

Translating Trans Identity: (Re)Reading and (Re)Writing  
Undecidable Texts and Bodies  
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## Abstract

In this thesis I look at the translations of six fictional and non-fictional first-person texts. Two are transgender, two intersex and two agender; they are from every century between the seventeenth and the twenty-first and are originally written in French, Spanish and English. The writers of all of these texts specifically use writing to show their gender identity, whether that be shifting or non-binary. I label all of my texts and their protagonists undecidable; undecidability is an inherent characteristic of texts written by or about trans people and I argue that translation is the best place to explore and represent this undecidability. The texts are undecidable because they are a mixture of fact and fiction – they are intertextual with unreliable narrators and open endings. The protagonists are undecidable because no decision should ever be made about whether they are male or female, masculine or feminine.

My research shows that while undecidability is heightened in my texts, all bodies and all texts are in some ways undecidable. It looks to Deleuze to consider how they are made up of constant becomings and unbecomings and to Derrida to consider these becomings as spectres. I argue that no text or body is ever finished and texts and bodies are haunted by the ghosts of former and future texts and bodies. To represent this in translation I look to the palimpsest, the hypertext and the cut-out technique. These queer translation experiments highlight the sexual and textual undecidability that is in every text and body; it is the juxtaposition of trans embodiment and translation that helps us to see that both gender (but especially trans-gender) and writing (but especially translation) are multiple, radical, queer and undecidable, always open to being (re)read and (re)written by the author, the translator and the reader.

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# Translating Trans Identity: (Re)Reading and (Re)Writing Undecidable Texts and Bodies

Reading is an adventure. Adventures are about the unknown. [...] Literature is a mix of unfamiliarity and recognition. The situation can take us anywhere – across time and space, the globe, through the lives of people who can never be like us – into the heart of anguish we have never felt – crimes we could not commit.

[...]

The escape into another story reminds us that we too are another story. Not caught, not confined, not pre-destined, not only one gender or passion.

Winterson (2014: xi-xii)

## Introduction

Je suis devenu fille malgré moi [I became a girl despite myself] – the Chevalier/Chevalière d'Eon

I become that for a little while at least. I become male-identified. But something daughterly must cling to me too – Cal/lie, *Middlesex*

I felt I was becoming less present every day – narrator, *Written on the Body*

### 1. Texts and Aims

This thesis grew out of the translation challenges posed by one particular text: the *Mémoires de l'abbé de Choisy habillé en femme* [memoirs of the Abbot de Choisy dressed as a woman]. It is made challenging by the voice of its author-narrator, the seventeenth-century priest François-Timoléon de Choisy, who explains that, after his mother died:<sup>1</sup>

Je n'étais donc contraint de personne, et je m'abandonnai à mon penchant. Il arriva même que madame de La Fayette, que je voyais fort souvent, me voyant toujours fort ajusté avec des pendants d'oreilles et des mouches, me dit en bonne amie que ce n'était point la mode pour les hommes, et que je ferais bien mieux de m'habiller en femme. Sur une si grande autorité, je me fis couper les cheveux pour être mieux coiffée (Choisy 1995: 17).<sup>2</sup>

Before the exchange with Madame de La Fayette, Choisy uses masculine gender on 'constraint' [constrained] and 'ajusté' [literally: adjusted; accessorised]. Once her advice

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<sup>1</sup> In Chapter One I shall address the issue of which pronouns to use to refer to characters whose gender shifts.

<sup>2</sup> I was therefore constrained by no one and I abandoned myself to my inclination. It just so happened that Madame de La Fayette, who I saw fairly regularly, seeing me often accessorised with earrings and beauty spots, told me as a friend that this was not the fashion for men and that I would do better to dress as a woman. On such authority, I had my hair cut to be better coiffed (my translation).

has been taken, ‘coiffée’ [coiffed] is in the feminine. Choisy does not just dress as a woman, he becomes one in the language he uses. Choisy can write as both a man and a woman because French marks gender on adjectives, nouns and past participles as well as third person subject pronouns. The general premise is that those assigned the male sex at birth use masculine grammatical gender and those assigned female the feminine. Translating a text into English whose author breaks these rules is challenging, because English only marks gender on third person pronouns (he or she) and possessive adjectives (his or hers).

The specific translation conundrum which began this research – how does a translator deal with shifting linguistic gender identity when translating into a language, such as English, which does not use gender in the same way? – led to a much further reaching question: What does considering how to translate this shift, instead of putting it down as a regrettable but inevitable translation loss, reveal about the act of translation and/or about gender and how we present our gender identity (or identities) to the world? For the purpose of this thesis, we will describe protagonists who use shifting linguistic gender as trans.<sup>3</sup> And like the Abbé de Choisy, who becomes a woman and who I have argued elsewhere was transgender (see Rose 2017), any trans protagonist goes through such a process of becoming and unbecoming, something that is borne out by the above epigraphs which are taken from other texts which I label ‘trans’.<sup>4</sup> This constant becoming and unbecoming makes these protagonists undecidable. I use the term ‘undecidable’ in preference to those of ‘ambiguous’ or ‘undefined’ because it makes apparent the important readerly and textual nature of the problem I am addressing – it situates my work within the fields of literary criticism (see Bennett and Royle 2004) and postmodernism, and specifically aligns it with the work of Jacques Derrida (see Froneman 2010 and Dick and Wolfreys 2013).<sup>5</sup> The concept was first introduced by Kurt Gödel in 1931; it ‘proposed that in any formal system, that is, any system constructed by rules,

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<sup>3</sup> Throughout this thesis I take ‘trans’ to mean ‘transgender or transsexual’ and ‘to be inclusive of a wide variety of identities’ (GLAAD, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> For this study, I define a ‘transgender’ person as ‘a person whose identity does not conform unambiguously to conventions of male or female gender, but combines or moves between these’ (Oxford, 2017); transgender is therefore one type of trans identity.

<sup>5</sup> The work of Derrida and other theorists such as Deleuze and Benjamin will be quoted in English translation in this thesis in the interests of space. But these translations have been checked against a careful reading of the originals to ensure that no misunderstandings or mistaken interpretations occur.

there would be certain propositions that could neither be proved nor refuted by finite logical procedures, while still remaining meaningful. Such proposals were called “undecidables” (Froneman 2010: 294). According to Derrida, a reading of a text can only take place if undecidability is maintained, where there is an aporia, ‘where to make a choice is to cheat the text, cheat meaning’ (Dick and Wolfreys 2013: 300).

Any text is undecidable but I argue that trans texts are quintessentially undecidable texts. My main research question, therefore, asks how translation can deal with sexual and textual undecidability. I begin with the premise that undecidability is an inherent characteristic of texts written by or about trans people and that translation is the best place to explore and represent this undecidability. This undecidability, or becoming, is best conveyed in translation because translation is not a simple transfer of meaning from one text to another where the end result is fixed: instead, as Clive Scott (2014a: 14) has argued, ‘translation should be a process of continuous variation and becoming, which slips outside the mechanisms of choice, variant and intertext into those of metamorphosis’. I investigate the idea that this textual and sexual undecidability, which is revealed and celebrated in the translation of trans identity, is actually present in all texts and bodies, whether ‘trans’ or not.

In order to investigate undecidability and its translation in trans texts I decided to look at authors and texts that approached the question of being ‘trans’ and that of ‘becoming’ from a variety of perspectives. Having had my interest piqued by an early-modern memoir which necessitates an investigation into past conceptualisations of gender and which brings questions of whether ‘trans’ can be a ‘trans-historical’ phenomenon to the fore, it seemed like it might be fruitful to return here again. William Spurlin (2017: 173) asks: ‘are the very terms used for gender and sexual identities in one language necessarily reducible to equivalents in other languages, particularly when one works across historical periods [...]?’ One could make an argument that if trans is a trans-historical phenomenon there is no need to historicise early texts and I argue that early-modern texts can be labelled ‘trans’ (even though this category was not available to the writers themselves at the time); I see this as a new way of describing something that has existed for centuries but which has only recently been given a name. Furthermore, in this thesis, I look to Walter Benjamin’s (2012 [1924]) theory that translation is the source text’s afterlife to argue that translations affect their sources and therefore a queer

translation makes its source retrospectively queer. I do look at early-modern conceptualisations of gender, however, to argue that, while it has always been possible to be trans, what it means to be trans, and the consequences of publicly identifying as ‘different’, change over time. My early-modern texts are trans but I also acknowledge that this is perhaps a different kind of ‘trans’ (that all kinds of ‘trans’ are in some ways individual) and this acknowledgement is queer: ‘Attention to these very transgressions, these slippages of signification, these differences, when we work across languages and cultures is, in effect, a comparatively queer praxis’ (Spurlin 2017: 173).

It became clear that the early-modern period should be my starting point and not the main destination; to address such a variety of perspectives my study could not be limited in genre or time. Comparing source texts which are separated by centuries and literary conventions would allow me to take a broad view of how trans lives have been written and how trans writing has been received. I therefore set out to compile a list of trans texts; the only constraint I put on my search was that the texts be originally written in French, Spanish or English. These languages are sufficient for my purpose because English, French and Spanish are sex-based languages meaning that the link between nouns which take agreements and a semantic feature is biological sex (Corbett 2013b). Therefore, by analysing texts originally written in English, French and Spanish I can consider how trans writing works in three sex-based languages which all have gender but which use it to varying degrees. Despite often being seen as an ‘ungendered’ language, English has three sex-based grammatical genders in a pronominal gender system (Corbett 2013a). French and Spanish, on the other hand, have reduced to two grammatical genders from three (Corbett 2013a) but they show gender on more than pronouns, requiring agreement in number and gender on pronouns, adjectives, nouns and past participles.

