short overview of different kinds of encoding before focusing down on how gender is encoded into English, on one hand, and into French, on the other.

1.1.1. Overview

While in most Indo-European languages first and second person singular pronouns have a unique, non-gendered form, this is not the case in all languages. An example is Japanese, in which the first person singular pronouns vary, both according to gender as well as to the level of formality of speech (Brown & Cheek, 2017, p. 96). On one hand, men can use three different pronouns depending on the level of formality they use: *watashi* (in formal language), *boku* (in plain language) and *ore* (in deprecatory language). Women, on the other hand, have the choice between four pronouns, which, however, only span across two levels of formality: *watakushi* or *atakushi* (in formal language), and *watashi* or *atashi* (in plain language). This leads, amongst other things, to a direct gendering of the speaker whenever they express something personal.

In an opposite direction, some languages have very few gender markers. This is the case, for example, with Finnish, in which even the third-person singular pronoun is the epicene pronoun *hän*. However, one must keep in mind that in spite of a gender-neutral pronoun, the cultural and societal environment in which a language is used and evolves can lead to words holding gendered connotations. This seems to be the case with the Finnish *hän*: it is often interpreted as masculine if there is no explicit mention contradicting this interpretation, as if it held a “piilomaskuliinisuudesta” [translation by deepl.com: hidden masculinity] (Engelberg, 2018, as cited in Merikallio, 2022, p. 61).

1.1.2. English

In English, conceptual gender permeates language relatively infrequently. While there are a number of nouns referencing a specific gender (e.g., actor/actress), most gendered inflection is concentrated on third-person singular pronouns, whether they be personal (he/she/him/her), possessive (his/her), or reflective (himself/herself) (Nelson & Greenbaum, 2016, pp. 40, 52).

Apart from the third-person singular, pronouns are not inflected by gender, which allows a first-person narration dissimulating the gender of the speaker to be easily carried out.

1.1.3. French

French marks conceptual gender much more often: in third-person pronouns (singular and plural), most nouns and adjectives, as well as certain past participles (Tillard, 2021) (Simon, 1996, as cited in Rose, 2017). For example, whereas *a happy student* reveals nothing about the conceptual gender of the student in English, the French equivalent would be gendered, either in the masculine—*un étudiant content*—or the feminine—*une étudiante contente*.

Furthermore, whereas in English a first-person narration would take on very few gender markers, the same in French would be marked for gender at any use of adjectives or past participles, amongst other elements. In French, past participles used in the compound past call for gender agreement if the auxiliary verb is *être* [‘to be’], or if the direct object of a compound past with the auxiliary verb *avoir* [‘to have’] is placed in front of the verb (Hoepffner, 1995). For example, the clause *the student went to university* would translate into *l’étudiant est allé à l’université* (masculine) or *l’étudiante est allée à l’université* (feminine), depending on the gender of the subject-student. In a clause such as *the university welcomed him/her*, the object-student’s gender would be encoded into the pronoun ‘him’ or ‘her’, while in French a translation using the compound past (*l’université l’a accueilli/e*) would find the object-student’s gender encoded into the past participle, with the inclusion or lack thereof of a final ‘-e’, which marks the feminine. In the same way, such a clause, formulated in first-person, would also be gendered; *the university welcomed me* would become *l’université m’a accueilli* or *l’université m’a accueilli*, depending on the speaker’s gender.

While the final feminine ‘-e’ is visible in a written text, the oral pronunciation sometimes remains the same whether or not a final ‘-e’ is present; this depends on whether the previous letter is a consonant, in which case the pronunciation will change, or a vowel, in which case the pronunciation will remain unaltered. Thus, in the examples given above, *étudiant* would be pronounced /etydjã/ while the feminine *étudiante* would pronounce the final /t/ sound: /etydjãt/. On the other hand, *allé* and *allée* would both be pronounced /ale/.

1.1.4. “Écriture inclusive” – towards a more neutral French?

In the past decades, however, many non-standard ways of attempting to “feminize” or even “neutralize” the French grammatical gender system have become more frequent, especially within feminist activist circles (Tillard, 2021, p. 14), academic circles, or even governmental communications (see for example Cerquiglini, 1999). These have come to be known as *écriture inclusive* [translation: inclusive writing], though they appear also in oral discourse.

Perhaps the most common form is the duplication of nouns groups under their feminine and masculine versions. This is common in political speeches, where politicians will address their audience with a “Français, Françaises!” [rough translation : Frenchmen, Frenchwomen!] (Charaudeau, 2018, p. 28).

A second way of feminizing the French language is the use of parentheses, dashes, slashes, dots or middle dots to separate the feminine ending from the word while also making it visible (Charaudeau, 2018, p. 13). In the example given above of *a happy student*, this could result in either one of the following: *un(e) étudiant(e) content(e)*, *un-e étudiant-e content-e*, *un·e étudiant·e content·e*, and so on. Another similar approach is the capitalization of the feminine ‘-e’, to highlight its potential presence, as such: *unE étudiantE contentE*. In spoken discourse, this usually leads to the speaker either marking a pause to highlight both endings of the word or putting special emphasis on a final ‘-e’ that would otherwise be silent.

Finally, perhaps the most uncommon and radical way of affecting French grammatical gender is an attempt at neutralization, by use of neologisms, oftentimes constructed by contracting the two versions (masculine and feminine) of a word. This is the case for example with the gender neutral third person pronoun *iel* (which resembles a contraction of *il* and *elle*), or nouns such as *lecteurices* [‘readers’] (a contraction of *lecteur* and *lectrice*), or even adjectives such as *heureuxe* [‘happy’] (contracting the masculine form *heureux* with the feminine *heureuse*). This is often met with the most opposition from institutions such as the Académie française [tr: the French Academy], in charge of regulating the French language, as it is considered to be an offense to standard French (l’Académie française, 2017) (l’Académie française, 2021).¹

These different forms, however, are most often used in non-literary communications, and hence there are very few literary works using *écriture inclusive* (one can think of *Bâtir aussi*, written by the collective Ateliers de l’Antémonde, which walks the line between fiction and nonfiction), let alone academic research on the subject.

1.2. Translating gender indeterminacy in *Stone Butch Blues*

Because of the different ways sex or gender is encoded into different languages, it can appear after translation in a target language where there was no mark of it in the source text. This brings

¹ The Académie française has published both a declaration, in 2017, and an open letter, in 2021, about their stance on *écriture inclusive*, in which they call it an “aberration” which puts the French language in “mortal peril” (l’Académie française, 2017; [my translation]), and point out the difficulties for teachers and learners of French that the widespread use of *écriture inclusive* could lead to (l’Académie française, 2021).

the question of how to adequately translate texts where the sex or gender of the character(s) are indeterminate, unknown, or unstable. Translators must think how they can approach this task and choose different strategies to put in place to preserve the supposed intentions of the source text, or, on the contrary, dissolve the gender indeterminacy by linguistically encoding a certain sex or gender.

This is what Hystériques & AssociéEs had to do as they undertook the translation of Leslie Feinberg's *Stone Butch Blues*. This 1993 novel follows the journey of a butch lesbian, Jess, through life and gender and, since its publication, it has become a cornerstone of queer literature, being translated into over ten languages to date. Jess's gender nonconformity creates many instances of gender indeterminacy within the first-person narration, that deserve to be addressed when translated into French, and are the focus of this essay.