Looking at one Germanic language and two Romance languages enables me to consider not only how texts whose writers use both feminine and masculine grammatical gender can be translated into English but also how texts whose writers conceal gender can be translated into French and Spanish. And French and Spanish are two languages which, according to Eleonor Federici and Vanessa Leonardi (2013: 1), have been at the forefront of Feminist Translation Studies which was born in Québec in the 1980s: ‘[Francophone] Canada and Spain seem to be two of the most important countries where

the problems inherent to translation and the category of gender have been most fruitfully discussed by eminent scholars'. Moreover, French and Spanish are languages whose users are beginning to explore ways to get around the gender binary: a 'gender-neutral' pronoun 'iel' does exist in French (see Gaspard 2016) and Spanish feminists have explored using an 'x' to replace the 'o' or the 'a' at the end of adjectives in written Spanish (see Reynolds 2016: 100; Concilio 2016: 466 and Morales 2018) and the '@' sign has also been used to similar effect (Pountain 2017: 104).

Taking this linguistic restriction into account, I obtained a selection of well-known and lesser-known texts, both autobiographical and fictional that were written over the course of four centuries: The memoir of the Chevalier/Chevalière d'Eon (unpublished 1785); the memoir of Herculine Barbin (1874, [republished 1978]); *Hermaphrodite* by Alain Roger (1977); *L'Enfant de Sable* [the sand child] by Tahar Ben Jelloun (1985); *Sphinx* by Anne Garréta (1986) and *Changer de sexe pour vivre enfin. Le long combat de Manon devenue Patrick* [changing sex to live at last. The long combat of Manon who became Patrick] by Patrick Verret (2005) which are all French. The memoir of Catalina de Erauso (unpublished 1646 [edited and published 1829, 1992 and 1995]); *Cobra* by Severo Sarduy (1981 [1972]) and *Tengo miedo torero* [literally: I am afraid bullfighter; translated as *My Tender Matador* (Silver 2005)] by Pedro Lemebel (2002) all in Spanish. And finally, a range of English language texts: *Orlando* by Virginia Woolf (1928); *Roberta Cowell's Story* by Roberta Cowell (1954);<sup>6</sup> *The Left Hand of Darkness* by Ursula K. Le Guin (1969); *Bone Dance* by Emma Bull (1991); *Written on the Body* by Jeanette Winterson (1992); *Sarah* by JT LeRoy (2000); *Middlesex* by Jeffrey Eugenides (2002); and *Annabel* by Kathleen Winter (2011).<sup>7</sup>

Because linguistic gender is concealed in the first person pronoun in English I decided to focus on texts that were written in the first person; this ruled out: *L'Enfant de*

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<sup>6</sup> This was translated into French by Antoine Gentien as *Comment je suis devenu(e) femme* [how I became a woman] in 1955. Gentien has already introduced an idea of ambiguity in the title by making the past participle both masculine and feminine with the use of '(e)'. That the idea of becoming is intrinsic to transsexual autobiographies can also be seen in Patrick Verret's title which keeps 'devenue' in the feminine.

<sup>7</sup> This list is by no means exhaustive and does not represent all the trans texts written in these languages. There is no clear definition of what constitutes a 'trans text' and so there may well be texts that I have included that others would not. Because this thesis centres on trans issues I decided to exclude texts that dealt with issues of sexuality whose characters did not question their gender (linguistically). This is not to say, of course, that trans texts do not deal with sexuality.

*Sable, Cobra, Tengo miedo torero, Orlando* and *Annabel*.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, it was important to include memoirs written by trans people themselves (even if they could not identify as trans in their own time) because, according to Catherine Baker (2017):

The stories of what it means to be trans are even more disproportionately told by cis creators, and keep coming round to the same tropes that fascinate people who aren't trans – while publishing pressures trans authors to keep writing in one limited format (memoirs about surgical transition, which not every trans person even wants or needs).

I have included stories written by cisgender authors as well – these texts, whether we like it or not, tend to reach a wider audience and, most importantly, are translated.<sup>9</sup>

My final texts were chosen very carefully to fit with a structure based on the translation of different kinds of trans identity. The three chapters in this thesis each examine two texts that are examples of transgender, intersex and agender writing; it was a coincidence that this final structure was more or less chronological and split more or less by genre (though as we shall discover, the genres of all my texts are not as clear-cut as would first appear), the second chapter being an anomaly in both cases. It is obviously paradoxical to state that trans people and the texts they write are undefinable, undecidable and queer (and that in this state they are at their most fertile) and then label them in this way, but dividing the texts by identity presciently reveals the role language plays in identity, especially different languages which conceal and reveal gender to differing degrees.<sup>10</sup> I also chose texts that would complement each other, as can be seen

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<sup>8</sup> It is a limitation of my focus on first-person texts that Hispanophone writers are not so equally considered as Anglophone or Francophone writers: there being only one Spanish source text in my final selection. Nevertheless, the English source texts I use have been translated into Spanish and these translations are closely analysed.

<sup>9</sup> A 'cis-gender' person is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as someone 'whose sense of personal identity and gender corresponds to his or her sex at birth' (Oxford 2017). Though this thesis aims to suggest that cisgender and transgender people are not as different as these terms would like to suggest because transgender people reveal such things as binary sex to be fictitious, I use it here as a contrast to 'transgender'.

<sup>10</sup> It is also worth noting that all terms or labels, and especially trans ones, are open to doubt. For Joseph Roth, when it comes to labelling people, 'there's always space between the term and what it applies to, because the world isn't so terribly literal. We are, however, because we confuse names and things' (Roth 2004: 73).

below, and this is why I left out *Bone Dance*, *The Left Hand of Darkness* (both of which would have come under ‘agender’ writing) and *Sarah* (which, while hard to categorise, would have fit best with ‘transgender’ writing) and why I compare the memoir of Herculine Barbin with *Middlesex*, dismissing Alain Roger’s *Hermaphrodite*.

I begin with the early-modern memoirs of the Chevalier d’Eon and Catalina de Erauso, two protagonists who appear to ‘become’ the ‘opposite’ sex permanently but whose writing belies this permanence. In the epigraph, the Chevalier/Chevalière d’Eon, supposedly ‘one of the most famous transvestites in history’ (Champagne, Ekstein and Kates 2001: ix), demonstrates how this process of movement is inevitable but also transgressive – he tells his eighteenth-century readers that he becomes despite himself, that he is powerless to resist crossing the gender divide, in order to lessen his transgression.<sup>11</sup> The lives of d’Eon and Erauso have been examined by researchers interested in history, autobiography, sexology and sexuality, among other things. They have not, however, been extensively discussed by translators or translation scholars; the translation challenges of these memoirs are discussed by their English translators, but with varying degrees of attention paid to the ‘trans’ aspect. These ‘trans’ aspects and the difficulties they present for translation into English will be discussed here where the two texts are brought together for the first time. Their juxtaposition reveals the importance of maintaining the ‘trans’ aspect in translations of texts whose writers specifically use writing to show their shifting gender identity when no other means were at their disposal. And, indeed, I argue that the creativity needed to overcome the linguistic challenges these texts present for translation only serves to enhance the original transgression these writers practised by writing ‘trans’ memoirs intended for public consumption.

I continue with the French memoir of Herculine Barbin, one of the most famous ‘hermaphrodites’ of the nineteenth century (Dreger 1998: 51). I compare it to the fictional *Middlesex* whose protagonist, Calliope, constantly becomes and unbcomes both male and female, both a son and a daughter, and this is shown in the name I use – masculine ‘Cal’ and feminine ‘Callie’ become ‘Cal/lie’. These two texts are rarely read together (see Holmes 2008 for an exception) despite the fact that *Middlesex* is a good fit for comparison with Barbin because Cal/lie is supposedly inspired to write after having

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<sup>11</sup> This attempt to lessen recrimination through fear can also be seen in Choisy’s work. In the excerpt I quote above, Choisy uses the authority of a woman, Madame de La Fayette, to justify his dressing as a woman.

read Barbin's memoir. Many critics and researchers ignore the undecidable aspect of both texts and struggle to label the protagonists as male or female rather than both or neither and my study not only offers a rare argument for undecidability in these and my other texts, but also offers a new angle on how to maintain it in translation. Barbin's life and memoir have been examined by many, including Judith Butler (2006), and *Middlesex* has received much critical attention which is unsurprising for a Pulitzer-prize-winning novel. However, neither their translations, nor the very specific issues they create for translation, have been profoundly probed thus far.<sup>12</sup> By providing such a probing here I aim to show that translation, and, more specifically, digital translation, is an appropriate medium through which to transmit texts which are made undecidable by, among other things, layers of both intertext and paratext because translations themselves are layers added to the source text.

I close with a chapter looking at *Sphinx* and *Written on the Body* whose narrators are neither male nor female and so whose 'becoming' brings up questions of identity and existence; the unnamed narrator of *Written on the Body* becomes 'less present' the more we try to pin down their sex. These are two texts which have been studied relatively extensively both in the original and, in the case of *Written on the Body*, in translation; again many readers ignore the undecidable aspects of the texts, looking to label the protagonists by clutching at textual clues. The English translation of *Sphinx* was only published in 2015 and so while many theorists and critics have considered the French text, far fewer focus on its translation. The materiality and 'constructedness' of the text and the body are highlighted by these highly unconventional texts which erase both sex and gender. I argue that because translation requires such close reading at the level of the text and because it brings up questions of linguistic gender, it is more illuminating to look at translations of agender texts than it is to look at the 'original' texts alone. By reading these texts alongside each other I am offering a new angle on the critical analysis of *Written on the Body*, a field which would appear to have become saturated with

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<sup>12</sup> Both have been looked at in articles – *Mes souvenirs* by C. J. Gomolka (2012: 63) who critiques the translation of what he believes to be 'one of the first instances of trans-subjectivization by linguistic gender manipulation'. *Middlesex* has been researched by Mirko Casagrande (2013: 113) who looks at its translation into Italian in order to 'put forward the parallelism between sex reassignment surgeries in intersex subjects and translations into target languages that require a grammatical gender in the pronouns and the suffixes that morphologically mark tenses and adjectives'. I shall analyse their contributions further in Chapter Two.

studies claiming to have deduced the narrator's gender identity, and am offering a new approach to translating undecidability.

I argue that despite the fact that some of these texts are well known and well researched they have all been undervalued as texts which tell the reader about, or help the reader to question, what it is to be trans and, by extension, what it is to be human. I am developing a way of reading these texts which not only counteracts this undervaluing but which restores value through translation. While trans people are still subject to violence and persecution, a discussion of how to educate people about trans lives and how to promote trans rights will always be important. This is especially true now amid increasing concerns that the Trump administration in the United States 'will take a different approach on the hotly contested issue of transgender rights, which many conservatives thought went too far under President Barack Obama' (Somashekhar and Balingit 2017). By exploring the relationship between translation and trans identity, I aim to bring trans writing and lives to the fore across cultures and to make a significant intervention in several different fields. My thesis has implications for the areas of translation theory and transgender theory as well as literary theory and gender theory. By bringing translation and trans-gender issues together I seek to influence the ways in which these areas of study take account of undecidable identity by shining a light on trans texts and bodies.

## 2. Theoretical context

### 2.1 (Trans)gender

Transgender theory is a relatively new field of study which only really gained traction as a 'cutting-edge topic' in the late 1990s (Stryker 2008: ix). According to Chris Beasley (2005), it takes a post-modern and queer approach, rejecting identity categories and calling for a more ambiguous embodiment of gender. The rejection of categories is queer because 'queer' can refer to 'the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender [...] aren't made (or *can't be* made) to signify monolithically' (Kosofsky Sedgwick 1994: 8).

With its queer background, transgender theory is concerned with questioning norms, with anything that ‘disrupts, denaturalizes, rearticulates, and makes visible the normative linkages we generally assume to exist between the biological specificity of the sexually differentiated human body [and] the social roles and statuses that a particular form of body is expected to occupy’ (Stryker 2006: 3). Transgender theory exposes the myth that one’s gender follows naturally from one’s sex. Sex and gender are different: ‘sex refers to the biological and reproductive classification of an organism – male or female [or intersex]. Gender [...] refers to the cultural aspect of sex – how we come to know ourselves as social beings that are male or female [or intersex]’ (Franklin 2012: 1).<sup>13</sup> Some trans people see their sex and gender as being totally separate while others do not and I am moving away from using ‘transgender’ as an umbrella term because not all transgender people view (the concept of) identity in the same way or have the same goals; transgender people do not necessarily view their (own sense of) identity in the same way as intersex and transsexual people even though ‘transgender’ can be used as a term to refer to all three. Indeed, one’s ‘gender identity’ or ‘how someone makes sense of the relationship between their self, their body and the gender system(s) of their social world’ (Baker 2017) does not even have to match their ‘gender expression’ or the clothes they wear and the things they do to present themselves to others (see Baker 2017). For these reasons I use ‘trans’ as an umbrella term to denote the people with whom transgender theory is concerned.

The disparity between people who identify as trans and yet who believe different things about their sex or gender reveals a central tension at work amongst trans people and activists. There is at once a usefulness and force in the appeal to essentialism, the idea that one feels one’s gender both spiritually and physically, and an equal usefulness to anti-essentialist arguments that permit gender mobility and play. That gender is not a core was an idea propounded as early as the 1940s by theorists such as Simone de Beauvoir (2009 [1949]: 295) who famously wrote that ‘one is not born, but rather becomes a woman’. This idea was taken up by Judith Butler (2006: xv-xvi) who demonstrated in a 1999 preface included in the 2006 Routledge Classics edition of *Gender Trouble* that gender is not essential:

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<sup>13</sup> I have inserted the possibility of intersexuality into the quotation to demonstrate that the concept of two ‘natural’ sexes is flawed, something I shall explore in my second chapter.

The view that gender is performative sought to show that what we take to be an internal essence of gender is manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylization of the body. In this way, it showed that what we take to be an ‘internal’ feature of ourselves is one that we anticipate and produce through certain bodily acts.

Butler’s (2006: 10) innovation, however, was the argument that sex is also a construct, that there is no distinction between sex and gender or nature and culture: ‘gender ought not to be conceived merely as the cultural inscription of meaning on a pre-given sex (a juridical conception); gender must also designate the very apparatus of production whereby the sexes themselves are established’. If both sex and gender are perceived as discursive products of society, then being male or female is as complicated as being masculine or feminine. Butler claims that trans people prove the performativity of gender (and intersex people prove the performativity of sex) though she is not saying that all gender is drag; drag is an example of performativity not a model for it (Butler 1994: 32). In her 2004 work *Undoing Gender*, Butler argues that we should take this revelation and use it to question all gender. Butler (2004c: 27-28) claims that if trans people were seen as normal, the instability of all gender would be exposed and norms would become unsettled: ‘when the unreal lays claim to reality, or enters into its domain, something other than a simple assimilation into prevailing norms can and does take place. The norms themselves can become rattled, display their instability, and become open to resignification’. Judith Halberstam (2005: 57-58) also believes that ‘cisgender’ identities are just as strange as ‘transgender’ ones: ‘Eccentric, double, duplicitous, deceptive, odd, self-hating: all of these judgements swirl around [...] the self-defined transgender person, as if other lives – gender normative lives – were not odd, nor duplicitous, not doubled and contradictory at every turn’. In this view trans people and cis people all struggle with gender and this suggests that gender is not essential, because it is not easy to do. For Butler (2006), gender is something we ‘do’ not something we are and, as Wilchins (2002a: 24) says, ‘if gender is a doing and a reading of that doing, a call-and-response that must be continually done and redone, then it’s also unstable [...]. Maybe universal and binary genders are not so inevitable after all’.

Many trans people, however, want to ‘pass’ as men and women and do not wish to draw attention to their ‘transness’. While Butler’s work repudiated the idea of a core, some transsexuals believe that they were ‘born in the wrong body’ (Wilchins 2002a: 23-24) and that sex reassignment realigns their outer appearance with their inner ‘core’. We cannot entirely do without essentialist thought – as Diana Fuss (1989: 104) says: ‘fictions of identity, importantly, are no less powerful for being fictions’. A gender core may be a fiction but it is too powerful, too entrenched in many people’s consciousness, for it to be wholly denied out of hand. Both sides of the essentialist/constructivist argument must be kept open:

While there are certainly rhetorical and political grounds on which it may make sense to choose at a given moment between articulating, for instance, essentialist and constructivist [...] accounts of gay identity, there are, with equal certainty, rhetorical and political grounds for underwriting continuously the legitimacy of both accounts. (Kosofsky Sedgwick 2008: 27)

Furthermore, Fuss (1989: xi-xii) suggests that we could learn something from essentialism: ‘we can also hear echoing from the corners of the debates on essentialism renewed interest in its possibilities and potential usages, sounds which articulate themselves [...] in the form of calls to “risk” or “dare” essentialism’. Rather than denying essentialism we can question it – the questioning of the core becomes even more radical because so many believe it to be ‘sacrosanct’; as Fuss (1989: xii) states, ‘essentialism can be deployed effectively in the service of both idealist and materialist, progressive and reactionary, mythologizing and resistive discourses’. Constructionism and essentialism are not mutually opposing categories, indeed, even though constructionism is based on the social and essentialism on the natural, the social can be essentialist and the natural constructionist (see Fuss 1989: 4-6) (the prime example being doctors assigning babies with ‘a gender’ based only on the genitals they can ‘see’).

Essentialism can be deployed effectively in the interests of a group; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988: 13) sees some value in the concept of ‘a strategic use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest’ in relation to the

grouping together of the ‘subaltern’. It is productive to believe, using Antonio Gramsci’s Marxist notion, that there can be an “ideologically *coherent*”, “spontaneous philosophy of the multitude” (Spivak 1988: 14), that one can appeal to the collective consciousness of a group. To group people by class or gender is not irrational, even if there are many differences among the same people in one group; the unification of a group is used to undo the power wielded by that very unification, to reveal that power as illusory:

Class-consciousness on the *descriptive* level is itself a strategic and artificial rallying awareness which, on the *transformative* level, seeks to destroy the mechanics which come to construct the outlines of the very class of which a collective consciousness has been situationally developed. (Spivak 1988: 14)

Strategic essentialism, for example, is useful in the fight for the visibility of women in language carried out by Francophone feminists in particular (see Yaguello 2002, de Lotbinière-Harwood 1991). This is despite the fact that usually trying to appeal to the concept of ‘women’ as a whole is decried as impossible because all women are different. Feminists need a concept of woman as essential in order to claim an autonomous female voice (see Fuss 1989: 2). I am claiming an autonomous trans voice here in order to bring trans issues to the fore, but I am also acknowledging the heteroglossic nature of that voice, given the evidence that many trans people do not see eye to eye on many vital issues surrounding what it means to be trans.