2. Aim and Research Questions

This essay aims to explore how gender indeterminacy can be translated between two different grammatical systems, namely in English to French translations. Three research questions have thus been formulated as follows:

- what translation strategies are used to express gender indeterminacy in English to French translations?
- how are these strategies used and distributed within a text?
- what motivates the choice of one or more specific translating strategy?

Finding answers to these questions is achieved by taking a look at the linguistic options and choices that appear in the translation of the novel *Stone Butch Blues*, and through that observation reach an identification of several translation strategies into which the different translation options can be categorized.

This study could have been extended to take into account the translator's success — or lack thereof — in maintaining the expression of gender indeterminacy in the target language by surveying readers of the source text and readers of the target text so as to compare and contrast their perceptions and understanding of the characters' gender(s). However, the focus of this essay is not to judge the quality or efficiency of the translation itself but rather to identify and classify which choices can be made when translating gender indeterminacy in literary texts from English to French.

3. Background

This background section will delve into the theoretical framework of the present study by looking at translation theories (section 3.1), before defining gender indeterminacy and giving an overview of previous research on gender indeterminacy in translation (section 3.2).

3.1. Translation and its goals

Translation is the discursive action that attempts to transfer or replicate meaning from one language (source) to another language (target) (Appiah, 2012, p. 334). However, this necessarily entails a certain degree of interpretation of the original meaning (Robinson, 2020, p. xi), which renders the translated text not an imitation or replication of the source text, but rather, an adaptation of it as seen through the translator's lens. Keeping this in mind allows for the translation choices in the present study to be observed and discussed outside of a "right or wrong" rhetoric, and to focus on the process of translation, i.e. the execution of linguistic interpretation and adaptation, rather than the finished product.

To look at the process, it's important to start at the beginning: the purpose of the translation, or as Vermeer (2012) presents, the *skopos* of a translation, which can be seen as the "decisive criterion" (p. 193) of any translational action². This implies that the choices made in regards to the translation strategies used must follow and aim to reach the set implicit or explicit purpose of a translation: is it absolute faithfulness to the source text? Is the aim to make the target text digestible to the target audience, or on the contrary, to make it uncomfortable and disruptive for the audience? The *skopos* should influence and guide every choice made by the translator(s).

Such a choice is what to reveal or conceal of the source text in the translation. This is especially interesting when considering queer texts, which often themselves deal with themes of concealment and disclosure. Démont (2017) outlines three modes of translating such texts: misrecognizing translations, minoritizing translations, and queer translations. The first mode fails to recognize and/or transfer queerness from the source text to the target text, concealing the destabilizing aspects of a text, while the second will tend to flatten the connotations and associations of a text, reducing it to a single interpretation and "often serv[ing] the goal of an identity politics at the expense of queerness" (Démont, 2017, p. 163). Queer translations do the

² Vermeer fits his theory in translational action theory; translation is a particular type of translational action that, from a source text, leads to a target text.

opposite: they attempt to maintain the intricate web of meaning that source texts weave within their cultural and literary environment, often by providing glosses and notes to their translations in order to preserve the variety of interpretations, rather than offering an “‘ultimate’ translation” (p. 168) which would dampen the queer potentiality of a text. In this way, queer translations allow for ambiguity and uncertainty, while misrecognizing and minoritizing translations draw a clear interpretation.

3.2. Gender indeterminacy

Building on Schabert (2010), gender indeterminacy will here be defined as the quality of a character’s gender to remain concealed within language; the character’s gender eludes grammatical signification (and literary significance) and thus transcends the common gender binary (masculine or feminine) to become both, and none, at the same time. One could think of a sentence such as *the teenager left the room*: the gender of the protagonist (ie: the teenager) is not revealed, not *determined*, which expands the possible meanings of this sentence to refer to a teenager of any gender, at the same time as it hints at the potential irrelevancy of that information. Of course, certain terms have gendered connotations within society even though their gendered meaning is not explicit—one can notably think of profession terms such as doctor, typically associated with men, or nurse, typically associated with women.

The concept of gender indeterminacy is central to this study, which aims to analyze the translational possibilities of dealing with gender indeterminacy in translations into French, a language in which gender markers seep through language much more frequently than in English, the source language.

While a few studies have delved into the question of gender indeterminacy in translation, the topic remains relatively underexplored. What follows is an overview of the main works published around this theme, first taking a look at a specific study addressing gender indeterminacy in a French to English translation, and then with a focus on papers examining gender indeterminacy in texts translated from English to French.

3.2.1. Rose’s ‘Revealing and concealing the masquerade of translation and gender’

Rose (2017) takes an interest in the parallels between translation and transvestism as disciplines concerned with a kind of “redressing” (Van Wyke, 2010, as cited in Rose, 2017) of an original meaning. Rose undertook an “experimental translation” (p. 37) to examine the connections between translation and gender performativity, focusing on François-Timoléon de Choisy’s

French text *Mémoires de l'abbé de Choisy habillé en femme* [literal translation by Rose: memoirs of the abbot de Choisy dressed as a woman], translating it to English. She experiments with translation strategies within the two different chapters of the text to “expose the very constructedness of gender and writing” (p. 38) by either hiding or exposing translation and the gender binary.

In the first chapter, her first strategy, or experiment, is to render visible the French grammatical gendering in English by using the feminine symbol of Venus and the masculine symbol of Mars in the typography of certain words which would be gendered in French³. Another strategy she uses is to “incorporat[e] words which carry gender in English into words which do not” (p. 39), such as writing “I LA(d)Y down” (p. 40). These strategies point to a creativity in translation which allows to play around and create new words, typography, and new codes to render evident the malleability of both language and gender.

In the second chapter, Rose takes another approach, namely that of attempting to hide both the gender binary and the translation. Firstly, she uses the non-gendered pronouns ‘ze/hir’ for characters around Choisy, and the pronoun ‘one’ rather than the first-person pronoun ‘I’ (pp. 44–45), hence going straight into playing with English grammar itself. To conceal the interpretative aspect of the translation, Rose would omit to specify to the reader that the original text did not conceal gender in such a way, in an attempt to call into question “the power of the source text as authoritative” (p. 47). This goes back to the idea that a translation is never a representation but always an interpretation of the original text, with the translators choosing what and how to convey to their readers.

3.2.2. English to French specifically

The present study takes inspiration from Schabert’s 2010 paper exploring gender indeterminacy in English fiction and how it is affected when translated into French. Ina Schabert explains that, as mentioned above, “sexual difference [...] is encoded in [languages’] morphological structure[s]” (Schabert, 2010, p. 74), which presents problems when trying to keep a character’s

³In the example she gives, reproduced below, Rose incorporates the Venus symbol into the word ‘dressed’, and the Mars symbol into the word ‘exposed’:

I go into town **drēssed** as I am as little as possible; the world is so cruel, and it is such a rare thing to see a man wishing to be a woman, that one is often **expōsed** to malicious jokes. (Choisy 1995: 89, my translation)⁴

(Rose, 2017, p. 39)

gender indeterminate, and that these problems differ depending on the language and how sexual difference⁴ is encoded within it.