My aim is not to set up a debate between trans people, or to claim that those who do draw attention to their transness are more transgressive and are therefore more deserving of theoretical attention. And neither was this Butler’s aim; *Gender Trouble* was not arguing that we can pick and choose what gender we will ‘do’ on a daily basis, that being trans is a conscious choice (Butler 2014), despite many mistakenly enlisting it to argue for precisely that (see Butler 1994 and Prosser 2006). The revelation that gender is not determined by biology, by genitals or chromosomes, shows that, in reality, ‘individuals, not social institutions, have the authority over what their gender is’ (Baker 2017). Gender is not binary; acknowledging this does not preclude the idea that somebody ‘knows’ they are a woman even if they were assigned the male sex at birth.

And it is the revelation that gender does not follow from sex, that it is not determined by genitals, which makes it possible for these seemingly incompatible positions to co-exist.

For Butler (2014, n.p.), an identity politics is necessary because ‘sometimes we do need a language that refers to a basic, fundamental, enduring, and necessary dimension of who we are’. Her new ideas suggest that if somebody wants to see their gender as essential, this would not be ‘wrong’ but neither would it be ‘wrong’ to conceive of one’s gender as fluid. On this point I follow Butler’s (2014, n.p.) proclamation:

No matter whether one feels one’s gendered and sexed reality to be firmly fixed or less so, every person should have the right to determine the legal and linguistic terms of their embodied lives. So whether one wants to be free to live out a ‘hard-wired’ sense of sex or a more fluid sense of gender is less important than the right to be free to live it out, without discrimination, harassment, injury, pathologization or criminalization – and with full institutional and community support.

This view is important in a world where trans people experience their identities in very varied ways. What I wish to take from Butler’s views on trans identity and the foregoing discussion of the paradox of essentialism is that these different, yet equally valid, positions on sex and gender can be explored through trans literature and the representation of transness in writing. Furthermore, the notion of a ‘core’, of originality, of passing and of ‘interpreting’ meaning (of making assumptions based on what we ‘see’, be that a body or a text) are all notions that concern translation scholars. Gender is stable yet fluid, dichotomous yet multiple, conservative yet radical and, because of these contradictions, is queer. Translation is all of these things too, and it is the juxtaposition of trans embodiment and translation that helps us to see that translation is fluid, multiple, radical and queer. In transgenderism, something initially taken as ‘x’ experiences itself as ‘y’ and similarly in translation, a text ‘x’ becomes expressed as ‘y’. The ‘trans’ of translation and transness is this crossing between ‘x’ and ‘y’ and it is the translator’s job to both express ‘x’ as ‘y’ textually (remembering that ‘y’ can never be the same as ‘x’) and, in translating transness itself, to respect the fact that ‘x’ has become ‘y’ sexually (acknowledging the fact that ‘y’ might go back to ‘x’ or even become ‘z’).

## 2.2 Translation

Translation studies has been concerned with the translation of gender for many decades now but this has largely been in relation to the translation of women and to the figuration of the translator (see Simon 1996; von Flotow 1997, 2011, 2013; de Lotbinière-Harwood 1991; Federici and Leonardi 2013; Castro and Ergun 2017). Both translation and women have traditionally been seen as secondary, derivative and inferior to men and original writing: for Lori Chamberlain (2012: 254) there is a gendered distinction between writing and translation, the former is ‘original and “masculine”, the other [...] derivative and “feminine”’ (see also Simon 1996: 1). Though while the translation is female, the translator, in their role as ‘usurper of the author’ is ‘figured as male, the text itself is figured as a female whose chastity must be protected’ (Chamberlain 2012: 256). In this view, masculinity is authoritative and active, femininity is submissive and passive; by extension, women cannot be translators. Feminist translators have striven for women’s visibility as translators and ‘gender awareness coupled with translation has brought about a revision of the normally invisible role a translator plays’ (von Flotow 1997: 3).

While translation was the woman/daughter to original writing’s man/father (Chamberlain 2012), it was also seen as the ‘redressing of a body of meaning in the clothes of another language’ (Van Wyke 2010: 18). This is a pertinent metaphor for my particular study. James St. André (2010a) shows that translation has long been conceptualised in terms of gender and of clothing because both translation and cross-dressing have been seen as the act of changing an external appearance to (mis)represent an internal ‘truth’. A cross-dresser covers and conceals their physical body with clothing and, according to this metaphor, a translation covers and conceals the original textual body with a new text. In the eighteenth century, translation was often compared to the idea of clothing the source author. In the 1760s Johan Gottfried Herder (1992: 74) described how the French would translate Homer who ‘must enter France as a captive and dress according to their fashion, so as not to offend their eyes [...]. He has let them take his venerable beard and his old simple clothes away from him’. According to Herder (1992: 74), German translators want to ‘see [Homer] the way he is’. In 1790, Alexander Fraser Tytler (1992: 130) wrote that a translator must ‘be ever so thoroughly master of

the sense of his author' because if the translator is not 'he will present him through a distorting medium, or exhibit him often in a garb that is unsuitable to his character'.

According to St. André (2010a: 9), 'the body/clothes metaphor is rooted in a Socratic quest for the truth as something which is always concealed under layers of representation'. Translation has long grappled with this notion of a 'core' meaning at the centre of the text – for centuries it was believed that the translator should uncover the essential core that the author created for the text and then re-cover it in a new language; 'the dress must become new; what is in it must be kept' (von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1992: 168), and this must be done while usurping the author but at the same time preserving 'his' character. When it proves impossible to reproduce the text's core, as it always does, the translator is accused of betraying the source text. In 1549, Joachim du Bellay (1992: 22) wondered: 'what shall I say about those who really deserve to be called traitors [...] since they betray the authors they try to make known, robbing them of their glory'. In 1683, Pierre Daniel Huet (1992: 88) was also of the opinion that a translation that departs from the original is a deception: 'Who would not burn with anger when he feels that his face has been ill represented? [...] an adulterated translation is most like [...] a woman's face plastered with cosmetics'. This quotation reveals the extent to which translation has been linked to women and, with its misogynistic tones, the extent to which both have been maligned over the centuries. Not only is translation deceitful like a woman (cf. the common trope of the *belles infidèles* which expressed the 'concerns of the [seventeenth century] as regards faithfulness and property, the man with regard to the woman and the author with regard to the original text' (Godayol 2013: 100)) but it is also, in both the translation-as-betrayal and translation-as-clothing metaphors, a concealing or masking of the 'truth' behind layers.

The fact that translation is always a betrayal demonstrates that meaning is not inherently there in the text waiting to be discovered. Roland Barthes's (1977) notion of the 'death of the author', was largely taken to mean that meaning is in the hands of the reader, that the reader usurps the author's place as the authority on the text's meanings. However, for Barthes the 'reader' is the place in which all of a text's multiple meanings gather (Connors 2010: 77). What Barthes's theory does not take into account is the fact that readers do select meanings for a text from the multiple choices available. We cannot follow every thread and so sacrifice the ones we do not pursue: 'writing does not simply

weave several threads into a single term in such a way that one might end up unravelling all the “contents” just by pulling a few strings’ (Derrida 2004: 384); the reader can never unravel the whole text but only the meanings which emerge from the strings they choose to pull. Taking it one step further than Barthes does, we can see that ‘if signifiers do point to other, absent, signifiers, then it follows that a text is a force-field which itself pushes some meanings to the fore by excluding others from its terrain’ (Connors 2010: 77).

For Derrida (2001a: 8), meaning is always relational but also always dynamic, it does not inhere in single units but arises from this dynamism: meanings jostle with each other, ‘preventing each other’s emergence’ but ‘provoking each other too, unforeseeably’. Any reading of a text can ‘uncover’ the author’s intention but it can also ‘uncover’ elements that are in tension with that intention (see Connors 2010) and this is how the author can be both alive and dead. There is a tension between play and presence: ‘Play is the disruption of presence. The presence of an element is always a signifying and substitutive reference inscribed in a system of differences and the movement of a chain’ (Derrida 2001a: 369). The notion of innumerable paths and a play of identity is formalised by Derrida as ‘*différance*’ (see Glendinning 2011: 55). Where ‘*différance*’ is both ‘to differ’ and ‘to defer’, where a word’s many meanings are always out of reach (see Johnson 2004: ix). It is not simply that one word never has only one meaning, it is that each different meaning a word could have can itself be understood in various ways. Derrida differentiates Barthes’s (1970) notion of polysemy from his own concept of dissemination because polysemy ‘always puts out its multiplicities and variations within the horizon, at least, of some integral reading which contains no absolute rift, no senseless deviation – the horizon of the final parousia of meaning at last deciphered, revealed’ (Derrida 2004: 384). Dissemination, on the other hand, ‘endlessly opens up a *snag* in writing that can no longer be mended, a spot where neither meaning, however plural, nor *any form of presence* can pin/pen down [a grapher] the trace’ (Derrida 2004: 22). Dissemination entails countless possible paths of meaning but these paths, while always present, can never all be ‘interpreted’ by one reader and one meaning is made at the expense of these countless others.

There is a difficulty with the concept of ‘interpretation’ which goes back to the idea of ‘essentialism’ – it suggests that there is something essential in a text to be perceived and then found by the reader, that what we interpret is the core. As Clive Scott

(2006: 34) says, ‘it is not a text we translate, so much as a reading of a text, not a reading as in “interpretation”, but a reading as in “ongoing psycho-physiological, psycho-perceptual relationship”’. Scott makes recourse to Barthes’s concepts of ‘lisibilité’ and ‘scriptibilité’, or work that is ‘readerly’ (where the author produces a text to be passively read by the reader) and ‘writerly’ (where the author writes a text to be actively produced by the reader) (Barthes 1974: 4), to show how ‘reading-as-psycho-physiological-relationship generates lisibilité [and that] translation endeavours to transform the ST [Source Text] as “lisible” into the ST as “scriptible”’ (Scott 2006: 35).

However, just as we need the concept of an essential core for some types of gender identity, we need the concept of interpretation. According to Nietzsche, we need interpretation precisely because there is no ‘truth’. He claims that ‘truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are’ (Nietzsche 1967: 47); truth only exists because society agrees upon what is true, things in themselves are not inherently ‘true’. Everything has to be an interpretation: ‘against that positivism which stops before phenomena, saying “there are only facts”, I should say: no, it is precisely facts that do not exist, only *interpretations*’ (Nietzsche 1967: 458). There are no truths because there are no originals. Nietzsche (1967: 46) uses leaves to demonstrate this:

No leaf ever wholly equals another, and the concept ‘leaf’ is formed through an arbitrary abstraction from these individual differences, through forgetting the distinctness; and now it gives rise to the idea that in nature there might be something besides the leaves which would be ‘leaf’ – some kind of original form after which all leaves have been woven.

In this thesis I intend to demonstrate that the same applies to both texts and bodies.

### 2.3 Transgender translation

Having explored the tenets of Transgender and Translation Studies that have influenced my research, I shall now bring together the two contexts to demonstrate how the two fields have much in common and how a combination of the two undermines the

dominant ideology surrounding ‘original’ writing and ‘original’ gender. The work of Feminist Translation Studies is by no means over, as Luise von Flotow (2013: 163) states: ‘This topic will not go away’. Questions are still being asked about women in translation, women as translators and women as authors as can be seen from collections such as *Bridging the Gap between Theory and Practice in Gender and Translation Studies* (2013) which recognises and interrogates a gap between theory and practice in the translation of gender and a dearth of research into gender in translation in Italy (Federici and Leonardi 2013: 1); and Olga Castro and Emek Ergun’s *Feminist Translation Studies: Local and Transnational Perspectives* (2017) which situates feminist translation as political activism. However, recent work on the topic of gender and translation has also turned its attention towards the ‘other genders, or perhaps other gender positions, that humans can be seen to enjoy, perform, choose, interchange, and translate’ (von Flotow 2013: 164); indeed Federici and Leonardi’s volume has two chapters (Casagranda 2013 and Leonardi 2013) dedicated to ‘trans’ texts. I am following this new turn which moves away from, but which is in many ways parallel to, feminist translation theory by looking at the translation of trans-gender. In order to do this I am drawing on the feminist translation theories that have prepared this ground as well as on poststructuralist philosophy and literary criticism.

In 2010, St. André (2010b: 276) suggested a metaphor for translation inspired by cross-dressing: ‘translation as cross-identity performance’. He states that with this metaphor our knowledge of the cross-identifying performer is put into question along with the translator’s knowledge of the source text. He also compares the skills needed to mimic a gender performance to the skills needed to mimic the performance of a text (St André 2010b: 281). One of the most important points of this thesis is that translation and trans identity can learn from each other in several different ways and what St André’s metaphor throws into sharp relief is that translation and the trans person have traditionally had to hide but that in revealing themselves they show that the things they masquerade as (‘normal’ gender and ‘original’ writing) are themselves masquerades. Trans people reveal the performative aspect of all gender while they sometimes attempt to pass as cisgender in heteronormative surroundings and translations reveal the performative aspect of all writing while sometimes attempting to pass as original writing in literary surroundings.

In 2011 von Flotow (2011: 3) claimed that 'the much discussed performative aspects of gender, which would seem to fit nicely with the performative aspects of translation, have hardly been explored or developed'. And she stands by this position in 2013 stating that 'while the theorizing around gender continues to be intense and highly political, actual studies of its impact in and upon translation in many different societies still needs to be explored and studied' (von Flotow 2013: 164). It is true that the subject of the transgender writer or translator or protagonist has yet to fully emerge within Translation Studies. A recent notable exception is the 2016 special translation issue of the journal *Transgender Studies Quarterly* (TSQ). Two collections on Queer translation published by Routledge for their Advances in Translation and Interpreting Studies series also followed in 2017: *Queer in Translation* (Epstein and Gillett 2017) and *Queering Translation, Translating the Queer* (Baer and Kaindl 2017). As if to demonstrate the sense of urgency currently surrounding studies in this field the latter was published only seven months after the former. These texts complement my work and my work also complements these texts (I contributed articles to both the *TSQ* edition (Rose, E. 2016) and to *Queer in Translation* (Rose 2017)).

Some of the questions I am asking here are beginning to be asked all over the world. The special issue of *TSQ*, entitled 'Translating Transgender', published in November 2016 asks: 'What do transgender subjectivities – in and around language – contribute to our knowledge of translation practice?' (Gramling and Dutta 2016: 339) and 'What particular contingencies attend the task of translating texts that themselves narrate transgender subjectivities?' (Gramling and Dutta 2016: 347). I ask similar questions here as well: what can being trans or writing a trans text tell us about the act of writing or the act of translation? And what can the act of translation tell us about being trans or about being human? My thesis is born in the thick of a proliferating discussion of queer and trans identity in translation and is therefore a timely addition to the field. And what it brings to the field is a close examination of trans texts which not only allows us to consider trans lives, and the translation of trans lives, more fruitfully, but it also allows us to expose the gender masquerade (that we all have one and that it is always only one of two choices) and the masquerade of original writing (that writers are in control of their texts and originate all the words and ideas they use).

That the fit between translation and gender as performative is taking hold in studies that see translation as a queer practice is confirmed by B.J. Epstein and Robert Gillett (2017: 1), editors of *Queer in Translation*:

On a larger theoretical level, notions of translation as a performative practice, as an imitation with at best tenuous links to the idea of an original, as an indefinite deferral of meaning, but also as a site of othering, hegemony and subalternity, mark it out as always already queer and as an appropriate metaphor for the exploration of queerness itself.<sup>14</sup>

As we have seen in section 2.2, I am also concerned with how the notion of originality can be challenged in both translation and transgender studies. Sara Salih (2004: 93) states that ‘subversive performances such as parody and drag reveal ontological inner depths and gender cores as regulatory fictions’; translation can also be seen as a subversive performance which emphasises the fiction of an ‘original’ text or a ‘genius’ author. Just as the concepts of a ‘core’ and of ‘interpretation’ are complicated, so too is that of ‘originality’. ‘Original’ can ‘mean “from the beginning, former, ancient” [...] and it can mean “fresh, new, novel, unexpected”’ (Pope 2005: 57). According to Rob Pope (2005: 58), ‘grasping the distinctions *and* connections between these two senses is crucial if there is to be an understanding of creativity that is in itself both “old” and “new”’. The source text is the origin (the beginning) for the translation but that translation can still originate something in its own right (Pope 2005: 59). Furthermore, the source text’s supposed originality (in the sense of innovation) cannot spring from nothing: “Invention”, then, is hardly ever a making-up entirely from scratch. It is the “coming-in” and in effect the “coming-together” of potentialities already available’ (Pope 2005: 64). Translation is creative where ‘creative’ means to celebrate these potentialities.

Translation as a creative act entails more than a simple transfer of meaning: ‘the translated text no longer forms a dependency on the original text, but actually transforms it, subverting radically the binary between original and copy. This [...] calls attention to the *performativity* of translation’ (Spurlin 2014: 206). Or put another way, the

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<sup>14</sup> See also Concilio (2016: 463) for a discussion of transgender studies, translation and originality.

performativity of both gender and translation lead us to reconsider the idea of an ‘original’ text or body. As we saw in section 2.1, for Butler (2004a: 127), gender is ‘*a kind of imitation for which there is no original*; in fact, it is a kind of imitation that produces the very notion of the original as an *effect* and consequence of the imitation itself’. The trans person reveals that gender is a product of previous acts which it needs to stay alive. This idea can be directly linked to translation and to Walter Benjamin’s (2012 [1924]: 76) ideas on the afterlife of translation: that the translation continues the life of the source text. For Scott, the purpose of translation is not to clarify a difficult foreign text for a new reader but to add to the source text’s journey through time and that is why translation should be multiple. The source text is the ‘avant-texte’ and ‘translation is not an act of preservation (of a definitive text) nor an act of recall (of a text that inevitably belongs to the past), but an act of forward propulsion and of reimagination’ (Scott 2014a: 52). It is through acts of translation that the ‘original’ text remains available, but, as we have seen in section 2.2, the idea of the original is a myth; translation is not a copy of an original but a copy of a text which is also copied from former texts. Derrida (2001b: 199) takes the idea of translation as both prolonged life and life after death for the source text one step further:

Doesn’t it guarantee these two survivals by losing the flesh during a process of conversion [*change*]? By elevating the signifier to its meaning or value, all the while preserving the mournful and debt-laden memory of the singular body, the first body, the unique body that translation thus elevates, preserves and negates [*relève*]?

Derrida’s use of the body metaphor for translation demonstrates that, conceptually, translation and the body are linked as multiple and mobile. A recurring theme of this thesis will be the haunting of the text, and especially translation, by earlier texts and the haunting of the body, and especially the trans body, by earlier bodies. Many trans people may reject this comparison, where the trans body *preserves* and negates the ‘first’ body when they wish only to negate it, but to be openly trans is to acknowledge that something, no matter how unwanted, came before. I will discuss further in Chapter Three how texts which remove gender have an *Aufhebung* of gender where gender is, as

with Derrida's notion of *relève*, preserved and deleted.<sup>15</sup> For Hegel (2010: 80), 'becoming is the unseparatedness of being and nothing [...] being and nothing are each unseparated from its other, *each is not*. In this unity, therefore, *they are*, but as vanishing, only as sublated'. 'To sublate' is the English translation of the German 'aufheben' which 'has a twofold meaning in the language: it equally means "to keep", "to 'preserve'", and "to cause to cease", "to put an end to" (Hegel 2010: 81-82). Being and becoming is contradictory and never pure. Like the 'original' that is both old and new in Pope's definition, the trans body, too, is both old and new; indeed, to be trans is to be in between. The earlier versions are not lost, they are the ghosts that make the text and the body what they are and they guarantee that the text and the body are in a constant evolution of becoming and unbecoming.