She then exposes a wide range of “degendering experiments” (p. 75), beginning with examples of gender indeterminate narrators, always outside of the narration, during the age of Victorian novels. Written in first person, these narrators’ “references to [their own] sex and gender [are] easy to manipulate, to ambiguate, to hybridize” (Schabert, 2010, p. 75) in English, on a linguistic level, though she explains that this does not stop some readers from interpreting and assuming a gendered narrator, sometimes conflating the narrator’s gender and that of the author. This creates an ambiguity which allows for multiple possible interpretations to cohabitate in the text.

However, this gender indeterminacy was often lost when translated into French, where the expressions of the narrator’s state of mind betray a specified gender through the use of adjectives or past participles that, grammatically, have to agree with the gender of the speaker. Such is the case in, amongst others, Charlotte Brontë’s 1849 novel *Shirley*, in which the narrator—with the exception of his appearance as a man in the last pages—remains throughout the English version of the novel ambiguously gendered, “equally at home in male and female spheres of the Victorian world” (Schabert, 2010, p. 78). In French versions, the narrator is almost instantly presented as masculine, and the gendered language used leaves no place for the reader to experience the ambiguity present in the original text, before the revelation at the end of the novel (Schabert, 2010).

Other examples of gender uncertainty in fiction include novels in which “the protagonist is in the in-between state, no longer a man and not yet a woman” (Schabert, 2010, p. 82), or, in fact, the other way around. As will be developed below, this is somewhat the case in *Stone Butch Blues*, in which Jess, a butch who feels neither like a woman or a man, starts taking masculinizing hormones and finds her/himself “exiled from [her/his] own sex to borders that will never be home” (Feinberg, 2014, p. 6). However, Jess’s gender remains in this in-between state throughout the novel, contrarily to the examples Schabert gives, such as Woolf’s *Orlando* or Carter’s *The Passion of New Eve*, in which both protagonists are “transformed from man into woman” (Schabert, 2010, p. 82) and the gender uncertainty is present only during the transitional moment.

⁴ Schabert uses mostly the concept of sex or sexual difference when talking about the grammatical encoding of language, while speaking of gender and “degendering” when talking about what these encodings reflect of/to society.

Here, Schabert exposes different translational strategies adopted by the translators of these two novels. While working on the French version of *Orlando*, Pappo-Musard “takes advantage of the fact that possessive pronouns do not give away the sex of the possessor in French” (Schabert, 2010, p. 83) and turns adjectives into nouns to create a “transitional phase of epicene narration” (p. 83) that maintains the dissimulation of Orlando’s gender. For example, she uses the expression ‘dans une totale nudité’ [literal translation: ‘in total nudity’] to translate the adjective ‘naked’.

In contrast, *The Passion of New Eve* being written in first person, the translator must “make decisions which clearly lead to interpretation, not merely replication” (Schabert, 2010, p. 84). Mikriammos, the translator of the novel, chose to include in the narration of the transitional period gender ambiguity by using masculine forms alongside descriptions of the ‘New Eve’, and by alternating between feminine and masculine forms. Hence, as Schabert puts it, “gender fluidity is thus translated as gender instability” (p. 84).

The final category of gender ambiguity in fiction is that where the character’s sex or gender is entirely undisclosed throughout the entire novel. Hoepffner’s work on translating Brigid Brophy’s *In Transit* is invaluable in terms of reflection around translation strategies. Brophy’s novel revolves around the protagonist, Pat, who cannot remember her/his sex, narrating in the first-person as if by obligation (Schabert, 2010, p. 86). To translate the same gender ignorance from English to French, Hoepffner applied two major strategies: first, to avoid adjectives that change according to gender by either replacing them by synonymous adjectives, or by using another construction featuring a semantically equivalent noun; the second, to stir away from the compound past (the French *passé composé*) in favor of other tenses, as the past participle in the compound past takes on a gender marker in a great number of cases, as explained above (Hoepffner, 1995). In spite of the extensive work Hoepffner put into his translation, no publisher has yet accepted to publish it, certainly judging that such a text is too alien-like, “so un-French” (Hoepffner, 1995, p. 54) to enter the French publishing scene without it being an act of “violence both to the novel and to the French” (p. 54); this reflects the views the Académie française holds about *écriture inclusive*, for example, and how they consider such contortions of the French language an “aberration” (l’Académie française, 2017).

The use of other tenses, such as the past historic or the present tense, to avoid the compound past is also found in Mayoux’s translation of *Written on the Body*, a novel by Jeannette Winterson. However, “the stylistic substitutions [...] work against the simple poetry of Winterson’s prose” (Schabert, 2010, p. 91), highlighting that translations cannot pursue every goal at once, and must always choose which, of meaning(s) or form, to put an emphasis

on and to build the translation around. In fact, the past historic is associated with a more formal register, while the compound past allows a more relaxed one.

As mentioned above, the relatively recent emergence of *écriture inclusive* in French has yet to properly enter the literary spheres, both in original works and in translations. There is therefore a severe lack of academic writing around the subject, especially regarding the present research questions, ie: whether *écriture inclusive* could be part of a translation strategy employed to express gender indeterminacy in French translations of English literary texts.

4. Material and Method

This section is dedicated to the presentation of, firstly, the material used in the present study (section 4.1), and secondly, the method used both to collect the material and analyze the data resulting from it (section 4.2).

4.1. Material

The material used for this study is, on one hand, the 20th Anniversary edition of Leslie Feinberg's novel *Stone Butch Blues*, released in 2014⁵ and on the other hand, its French translation, published by Hystériques & AssociéEs in 2019 under the same name, excluding any introductions, footnotes, or annexes in both versions.

The novel, narrated in first person, follows Jess Goldberg through childhood and well into adulthood, as s/he⁶ navigates, amongst other things, gender nonconformity. Throughout the novel, Jess's gender and others' perception of it evolve, which creates a discontinuity and ambiguity in the readers' understanding of Jess's gender. The use of the first-person narration, in English, allows Jess's gender as s/he experiences it to pass almost unnoticed, as there are relatively few instances where Jess, speaking of her/himself, specifies which gender s/he aligns her/himself with. However, French participles and adjectives, for example, require gender agreement with the subject, making the narrator's gender necessarily more apparent. This creates instances where gender indeterminacy in English poses a translation problem when translating the text into French.

This study will thus focus on all linguistic instances in the narration of the English source text susceptible to marking Jess's gender when translated into French, despite the indeterminacy present in English. This comprises adjectives, past participles, nouns, or longer phrases.

⁵ The novel was first published in 1993.

⁶ As Jess Goldberg is referred to with either the feminine pronoun "she" or with the masculine pronoun "he" by others throughout the novel, I choose to use the contraction s/he, as well as her/his, her/him and her/himself when referring to her/him, rather than the generic "they", often used nowadays as a gender-neutral pronoun. This is to accentuate and honor the fluidity of Jess's character as well as Feinberg's authorial choices.

4.2. Method

4.2.1. Collecting the material

As both versions of the full novel used here are made publicly and freely available online, as per the author's wishes, the material used was digital .pdf documents of the two texts, excluding all introductive, footnoted, or annexed material. The novel comprises 26 chapters.