The notions of becoming and unbecoming are taken from Gilles Deleuze who explains his notion of becoming using Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (2010 [1865]); Alice, who takes potions to both grow and shrink, is 'not bigger and smaller at the same time. She is larger now; she was smaller before. But it is at the same moment that one becomes larger than one was and smaller than one becomes' (Deleuze 1990: 3). For Deleuze (1990: 3):

This is the simultaneity of a becoming whose characteristic is to elude the present, becoming does not tolerate the separation or the distinction of before and after, or of past and future. It pertains to the essence of becoming to move and to pull in both directions at once: Alice does not grow without shrinking and vice versa.

Deleuze looks to Plato to explain this dualism which is 'a subterranean dualism between that which receives the action of the Idea and that which eludes this action. It is not the distinction between the Model and the copy but rather between copies and simulacra' (Deleuze 1990: 4). Pure becoming 'contests both model and copy at once' (Deleuze 1990:

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<sup>15</sup> Whilst I link them here because they are both notions which are relevant for my study, Derrida's notion of *relève* and Hegel's *Aufhebung* are not the same: 'Hegel sets out the immanent self-undermining of pure being, whereas Derrida points to, among many other things, the play of unresolvable differences that (he thinks) make possible and render impossible and idea of pure becoming [...] The two philosophers do, however, share a common belief that the idea of pure being is problematic' (Houlgate 2006: 303).

4). That there is no model (or original) and no copy, but that both are simply two 'ends' (ends which are never finished or finite) of the same process of becoming, is how I see the relationship between source text and target text or the different gender identities that can be held by the same person.

What is important for my study is that Deleuze rejects binary terms:

Life is the protraction of matter, as matter is the contraction of life. Mind and matter, life and matter, rather than binary terms, are different degrees of duration, different tensions, modes of relaxation or contraction, neither opposed nor continuous – different nuances, different actualisations of one and the same, that is, ever differing, internally and externally differing duration. (Grosz 2005: 7)

The conception of binary terms as different actualisations of one and the same duration could be applied to the notions of 'cisgender' and 'transgender' and of 'writing' and 'translation', all four made up of continuous acts or performances and therefore undecidable. Deleuze is influenced by Henri Bergson whose method of 'intuition' works 'to restore the complexity of undecidability to the real. It reveals and makes explicit the fine threads within and between objects (including living beings) that always makes them more than themselves, always propels them in a mode of becoming' (Grosz 2005: 9). The complexity of undecidability can be restored through language because 'it is language which fixes the limits [...] but it is language as well which transcends the limits and restores them to the infinite equivalence of an unlimited becoming' (Deleuze 1990: 4). Here I am examining how people who experience an 'unlimited becoming' can articulate this state of movement, this undecidability, through language.

My work branches away from other studies which look at queer translation or which look at being trans because it draws on concepts such as Deleuze's notion of becoming or on Derrida's notion of *différance* to talk about trans translation. While I have shown that this thesis inserts itself into a field of growing work which investigates the similarities between translation theory and queer or transgender theory, it comes into its own in my drawing on such a variety of theories traditionally used to study transgender identity or literature, but not both. Many of the theories I use to carry out my

investigations have not been applied to literature because they are sociological and, as such, deal with actual experience. By using cutting-edge social theory I am showing that there is a truth in fiction, that literature is a fruitful place to look for understandings of certain concepts or identities because ‘books make sense of life’ (Barnes 2012: 168); authors use language to explain or explore the world as it is or could be. Each of my chapters tackles a different type of trans identity and, as I shall explain in section 4, each chapter is linked to a different literary form which I take as inspiration for a translation method.

One of the challenges facing translators who translate trans writers or narrators who deliberately play with linguistic gender is to deal with this play on a semantic level. However, looking at transgender texts through the lens of literary theory gives me the opportunity to deal with this shifting gender on a much wider level. It allows me to think about more than just how to translate Spanish words that end in an ‘a’ instead of an ‘o’ or French words that have an extra ‘e’ in the feminine. It is an opportunity to find not just a linguistic solution to these texts but also an extra-linguistic translation process that can highlight the relation between literary form and the questioning of gender identity that has burgeoned in the twenty-first century: ‘identity is the hot issue of our age’ but at the same time ‘your identity is, we keep being told, whatever you want it to be’ (Freeman 2017) and, as I have already intimated, ‘nowhere is the discussion about identity more passionately felt than within the transgender movement’ (Freeman 2017). Finding a solution that goes beyond language is also a way to think about how:

The meanings negotiated in translation are not simply embodied in textual structures alone, but similar to Judith Butler’s theory of gender performativity (where gender is not located on the body), these meanings are located culturally or transculturally, always missing the mark of the original whilst simultaneously calling it into question. (Spurlin 2017: 176)

Gender identity is a fast-paced field of enquiry: according to Jemima Lewis (2016), ‘the rules of gender-fluidity have been laid down incredibly fast, and have already calcified into a set of unchallengeable truths. You are how you feel. Gender identity is a self-realisable truth’. As a reaction against this, some argue we now live in a world where

there is too much focus on gender and on labels. In an article entitled 'Gender – good for nothing', Lionel Shriver (2016) believes that 'our preoccupation with gender identity is a cultural step backwards'. However, in a rebuttal of Shriver's article, Abigail Maxwell (2016) states that 'identities give us licence to become who we are'. As discussed in section 2.1, the essentialist/anti-essentialist debate and whether identity is a useful concept is something that is explored by gender theory, transgender theory and queer theory. Queer theory does not reject identity or essentialism, instead, to use Fuss's (1989: xi-xii) term, it 'risks' it: queer 'signifies the messiness of identity, the fact that desire and thus desiring subjects cannot be placed into discrete identity categories, which remain static for the duration of people's lives' (Giffney 2009: 2). These theories do not just explore what it means to be trans or queer, they also question what it means to be human, and literature does the same.

### 3. Methodology

A fair amount of work I have done already in this introduction has been establishing the key terms of my study, such as undecidability – a concept that is crucial to my methodology. Here I discuss this methodology in more detail.

In order to bring trans studies and literature together my thesis is structured around a framework of comparative analysis focusing on six source texts and their translations. Before one can consider the 'solution' to the challenge of translating trans texts with undecidable authors and/or protagonists one must first prove that the texts are trans and that their authors and/or protagonists are undecidable. Close reading allows me to see the undecidability which I argue is inherent in these texts. This is something that every translator does, they are 'by necessity, a slow reader and a rereader' (Andrews 2014: ix). According to Chris Andrews (2014: ix), the translator has a special perspective on any text they are translating because they pay attention to the whole of the text and they 'are sometimes haunted by quiet places in a narrative that may seem unremarkable both to general readers, absorbed in the story, and to academic critics'. Close textual analysis is especially important for these texts which have all been translated before because, as can be seen in my title, they all benefit from a '(re)reading',

this (re)reading gives the texts back their undecidability and the idea that this undecidability comes from the reader is important. According to Scott (2014a: 50), we must imagine the source text 'as something living into its own multiplicity and undecidability. [It] does not already have this multiplicity; it is invested with a multiplicity by its reader/translator, and this in turn generates an increasing undecidability'. Following Scott's notion of the text as multiple, then, the translator who attempts to put down a definitive version of a text on paper works to immobilise the text and undo the text's undecidability. I would argue that the translator who attempts to put down a definitive version of a trans person does the same in that they immobilise the body and undo the body's undecidability.

The immobilisation of both the body and the text can be out-witted with a kind of translation 'whose materials and techniques keep, or set, the text in motion' (Scott 2014a: 50). Experimental techniques can achieve this mobility; through experimental translation the protagonists of these source texts can be seen as being in a perpetual process of becoming, of movement, of self-differentiation (Scott 2014a: 217). With experimental translation we can suggest that the text and the body are multiple, are old and new because we can follow the 'vision of creativity that embraces radical forms of *re*-creation and includes actively engaged kinds of *re*-vision, *re*-membering and *re*-familiarisation' (Pope 2005: xvii). Because of my focus on experiment and creativity, I am not necessarily suggesting translation methods which could be adopted for the translation of every trans narrative, or which would be readily accepted by many publishers. My aim, instead, is to encourage the translator-reader to think about how texts are read and how meaning is derived – the text and the trans identity within are written anew with every reading. This makes any translation and any reading of that translation one layer in the manifold layers that make up any body of text or any body in text. This, in turn, means that any one translation never has to be a definitive representation of one text or one body, not least because there is no 'one' text or body to be represented.

I will carry out multiple experiments in order to show that the body and the text are multiple and these trans texts and bodies are the perfect variables for this experimentation because they are, in and of themselves, variable. Trans bodies are variable because they are queer. Queer theory itself, like translation theory, is

interdisciplinary theory; it demonstrates that disciplinary boundaries are often ‘pasted across objects which are quite indifferent to a bureaucratic division between disciplines’ (Fitzgerald and Callard 2014: 23). However, the fact that both queer theory and translation theory are mutable and outward-looking suggests an interdisciplinary approach might not be most appropriate for this thesis. Interdisciplinarity involves ‘importing the methods of one field into another’ (Stockwell 2009: 27), but do we want to merely import the methods of queer theory into translation theory?

When pairing translation studies with gender studies the most common approach is currently interdisciplinary, as Olga Castro (2013: 7) notes: ‘what most current approaches to gender and translation share is a common interest in scrutinizing how an interdisciplinary understanding of gender conceptualisations can be fostered in relation to translation’. However, reflecting on the ways neuroscience can intersect with the social sciences and the humanities, Des Fitzgerald and Felicity Callard (2014: 6) believe that the rhetoric of inter[disciplinarity] ought to give way to an entanglement based around the idea of experiment as a ‘space of intervention’. For their part, Fitzgerald and Callard (2014: 17) specifically ‘direct attention to spaces of experimentation in which the intersections between scientific “objects”, instruments [...] and experimenters still quiver with uncertainty’.

To acknowledge this uncertainty my study moves beyond inter-disciplinarity and even multi-disciplinarity (which ‘crosses the methodological boundaries of several fields’ (Stockwell 2009: 27)) to consider the potential affordances of a trans-disciplinary methodology. And not simply because it shares a prefix with my main fields of enquiry, but because this approach ‘adapts the principles of several different disciplines [...] producing a unique new blend’ (Stockwell 2009: 27). A transdisciplinary methodology is ‘issue- or problem-centred [...]. Methodologically, transdisciplinary research follows responsive or iterative methodologies and requires innovation, creativity and flexibility’ (Leavy 2011: 9). It is my intention, therefore, to explore innovative, creative and flexible ways to consider the ‘problem’ of how to translate trans source texts. Considering a transdisciplinary approach is a new direction for translation studies that look at gender and it is apt because I am bringing together translation theory, transgender theory, gender theory, literary theory, philosophy, poststructuralism and queer theory to create a ‘trans’ theory that informs my translation of trans identity.

#### 4. Outline of thesis

Here I provide a brief account of the thesis' progression in order to elucidate my argument and highlight the main issues that will arise from my research. As I have discussed in section 1, my thesis offers a critical analysis of texts which I label 'trans' because they are either written by or about trans people. For these fictional and non-fictional trans people, writing is central to the performance of their gender identity and they all deliberately play with language in order to express themselves. They are all solecists in that they defy convention but our three memoirists, Catalina de Erauso, the Chevalier d'Eon and Herculine Barbin also deliberately misuse the conventions of French and Spanish grammar. Our three novelists, Jeffrey Eugenides, Anne Garréta and Jeanette Winterson do not break linguistic rules but every word they use has been thought and re-thought over and chosen very carefully, anticipating the translator's task before it has even begun. Each chapter will examine its source texts for undecidability in genre and gender before examining published translations to see whether that undecidability is written out. Each chapter will conclude with a justification for and a demonstration of my own, experimental, translation methods through the translation of an extract of one of the two texts under discussion in an attempt to show that it is precisely translation that can best represent these texts' undecidabilities.

My first chapter deals with Erauso and d'Eon, who could be called transgender by today's standards, despite writing centuries before the term was first used. These case studies allow me to consider how gender was conceptualised in a time very different from our own, and to argue that we cannot see these texts in a cultural vacuum but that they are products of their time. In this chapter I introduce the idea that translation is an active intrusion on the source text and this is a view I shall develop throughout the thesis. The theme of textual and sexual haunting is also introduced here; the confusion between presence and non-presence will be explored through the concept of the hymen (see Froneman 2010: 295) and shown in translation through the palimpsest.

My second chapter acts as a bridge between the first chapter which looks at memoirs and the third chapter which looks at novels by examining Barbin's intersex memoir and Eugenides's intersex novel written three centuries apart. This gap in time

offers an opportunity to explore the history of intersex and how it has been treated by the medical establishment over time. Like Erauso and d'Eon's texts, these two texts also blur the lines between memoir and fiction because both are intertextual and neither offer a completely 'truthful' portrait of the subject who writes – autobiography does not 'discover' the subject just as the medical establishment does not 'discover' the intersex child; both are created by the very thing that claims to be at their disposal. What makes these intersex texts difficult to translate are things all of my texts have in common: confused genres, intertextuality, divided narrative voices, open endings. The haunting of the body and the text by previous bodies and texts and their undecidability is represented in translation here by the hypertext.

My third chapter looks at Garréta and Winterson's twentieth-century novels whose narrators have no sex or gender and will explore how to keep such seemingly important character traits out of translation. I will consider how the undecidability of these characters has been viewed as a gimmick by some critics and as something to be solved by others. At this juncture it will be clear that trans texts are undecidable and that my aim is to queer them through translation so that no definitive conclusion can be reached on who their writers or protagonists 'really' are. This chapter also centres on the themes of freedom and constraint, that there is a freedom of potentiality and multiplicity in the constraints of language (which is exploited by our writers), in the way that translation is always constrained. Here my translation method is influenced by erasure and fragmentation, it comes full circle back to the palimpsest but this time to a perverse palimpsest (Barthes 1986), to a conscious unwriting that demonstrates how translation is always a rewriting. The text and the body are constantly read, written, reread and rewritten and this is why they are undecidable.

## Chapter One: Translating Transgender

Every time I ruined myself and I wanted to quit gambling, I fell back into my old weaknesses and became a woman again. (Choisy 1995: 82, my translation)

### 1. Introduction

The abbé François-Timoléon de Choisy (1995: 81) wrote his memoirs in the form of a letter to his friend the marquise de Lambert who wanted to hear of his racy life – he promises her that she cannot even begin to imagine it. As we have already seen, in his writing Choisy mixed masculine and feminine gender markers to refer to himself – in the above epigraph all of the past participles take the masculine gender in French including the last: ‘et suis redevenu femme’. And he was not the only early-modern memoirist to leave behind an account of what could now be considered a transgender life.

Around twenty years before Choisy was born (which was in 1644) Catalina de Erauso was writing down or dictating to an amanuensis an account of her ‘transgender’ life. Erauso was born in 1592 in the Basque region of Spain to a family who clearly reflected the traditional gender roles of the time: all of her brothers were in the army and, while one of her sisters was married, the other three entered a convent (Pérez-Villanueva 2014: 11). Erauso also joined a convent at the age of four, but the conventional part of her life ended at fifteen: she escaped disguised as a man, worked in northern Spain as a page, and travelled to the Americas as a soldier. When she was discovered to be a biological woman she became known as the ‘Lieutenant Nun’ and was ‘rewarded by the Spanish monarch Philip IV with a soldier’s pension for her distinguished military service in Peru and Chile. She also received dispensation from Pope Urban VIII to continue dressing in men’s clothing’ (Velasco 2011: 10-11). I will be examining the English translation of Erauso’s Spanish memoir alongside the English translation of the eighteenth-century French memoir by Charles Geneviève Louis Auguste André Timothée d’Eon de Beaumont, known as the Chevalier or Chevalière d’Eon, who was born four

years after Choisy's death on October 5, 1728 in Tonnerre. In 1771, while d'Eon was in London, ostensibly in the diplomatic service but also spying for the French king, a rumour began to spread that he was really a woman. When he decided to return to France from England, one of the conditions of his return was that he “re-adopt women's clothing” [...]. The wording of *The Transaction* suggested that d'Eon had been born a woman but had taken on male dress' (Conlin 2010: xiv). D'Eon's memoir is the fictional story of a woman who dresses as a man who is forced to return to her 'natural' state of womanhood, penned by a man who lives the first half of his life as a man and the second half 'pretending' to be a woman. D'Eon's contemporaries believed he was a cross-dressing woman until his death in 1810 (see Kates 1995).

The two writers that bookend Choisy's life (as well as Choisy himself) 'speak up from a position traditionally excluded from discourse' (Harris 2010: 177) and I focus on Erauso and d'Eon because they give us early-modern transgender writing that spans centuries and borders. I consider this to be transgender writing because the authors are explicitly undecidable: in their memoirs they shift between a feminine and masculine gender identity through the medium of grammatical gender. In this chapter I use the *Oxford English Dictionary* definition of a transgender person as 'a person whose identity does not conform unambiguously to conventions of male or female gender, but combines or moves between these' (Oxford, 2017).

Because of this oscillation I need a way to refer to both d'Eon and Erauso that does not force them to be definitively masculine or feminine. In 1981 Dennis Baron (1981: 83) wrote that 'among the many reforms proposed for the English language by its [...] concerned users, the creation of an epicene or bisexual pronoun stands out as the one most often advocated and attempted, and the one that most often failed'. Since the Middle Ages, English has dealt with the need for ambiguous pronouns by using 'they' or 'he or she' (see Baranowski 2002: 378). Many object to these, however, because 'they' should not be used in the singular, being a plural pronoun and 'he or she' is 'cumbersome, pedantic and unnecessary' (Baranowski 2002: 378).<sup>16</sup> Other options have included creating neologisms, and, while in a blog post Dennis Baron (2010) still claims epicene pronouns are the 'words that failed', they are becoming more widely used and

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<sup>16</sup> I choose not to use 'they' as it would become confusing as to whether I was referring to d'Eon/Erauso alone or together.

recognised. No one set of epicene pronouns is uniformly used by everyone (see Chak, 2015) but the set I shall henceforth use to refer to d’Eon and Erauso are ‘ze’ (he or she), ‘hir’ (him or her) and ‘hirself’ (himself or herself) (see Chak 2015 and Holmes 2008 who uses ‘hir’).