4.2.2. Analyzing the data

The two versions of the text were gone through manually and all 1720 linguistic instances in the narration of the source text that could betray information about the narrator's gender when translated into French but not denoting a specific gender in the source language were entered into an Excel sheet. Alongside each instance was noted its French translation, which grammatical gender was expressed in the latter (using the labels 'feminine', 'masculine', or 'unspecified' for words that could refer to either), which parts of speech it belonged to (verb groups, noun groups, adjective groups, or determinants), whether the gendered group was singular (only referring to the protagonist) or plural (referring to the protagonist and others), and finally whether Jess was the actor or goal, in the case of verb groups. Every instance's location in the text (page number and chapter in both versions) was also noted down.

The empirical data collected was then analyzed in two ways: first, sorted by location in the text, and second, sorted by parts of speech. This was done so the instances noted could be studied both in context (ie: focusing on the relation to other nearby instances picked up), and isolated (ie: focusing on the instance itself). These two different points of departure when analyzing the data allowed different patterns to emerge, and through those, common translation strategies were identified. The frequency of each grammatical gender expressed in French was also noted, per chapter, to allow the identification of translation strategies that span over the entire novel.

5. Results

This section will present the findings of the study, first describing the different ways the 1720 identified instances were translated (section 5.1), as well as the frequencies and distribution of masculine/feminine/undetermined instances in the French translation throughout the novel (section 5.2).

5.1. Translation strategies

Firstly, different parts of speech were identified as potential carriers of a gender marker when translated into French: adjectives; nouns; certain verbs; verbs of which Jess is the goal⁷; reciprocal pronouns (*each other*); determiners (in *both/all of us*). Each category is presented here with the translation strategies used for that category, as well as the percentages of each form (feminine, masculine, or undetermined) within translated instances in each category.

5.1.1. Translating adjectives

Here were considered only adjectives that are not built from verb past participles (for example: *afraid*, but not *scared*⁸), when attributed, by Jess, to her/himself or a group s/he is a part of. This represents about 13%⁹ of all instances. Different processes of translation appear when looking at these adjectives: the use of gendered adjectives in French, either in feminine or masculine; the use of gender-invariable adjectives (the form of which is the same in the masculine or feminine, and so marking no specific gender grammatically); and the reformulation of the part of speech to use, instead of an adjective, a noun that will avoid marking gender, which I will here call nominalization. Typical examples of each can be found in Table 1 below, which presents the instance in the source text (ST) and its translation in the target text (TT), the page numbers in both the ST and TT, the gender in the TT if marked, and the translation strategy used. They are arranged by frequency, as feminine forms represent 62% of all adjective translations, while masculine forms represent 20%, and gender-invariable adjectives 18%. This is also the category we find most cases of ungendered instances in translation (68% of all ungendered instances across categories), which aligns with the fact that

⁷ Used in functional grammar when analyzing transitivity structures, the *goal* in a clause refers to the participant affected by the affection—in some cases, to whom/which the action is ‘done’. The *actor* is the participant

⁸ In the online Oxford English Dictionary, for example, *scared* appears both in the entry for the verb *scare*, as its past participle, and as its own entry, classified as an adjective (“Scare, v.,” n.d.) (“Scared, Adj.,” n.d.).

⁹ All percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

gender-invariable adjectives are commonly used and are not considered a misstep from traditional French.

Table 1. Translation strategies for adjectives in ST

Instance in ST	Page number in ST	Instance in TT	Page number in TT	Gender (if marked) in TT	Translation strategy
I felt shy	132	j'étais toute timide	110	feminine	Gendered adjective <i>shy</i> → <i>timide</i>
I am different	244	je suis différent	210	masculine	Gendered adjective <i>different</i> → <i>différent</i>
I felt too weak	255	je me sentais trop faible	218	no gender markers	Gender-invariable adjective for <i>weak</i> → <i>faible</i>
I wasn't confident enough to feel sexy	4	je n'avais pas assez confiance en moi pour me sentir sexy.	4	no gender markers	Nominalization for <i>confident</i> → <i>avoir confiance en soi</i> Gender-invariable adjective for <i>sexy</i> → <i>sexy</i>

5.1.2. Translating nouns

The translation strategies used regarding nouns referring to Jess in the narration (2%) is quite classic: either translating with the feminine or the masculine TT equivalent of the ST noun. Sometimes, the noun itself is invariable in terms of gender, in which case gender is marked in the article used. Examples can be found in Table 2, illustrating cases in which the noun and article are gendered, and others where only the article is marked in gender. They are sorted by gender frequency: feminine forms are used in 81% of the time, and masculine forms only 19% of the time.

Table 2. Translation strategies for nouns in ST

Instance in ST	Page number in ST	Instance in TT	Page number in TT	Gender (if marked) in TT	Translation strategy
[I was] a regular at Abba's	52	[j'étais] une régulière du Abba's	44	feminine	Gender marked in the article and noun <i>a regular</i> → <i>une régulière</i>
I was a child the last time I'd smelled rhubarb	272	j'étais encore une enfant la dernière fois que j'avais senti de la rhubarbe	235	feminine	Gender marked in the article <i>a child</i> → <i>une enfant</i>
I was the only kid in the ward	16	j'étais le seul enfant dans la salle	14	masculine	Gender marked in the article (and adjective) <i>the (only) kid</i> → <i>le (seul) enfant</i>

5.1.3. Translating verbs

Verbs in French are not typically gendered, except in certain cases when the form they are conjugated in comprises a past participle; this is, here, mostly the case for the compound past, which is used in narratives written in past tense when an action takes place in a specific moment, and not over the course of much time (in which case the imperfect, non-gendered, would more commonly be used). As mentioned earlier, not all verbs call for a gender (not number) agreement when conjugated in the compound past. I have thus only picked instances which could lead to a need for gender marking in a French translation—that is: verbs of movement/position or feeling; and verbs in which Jess is the goal, whether they be in their passive or active forms.

5.1.3.1. Movement/position and feeling verbs

Two main categories of verbs of which Jess is the subject and not the goal are identified here: what I broadly call verbs of movement or position (e.g., *to walk*, *to rush*, *to stand*, *to sit*), and verbs of feeling (e.g., *to feel*, *to remember*). The reason for the focus on these two categories of verbs is that these are verbs whose compound past forms would typically be with the French auxiliary *être* ['to be'] rather than *avoir* ['to have'], and thus call for a gender (and number) agreement between the subject and the past participle. This is by far the most substantial category, representing 45%, which may be due to the wide range of verbs included.

The translation strategies for both categories are however the same: translating using the compound past with either the feminine or masculine. Table 3 and 4 present typical examples

for each movement/position verbs and feeling verbs, respectively. Both tables are sorted by gender according to frequency: 62% of instances in this category are feminine, and 38% of instances were masculine.

Table 3. Translation strategies for movement/position verbs in ST

Instance in ST	Page number in ST	Instance in TT	Page number in TT	Gender (if marked) in TT	Translation strategy
I walked home	110	je suis rentrée à pied	92	feminine	Gendered past participle in compound past <i>walked home</i> → <i>suis rentrée à pied</i>
So I stayed	186	Alors je suis restée	161	feminine	Gendered past participle in compound past <i>stayed</i> → <i>suis restée</i>
I stopped for gas	168	je me suis arrêtée pour prendre de l'essence	143	feminine	Gendered past participle in compound past <i>stopped</i> → <i>me suis arrêtée</i>
I stood in the same spot	112	je suis resté sur place	95	masculine	Gendered past participle in compound past <i>stood</i> → <i>suis resté (sur place)</i>
I leaned against the sink	205	je me suis appuyé contre l'évier	176	masculine	Gendered past participle in compound past <i>leaned</i> → <i>me suis appuyé</i>

Table 4. Translation strategies for feeling verbs in ST

Instance in ST	Page number in ST	Instance in TT	Page number in TT	Gender (if marked) in TT	Translation strategy
I felt left out	236	je me suis sentie oubliée	203	feminine	Gendered past participle in compound past <i>felt</i> → <i>me suis sentie</i>
I recalled the night Theresa and I broke up	330	je me suis souvenue de la nuit où Theresa et moi avons rompu	285	feminine	Gendered past participle in compound past <i>recalled</i> → <i>me suis souvenue</i>
I felt great, for the first time in days.	13	Je me suis senti bien pour la première fois depuis des jours	11	masculine	Gendered past participle in compound past <i>felt</i> → <i>me suis senti</i>

5.1.3.2. Translating verbs where Jess is the goal

In functional grammar, the concept of *goal* refers to which participant in a clause is affected by what the verb expresses, rather than who is doing it (Thompson, 2013, p. 95). Under this label, two types of verbal instances were singled out. On one hand, passive forms of which Jess is the grammatical subject (e.g., “*I was welcomed*” (Feinberg, 2014, p. 83; emphasis added)) or part of it, marked by the subjective case of the first person plural pronoun *we*. On the other hand, active forms of which Jess is not the grammatical subject, but the grammatical object (e.g., “*They washed me*” (Feinberg, 2019, p. 8; emphasis added)), or part of it, marked by the objective case of the first person plural *us*. This distinction is important as the construction in French of the compound past for these verbs will differ.

5.1.3.2.1. Passive forms

In passive clauses in which Jess is the grammatical subject, the past participle needs to be in gender agreement. Counted here are also words that could be classified as adjectives (for example: *scared*¹⁰), but whose similarity with the passive form leads me to analyze them as such. This adds up to 9% of all instances. The translation strategies used here are mainly the same as with movement/position and feeling verbs—that is, to use the compound past in either masculine or feminine form—but there are some occasions in which a nominal expression is used in the TT, namely for adjectival past participles in the ST. These strategies are presented and illustrated with typical examples in Table 5, arranged by gender according to frequency. In this category, 75% of instances are feminine, 22% are masculine, and 3% have no marks of gender due to nominalization.

¹⁰ See footnote 8 on p. 15.

Table 5. Translation strategies for passive verb forms in ST

Instance in ST	Page number in ST	Instance in TT	Page number in TT	Gender (if marked) in TT	Translation strategy
I was welcomed as usual	83	j'ai été accueillie comme d'habitude	71	feminine	Gendered past participle in passive form <i>was welcomed</i> → <i>ai été accueillie</i>
I was still hurt	272	j'étais encore blessée	234	feminine	Gendered past participle in passive form <i>was (still) hurt</i> → <i>étais (encore) blessée</i>
we were hired to break a strike	196	on avait été embauchés pour briser une grève	168	masculine	Gendered past participle in passive form <i>were hired</i> → <i>avait été embauchés</i>
I was stunned at the hatred in her eyes	211	j'étais choqué par la haine dans ses yeux	181	masculine	Gendered past participle in passive form <i>was stunned</i> → <i>étais choqué</i>
I was badly outnumbered	219	j'étais salement en minorité	189	no gender markers	Nominalization of an adjectival past participle <i>outnumbered</i> → <i>en minorité</i>

5.1.3.2.2. Active forms

Included in this category are all verbs of which Jess is not the grammatical subject, but the goal, and which express an action set at a specific time rather than over the course of it. In French, the grammatical *objet direct* ['direct object'] can usually be placed before the verb, in which case the past participle would require an agreement (and number), or after the verb, in which case the past participle is invariable. However, pronouns must always be placed before, and as the text is written in first person, every instance which included a first-person pronoun had to be gendered. This represents the second most substantial category, with 24% of instances. The translation strategy here was also simply to use the compound past in either masculine or feminine, as can be seen in the illustrative examples in Table 6. These examples are sorted by gender, according to frequency: 57% of instances use the feminine form while 43% use the masculine form.

Table 6. Translation strategies for active verb forms in ST, of which Jess is the goal

Instance in ST	Page number in ST	Instance in TT	Page number in TT	Gender (if marked) in TT	Translation strategy
My mother called me into our house for dinner.	13	Ma mère m'a appelée pour le dîner.	11	feminine	Gendered past participle in compound past, objective case personal pronoun before verb <i>called me</i> → <i>m'a appelée</i>
The receptionist looked me up and down	257	elle m'a examinée de la tête aux pieds	220	feminine	Gendered past participle in compound past, objective case personal pronoun before verb <i>looked me up and down</i> → <i>m'a examinée de la tête aux pieds</i>
Mona and the bouncer picked me up	25	Mona et la videuse m'ont attrapé	21	masculine	Gendered past participle in compound past, objective case personal pronoun before verb <i>picked me up</i> → <i>m'ont attrapé</i>
she looked me up and down	26	elle m'a regardé de haut en bas	22	masculine	Gendered past participle in compound past, objective case personal pronoun before verb <i>looked me up and down</i> → <i>m'a regardé de haut en bas</i>
The strike cheered us	196	les grévistes nous ont acclamés	169	masculine	Gendered past participle in compound past, objective case personal pronoun before verb <i>cheered</i> → <i>nous ont acclamés</i>

5.1.4. Translating reciprocal pronouns and determiners

Finally, the last group of instances picked out for analysis are reciprocal pronouns and determiners such as “each other”, “both”, or “all of us”, when including Jess. The particularity of this group is the fact they always refer to at least one other person in addition to Jess. Amongst all instances, 7% are reciprocal pronouns and determiners. To translate these, two strategies were identified: on one hand, translating the pronouns and determiners into their TT equivalents, in masculine or feminine form; on the other hand, expressing their meanings through the use of reciprocal verbs, which include a pronoun-particle, and call for gender (and number) agreement when conjugated in the compound past. These two strategies are illustrated below in characteristic examples in Table 7. These are sorted by gender according to frequency, as 84% of the instances in this category are feminine and 16% are masculine.

Table 7. Translation strategies for reciprocal pronouns and determiners in ST

Instance in ST	Page number in ST	Instance in TT	Page number in TT	Gender (if marked) in TT	Translation strategy
we all laughed and danced	32	on riait toutes, et on dansait	27	feminine	Gendered pronoun equivalent to ST <i>all</i> → <i>toutes</i>
we both nodded	79	on a acquiescé toutes les deux	67	feminine	Gendered pronominal phrase equivalent to ST pronoun <i>both</i> → <i>toutes les deux</i>
we kissed each other	132	on s'est embrassées	110	feminine	Gendered reciprocal verb <i>kiss each other</i> → <i>s'est embrassées</i>
he shouted at all of us	140	nous a-t-il crié à toutes	118	feminine	Gendered pronoun equivalent to ST <i>all of us</i> → <i>toutes</i>
we both heard a roar	223	on a tous les deux entendu un rugissement	193	masculine	Gendered pronominal phrase equivalent to ST pronoun <i>both</i> → <i>tous les deux</i>
we would recognize each other	326	on allait se reconnaître tous les deux	281	masculine	Gendered pronominal phrase equivalent to ST reciprocal pronoun <i>each other</i> → <i>tous les deux</i>

It is also important to note that, for all categories, there are no instances of any forms deviating from what could be considered traditional French, either by using any kind of *écriture inclusive*, which could have been used to express Jess's gender ambiguity, or by playing around with typography, as Rose (2017) did within her work on translating Choisy's *Mémoires*.

5.2. Frequency and distribution

5.2.1. Gender forms

Looking at the frequency and distribution of the instances using masculine, feminine, or unspecified forms in the TT allows for a bigger picture of the translation choices made throughout the whole novel to be painted.

Amongst the total of 1720 instances picked up, 1088 (63%) were feminine, 572 (34%) were masculine, and only 60 (3%) were forms that did not mark either feminine or masculine.

This shows a vast majority of feminine forms overall. However when looking at the distribution by chapter, it becomes clear that the distribution is not the same throughout the novel. In fact, as illustrated by Figure 1, while feminine forms represent the majority in many of the chapters, chapters 15 to 18 (included), 21, and 26 have a majority of masculine forms.

It can also be noted that at the start of the novel, as Table 8 shows, the frequency of feminine forms is much higher than that of masculine and unspecified forms, averaging a ratio of nearly 75/25 during the first fourteen chapters. Then, between chapters 15 to 18, this tendency changes, and there is an average ratio of about 60/40 masculine forms compared to others. Finally, from chapters 19 to the end (apart from chapter 24), the ratio nears 50/50 feminine and masculine forms, alternating which one has majority.

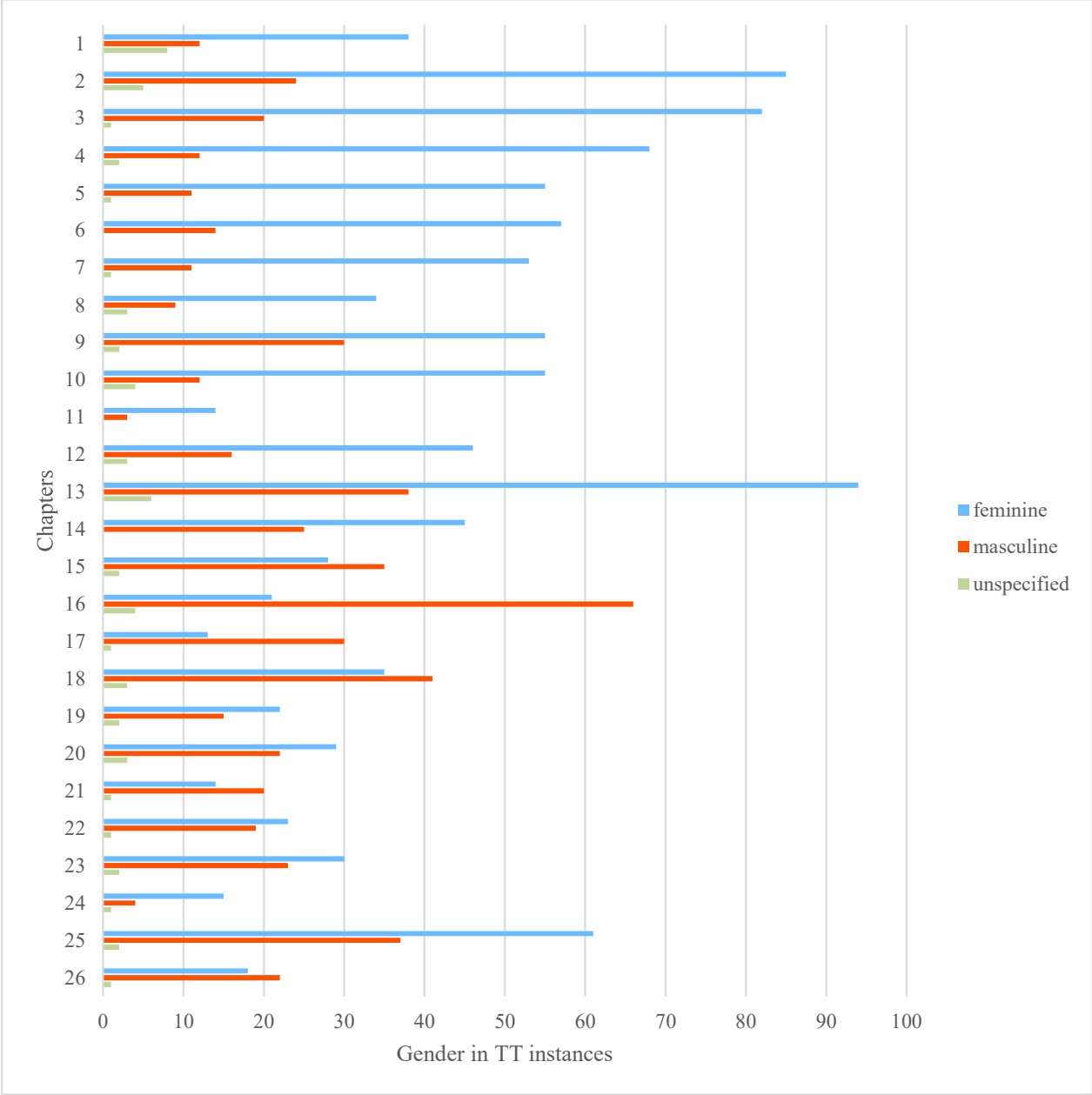


Figure 1. Distribution of gender in TT instance for each chapter

Table 8. Frequency of each gender in TT instances, per chapter

CHAPTERS	% OF EACH GENDER CATEGORY			Grand Total
	feminine	masculine	unspecified	
1	65,52%	20,69%	13,79%	100,00%
2	74,56%	21,05%	4,39%	100,00%
3	79,61%	19,42%	0,97%	100,00%
4	82,93%	14,63%	2,44%	100,00%
5	82,09%	16,42%	1,49%	100,00%
6	80,28%	19,72%	0,00%	100,00%
7	81,54%	16,92%	1,54%	100,00%
8	73,91%	19,57%	6,52%	100,00%
9	63,22%	34,48%	2,30%	100,00%
10	77,46%	16,90%	5,63%	100,00%
11	82,35%	17,65%	0,00%	100,00%
12	70,77%	24,62%	4,62%	100,00%
13	68,12%	27,54%	4,35%	100,00%
14	64,29%	35,71%	0,00%	100,00%
15	43,08%	53,85%	3,08%	100,00%
16	23,08%	72,53%	4,40%	100,00%
17	29,55%	68,18%	2,27%	100,00%
18	44,30%	51,90%	3,80%	100,00%
19	56,41%	38,46%	5,13%	100,00%
20	53,70%	40,74%	5,56%	100,00%
21	40,00%	57,14%	2,86%	100,00%
22	53,49%	44,19%	2,33%	100,00%
23	54,55%	41,82%	3,64%	100,00%
24	75,00%	20,00%	5,00%	100,00%
25	61,00%	37,00%	2,00%	100,00%
26	43,90%	53,66%	2,44%	100,00%
GRAND TOTAL	63,37%	33,20%	3,43%	100,00%

6. Discussion

All of the above results help identify the main translation strategies used in this translation of *Stone Butch Blues*. The discussion of these results and strategies is presented here in section 6, and has been divided in two: first to observe translation strategies at a instance level (section 6.1) and then to observe them at a text level (section 6.2). This was done because the results seem to show slightly different strategies when looking at an instance and its immediate context compared to looking at the text as a whole. The discussion is then pushed further to explore the potential motivations and *skopos* that may have influenced Hystériques & AssociéEs' decisions when translating (section 6.3).

6.1. Translation strategies at an instance level

We can notice, at an instance level, that both masculine and feminine forms are used, as well as reformulations of clauses in order to avoid using words that call for gender agreement, which is not unlike Pappo-Mussard's or Hoepffner's use of nominalized forms to replace gendered adjectives in their translations of *Orlando* and *In Transit*, respectively (Schabert, 2010, p. 83) (Hoepffner, 1995). Yet, contrarily to Hoepffner's emphasis on avoiding the compound past by favoring the past historic which does not call for gender agreement, Hystériques & AssociéEs have made the decision to use more casual compound past, thus creating many more instances of gender marking.

Something interesting to note is how each instance is gendered within its immediate context; for example, most times the gender agreement of plural forms (which refer to Jess and at least another person) agree with the gender of the other characters, as if Jess's gender is englobed amongst other genders. This is especially visible within the category of reciprocal pronouns and determiners, where the vast majority of instances are feminine, which aligns with the fact that Jess is mostly interacting with and evolving amongst women throughout the novel.

There is a quite big exception to this, however, in chapter 16, in which Jess, presenting as a man, has a relationship with another woman. Of the 11 plural instances noted during their main interaction (between pp. 202-212 in the ST, pp. 174-183 in TT), only one marks a feminine gender, while all 10 others use masculine plural forms, which may be an indication of the translators choosing to underline how Jess's gender is perceived by other characters in the moment, so that the reader's perception aligns with it as well.

This reflects a tendency that appears when looking at instances where Jess is the goal of the action, in active clauses. The translators seem to use either the masculine or feminine form in accordance to what the characters enacting the action are perceiving. An example of this is a scene where young Jess is “pushed and carried [...] to old Mrs. Jefferson’s house and locked [...] in the coal bin” (Feinberg, 2014, p. 12) by a group of boys—scene translated into Jess being “**poussée et trainée** vers la maison de la vieille Mrs Jefferson, et [...] **enfermée** dans la réserve à charbon” (Feinberg, 2019, p. 11; emphasis added), in which ‘poussée’, ‘trainée’, and ‘enfermée’ are all feminine forms of past participles.

6.2. Translation strategies at a text level

The translation strategies do not limit themselves to an instance level. In fact, the main strategy found within the text is the alternation throughout the whole novel of masculine, feminine, and undefined instances. Most often at least two different forms are found on the same page, in the same paragraph, and there are some cases where different forms also appear in the same sentence. For example, the sentence “Mona and the bouncer picked me up and practically carried me into the front bar and set me on a stool” (Feinberg, 2014, p. 25) is translated by “Mona et la videuse m’ont **attrapé** et m’ont presque **trainé** jusqu’au comptoir, où elles m’ont **assise** sur un tabouret.” (Feinberg, 2019, p. 21; emphasis added), in which ‘attrapé’ and ‘trainé’ are gendered in the masculine, while ‘assise’ is gendered in the feminine. This follows Schabert’s affirmation that linguistic gender instability can represent gender fluidity (2010, p. 84).

Jess’s gender is in fact itself instable, as s/he goes through certain medical procedures (such as taking testosterone or getting a breast reduction surgery) to present in society as a man, before deciding to stop taking hormones. At the beginning of the novel, before Jess chooses to undertake any medical procedures, s/he is butch, and so masculine, but perceived throughout society (both in heterosexual settings like at work and in lesbian settings at the bars) primarily as a woman, which shows in the high percentages of feminine forms compared to that of masculine ones within every category.

Later, as Jess starts hormones and undergoes breast reduction surgery, the changes in Jess’s gender expression and body are reflected in other translation choices made by Hystériques & AssociéEs, which follow the narrative arc by increasing the percentage of masculine forms used during the chapters in the novel in which Jess presents and lives within society as a man (chapters 15 to 18). This is similar to how translations of Woolf’s *Orlando* or

Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* will adapt how the character is gendered according to the narrative arc, whether it is pre- or post-transformation (Schabert, 2010).

At the end of novel, Jess stops taking testosterone, and her/his physical gender expression blurs even more lines, which is reflected in the more balanced ratio between masculine and feminine forms from chapter 19 onwards. However, chapters 24 and 25 present a higher majority of feminine forms. This can be explained by the narration as well: in these chapters, Jess meets up with old butch friends from her/his past—past in which s/he was perceived as a woman by others.

6.3. Motivations & *skopos*

There may be multiple reasons explaining the translation strategies used in Hystériques & AssociéEs' translation of *Stone Butch Blues*, but I would like here to expose some leads. In fact, the collective has published a translators' note very briefly outlining their decision on how to gender Jess throughout the novel—namely, explaining that they chose to alternate between masculine and feminine forms (Hystériques & AssociéEs, 2020).

The translators' note also indicates choices made for the footnotes and annexes, which, being outside of the first-person narration, I have not included in this study. It is however interesting to note the use of different strategies of *écriture inclusive* (the use of slashes, middle dots, or contractions) in these paratextual elements, which contrast with the lack of it within the text. This could be explained by the *skopos* of the collective being to create a text as accessible and legible as possible, so as to reach as wide an audience as possible. In fact, the use of *écriture inclusive* can be estranging to readers not used to it, as it interrupts the usual flow of a text with unexpected punctuation, for example. Furthermore, the use of *écriture inclusive* could have set it apart from the traditional literary scene, identifying it almost instantly as 'other', complicated, and queer. This contrasts greatly with Rose's work (2017) on translating Choisy's *Mémoires*, in which she attempts purposefully to "queer the text", even if that is at the price of obscuring meaning, as Rose wants to challenge the readers' perception of gender and have to "work for this meaning" (p. 44). Hystériques & AssociéEs may have intentionally wanted to integrate the text into the French literary canon, beyond simply being limited to being queer literature.

Another reason for using traditional gendered forms over new gender-neutral forms of *écriture inclusive* could be, in an almost paradoxical way, a way to hide gender in the background of the narration. The unusual forms that *écriture inclusive* would bring would inevitably catch the eye and could make the details of Jess's gender the center of the reader's reading, while the use of feminine and masculine forms is more common and the eye may thus

skip over them. This is also the case if the text is to be read aloud, as the majority of past participles, for example, do not change pronunciation when the feminine final ‘-e’ is added. This idea that *écriture inclusive* would bring unnecessary scrutinization on gender in the text is in fact an argument against *écriture inclusive* that the Académie française raises: that “by focalizing the attention on the obsession over gender, it constraints the relation to language by inhibiting an ampler expression of thought” (l’Académie française, 2021)¹¹.

The alternation of masculine and feminine forms may also be a way of keeping the possibilities of interpretation open, in an attempt to produce a queer translation, in Démont’s (2017) words, rather than a minoritizing one. In fact, the use of a single epicene form might have cut away the “layers of meaning” and reduced the text’s “literary quality [which] resides in its ambiguity and its capacity to (de)construct its own narrative/meaning” (Démont, 2017, p. 161), fixing Jess’s gender experience into place, rather than allowing in a certain fluidity, which is made possible in the present translation through the shift and variation of the grammatically gendered forms used.

A final translation choice, which has only been briefly mentioned, is the use of the compound past. In French, narratives written in past tense have the choice of tense for actions between the historic past, which is never gendered, and the compound past, which uses the past participle and sometimes needs gender agreement. The choice of which form to use thus affects greatly how much grammatical marks of gender will appear in a text. It is interesting that Hystériques & AssociéEs chose to use the compound past, despite it adding more gender markings, in a text where the narrating character’s gender is ambiguous. However, when looking at the connotations of both tenses, a possible reason emerges. As mentioned previously, the past historic is often considered more sophisticated, used very little in oral speech. Just as the translation of Jeannette Winterson’s *Written on the Body* loses the “simple poetry” (Schabert, 2010, p. 91) of the original by using the past historic, a similar effect of distortion could have been observed on Leslie Feinberg’s style if Hystériques & AssociéEs had chosen that same tense. The strategic choice to use the compound past is then an adequate one to preserve the working-class, simple tone of the novel, and serves as a reminder that *Stone Butch Blues* is not only about queer characters’ struggles and journeys, but also about that of the working class, further rendering the determination of Jess’s gender irrelevant behind other focal points in the narrative.

¹¹ My translation. Original: “En focalisant l’attention sur l’obsession du genre, elle restreint le rapport à la langue en inhibant une expression plus ample de la pensée”.

7. Conclusion

The issue brought up in this essay is the disparity in marking gender grammatically in English and French, and how this can affect translations of gender indeterminacy in fiction. This study has focused on providing an overview of the different choices available to translate gender indeterminacy and identifying the strategies that can follow from them, by analyzing the ones used by Hystériques & AssociéEs in their translation of *Stone Butch Blues*. This was done by picking out the instances where gender is not marked in English but might be in French, such as adjectives, verbs, and others. This method allowed a qualitative and in-depth analysis of the present translation choices made by the collective.

The main strategy identified here, across all parts of speech, is the alternation of traditional masculine and feminine forms throughout the text. The use of traditional forms could be explained by a willingness to render the text digestible for a wider audience, and thus places the expression of gender indeterminacy less at the instance level than at the text level. It has been observed that the proportions of each gender marker used also correlate closely with the narration, following Jess's journey through her/his gender exploration and expression, which shows a link between the linguistic and literary aspects of translation.

Another interesting choice is the use of the compound past rather than the past historic, the former sometimes calling for gender agreement and hence gender markers, while the past historic does not. This shows that staying faithful to the more casual style of the original author can also influence the translation, and affect other translation choices, here specifically around gender indeterminacy. Thus, translation choices and strategies around a particular issue cannot be completely separated from other issues that arise during a translation, as different levels of meaning are expressed in a single text.

It would be valuable to explore other translations of other texts in which the character has an indetermined gender, to broaden the scope of research and perhaps confirm translation strategies, or even discover ones absent here, such as if there is a use of *écriture inclusive* that was not found in Hystériques & AssociéEs's translation of *Stone Butch Blues*. It would also be interesting to see how translations of non-fiction texts, which deal with non-confirming genders, or genderqueer people, handle the issue of gender—for example, the translation of neopronouns or new terms that appear to speak of more complicated gender identities that fall outside of the man/woman binary.

References

- Appiah, K. A. (2012). Thick translation. In L. Venuti (Ed.), *The Translation Studies Reader* (3rd ed.). Taylor & Francis Group.
- Brisset, A. (2012). The search for a native language: Translation and cultural identity. In R. Gill & R. Gannon (Trans.), *TRANSLATION STUDIES READER*. Taylor & Francis Group.
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/gu/detail.action?docID=1075260>
- Brown, L., & Cheek, E. (2017). Gender identity in a second language: The use of first person pronouns by male learners of Japanese. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, 16(2), 94–108. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15348458.2016.1277948>
- Cerquiglini, B. (1999). *Femme, j'écris ton nom... Guide d'aide à la féminisation des noms de métiers, titres, grades et fonctions [Woman, I write your name... Help guide to the feminization of professions, titles, ranks and functions]*.
- Charaudeau, P. (2018). L'écriture inclusive au défi de la neutralisation en français [Inclusive writing and the challenge of neutralization in French]. *Le Débat*, 199(2), 13–31.
<https://doi.org/10.3917/deba.199.0013>
- Démont, M. (2017). On three modes of translating queer literary texts. In B. J. Baer & K. Kaindl (Eds.), *Queering Translation, Translating the Queer*. Routledge.
- Feinberg, L. (2014). *Stone Butch Blues* (20th Anniversary Author Edition). (n. p.).
- Feinberg, L. (2019). *Stone Butch Blues* (Hystériques & AssociéEs, Trans.). Hystériques & AssociéEs.
- Hoepffner, B. (1995). Translating “In Transit”: Writing—By proxy. *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 15(3), 54.
- Hystériques & AssociéEs. (2020). *Traduire Stone Butch Blues en français... [Translating Stone Butch Blues into French...]*. <https://hysteriquesetassociees.org/2020/05/12/traduire-stone-butch-blues-en-francais/>

- l'Académie française. (2017). *Déclaration de l'Académie française sur l'écriture dite "inclusive"* [Declaration of the French Academy on writing said to be "inclusive"].
<https://www.academie-francaise.fr/actualites/declaration-de-lacademie-francaise-sur-lecriture-dite-inclusive>
- l'Académie française. (2021). *Lettre ouverte sur l'écriture inclusive* [Open letter on inclusive writing]. <https://www.academie-francaise.fr/actualites/lettre-ouverte-sur-lecriture-inclusive>
- Merikallio, A. (2022). Sukupuolen käännöksiä: Epänormatiivisen sukupuolen suomentamisesta [Gender translations: translating non-normative gender]. *MikaEL*, 15, 58–73.
- Nelson, G., & Greenbaum, S. (2016). *An introduction to English grammar* (Fourth edition.). Routledge.
- Robinson, D. (2020). *Transgender, translation, translingual address*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Rose, E. (2017). Revealing and concealing the masquerade of translation and gender: Double-crossing the text and the body. In B. J. Epstein & R. Gillett (Eds.), *Queer in Translation* (pp. 37–50). Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315603216>
- Scare, v. (n.d.). In *OED Online*. Oxford University Press. Retrieved December 7, 2022, from <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/172018>
- Scared, adj. (n.d.). In *OED Online*. Oxford University Press. Retrieved December 7, 2022, from <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/172024>
- Schabert, I. (2010). Translation trouble: Gender indeterminacy in English novels and their French versions. *Translation and Literature*, 19(1), 72–92.
- Thompson, G. (2013). *Introducing functional grammar* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Tillard, M. (2021). *L'essentiel de la grammaire française* [The essential to French grammar]. Ellipses. <http://unr-ra.scholarvox.com.bibelec.univ-lyon2.fr/book/88915777>

Vermeer, H. J. (2012). Skopos and commission in translational action. In A. Chesterman (Trans.), *The Translation Studies Reader* (3rd ed.). Taylor & Francis Group.
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/gu/detail.action?docID=1075260>

Vigliocco, G., & Franck, J. (1999). When sex and syntax go hand in hand: Gender agreement in language production. *Journal of Memory and Language*, 40(4), 455–478.
<https://doi.org/10.1006/jmla.1998.2624>