These epicene pronouns are not intended to categorise d’Eon or Erauso as modern genderqueers or to associate them with contemporary conceptions of nonbinary identity, but to acknowledge their multiple gender identifications. Indeed, they both made their livelihoods before the rise of sexology and sexual science and therefore both d’Eon and Erauso are complex subjects who can be properly understood only by way of a concerted disinvestment in disciplinary boundaries and via a transdisciplinary methodology. Griselda Pollock (2010: ix) asks of the Chevalier’s memoir: ‘How can we make sense of this archive, this story, this episode? Is it a matter for historians, political theorists, art historians, costume historians, or biographers?’ Pollock does not include translators on this list but they are vital to the analytical process; in order to bring d’Eon’s text to non-francophone theorists and readers, its translators must be more than just translators, they must be able to see d’Eon’s setting and situation ‘through the many lenses of each of these specializations’ (Pollock 2010: ix).

I shall therefore start by discussing the contexts in which d’Eon and Erauso lived and wrote, considering past conceptualisations of gender, arguing that these texts cannot be seen in a cultural vacuum but that they are products of their time. I shall then examine both the writers themselves and their source texts, reading both for signs of undecidability in both gender and genre. I shall then analyse published translations of both texts – *The Lieutenant Nun: Memoir of a Basque Transvestite* (1996) by Michele and Gabriel Stepto and *The Maiden of Tonnerre: The Vicissitudes of the Chevalier/Chevalière d’Eon* (2001) by Roland Champagne, Nina Ekstein and Gary Kates – to see whether this undecidability is acknowledged by the translators or whether it is written out. Finally, I will argue that we should maintain the undecidability presented by these writers and in order to do so we could use the palimpsest to create a layered translation that represents the layered identities of the writers and their source texts. The chapter will conclude with examples of my own palimpsestuous translation of Erauso’s text.

## 2. Early-modern (trans)gender

This section will look at the ways in which gender was conceptualised in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and will argue that, because of these conceptualisations, Erauso and d’Eon would have been seen as transgressive and therefore had limited means to present their identities to the world around them, making their writing central to their performances. Following ideas on the death of the author, Roland Barthes might argue that what was or was not seen as transgressive in the times of Erauso or d’Eon is of no consequence because it is the reader’s context that matters: he states that the author ‘is born simultaneously with the text, is in no way equipped with a being preceding or exceeding the writing [...]; there is no other time than that of the enunciation and every text is eternally written *here and now*’ (Barthes 1977: 145). While this works for contemporary texts, there has to be a different way of looking at texts from the distant past. We should not just look at Erauso’s, or d’Eon’s, texts in the *here and now* without considering the *then* of their lives because we can attempt to excavate the historical ontology of early modern texts and this excavation has implications for translation choices.

Despite the fact that Marjorie Garber (1996: vii) claims that we cannot ‘assess the erotic, social, and political effects of cross-dressing at a remove of almost four centuries, in the context of a culture very different from our own, and as described in a Spanish-language text’, we have evidence of how Erauso’s contemporaries felt about hir cross-dressing (see Vallbona 1992 and Mendieta 2009). There is also much research available on gender conceptualisations and transgressions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and this needs to be examined as, ‘the most fruitful way of understanding d’Eon’s [or Erauso’s] behaviour would be to reconstruct the gender system operative during [their] time[s]’ (Kates 1991: 187). This call to examine or reconstruct the past is complicated, however, by conflicting opinions on what the gender systems of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries actually were: ‘early modern conceptions of male and female, masculine and feminine, were not necessarily either clear or consistent’ (Gilbert 2002: 12).

I shall now take a look at some of these opinions to show how I come to my own conclusions regarding early-modern gender; they are conflicting because:

During the sixteenth- and seventeenth-centuries theories about the mechanics of the human body were drawn not only from experimental anatomy but also from earlier medieval and classical belief systems. The classical medical traditions presented very different theories of sexual difference. (Gilbert 2002: 35)

Sex was conceptualised in two ways: the first was based on Hippocrates's writings from the fifth century BC. This position, in which 'male and female were placed not in binary opposition, but on a continuum' (Gilbert 2002: 36), was taken up in the early medieval period. It espoused a fluid system of sexual differentiation based on a 'one-sex' model. Following the Hippocratic position, Thomas Laqueur (2012: 802) states that 'before the eighteenth century men and women were regarded not as two opposite and distinct sexes but rather as hierarchically ranked versions of each other'. This meant that, according to Laqueur (2012: 802), 'there was a time before what we now call gender (a set of prescribed behaviours, legal standings, social arrangements, and much more) was grounded in what we now call sex'. Gary Kates (1991: 170) sides with Laqueur; he claims that 'd'Eon conceived of the distinctions among the sexes as fluid, mutable, and elastic' (Kates 1991: 185-86). Nerea Aresti (2007: 406) also appears to buy into the one-sex model, saying that, in Erauso's time: 'The female body was unstable and deficient, but might change towards the masculine form under the influence of extreme physical effort. A sudden rise in temperature could also cause an extrusion of the male sexual organs that lurked within the female body'.

Aresti (2007: 402) claims that Erauso's cross-dressing was accepted precisely because there was no concept of a gender that followed from sex in his time: 'female identity was not yet completely dictated by sexual anatomy. Sex was a question of sociology rather than ontology. As a direct consequence, exceptions to prevailing gender norms met with more tolerance than in privileged social circles' (see also Rutter-Jensen 2007: 90). According to Mendieta (2009: 172-3):

The body was seen as something less fixed, more mutable, and thus made the transformation from one sex to another appear to be plausible. If the body of a woman was a natural transvestite, containing male organs within it, was not transvestism only a natural social extension of ‘the myth of mobility’ intrinsic to this sliding scale?

Cross-dressing, however, was illegal – ‘women who cross-dressed were usurping a right to which they were not entitled’ (Aresti 2007: 404). Though it would appear that a woman could escape prosecution if her cross-dressing was for the purpose of bettering herself (in the image of Christ) and not for usurping a male role (Mendieta 2009: 167). Erauso was protected from punishment despite hir participation in the exclusively masculine activity of warfare because of hir virginity (Mendieta 2009: 167; see also Rex 2016: 40) and, perhaps, because of hir fame: ‘even as her readers are following along with Erauso’s very macho adventures as an agent of empire, the foreknowledge of her subject position as a virginal nun prevents her audience from [...] buying into her performance of *lo masculino* as a natural, fixed identity’ (Rex 2016: 37).

The idea that Erauso was somehow going against hir ‘essential’ female self made hir a natural rarity in hir time to be collected by the royal court (along with hermaphrodites, dwarfs and eunuchs) and indeed, Aresti (2007: 405), who espouses the anti-essentialist position seen above, claims that ‘the real reason for [Erauso’s] eventual popularity and recognition was precisely the difficulty of categorising her in terms of the binary oppositions that underpinned that particular society’ (see also Rex 2016: 42 for an argument that the early-modern gender codes of Spanish society were binary). The Hippocratic, one-sex model represents a continuum, however; binary oppositions are much more pronounced in the two-sex model.<sup>17</sup>

The one-sex model did eventually give way to a two-sex model; doubt, however, surrounds the question of when this took place. Some believe, like Laqueuer above (2012), that it was in the eighteenth century (see also Lester 2017: 74-75 and Mendieta 2009: 172). Others believe it was much earlier: studies carried out by Ruth Gilbert on the

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<sup>17</sup> While the Hippocratic position did see sex as on a continuum, men and women were still opposed: men were at the top, women, the biological inverse of men, were at the bottom and hermaphrodites were in the middle (see Lester 2017).

early-modern period and Robin Headlam Wells on the Elizabethan period challenge the idea that Erauso and d’Eon’s gender fluidity would have been considered natural, or a product of biology, at the time. Gilbert (2002: 40) argues that in the thirteenth century, many returned to Aristotle’s fourth-century BC declaration that male and female were fundamentally binarised based upon their essential oppositions: ‘when we place sexually ambiguous figures in early modern legal and social contexts it becomes clear that [...] attitudes towards sexual indeterminacy were usually shaped by a far more rigid Aristotelian-style adherence to the sex-gender system’. This is despite the fact that ‘the sixteenth-century representation of sexual difference was dominated by a Hippocratic revival [...] but intersected still with elements of the Aristotelian tradition’ (Gilbert 2002: 36). Gerald Callahan (2009: 19) believes that the one-sex model gave way to the two-sex model after the discovery of the clitoris in the fourteenth century:

It seemed to contradict the one-sex hypothesis then popular [...] How could a woman have ‘two penises’ and still be the perfect homologue of and basically the same as a man? That rattled the foundations of then-current thought [...] Where certainty had ruled for nearly two thousand years, a seed of doubt began to sprout.

Headlam Wells (2005: 6) also disproves the popular belief that in the sixteenth century ‘Shakespeare and his contemporaries were anti-essentialists. That is to say, Elizabethans are thought to have had no general theory of humankind as a species: human beings had no existential “centre”; they lacked any kind of unifying essence’. In actual fact, ‘though these ideas have been thoroughly assimilated into mainstream Shakespeare criticism, it’s not easy to find evidence for them in European intellectual history’ (Headlam Wells 2005: 7).

Erauso and d’Eon presented themselves in a manner which contradicted their biological makeup (they were either rejecting their essential centres or these centres were out of kilter) and this made them unusual: the overriding impression we get of how Erauso and d’Eon were seen by their contemporaries is that they were both curious spectacles. The question of d’Eon’s ‘true’ gender caused such a sensation in 1771 that bets were taken on the London Stock Exchange ‘in the form of life insurance policies that

paid out (or not) depending on whether d'Eon was found to be of one or other gender' (Conlin 2010: 50) and after Erauso had been discovered to be a woman ze could not walk the streets for people wanting to see hir: 'We entered Lima after nightfall, but nonetheless there were more people than we could cope with, all curious to see the Lieutenant Nun' (Erauso 1992: 113, my translation).

While we can assess the contexts in which Erauso and d'Eon were writing, problems arise when attempting to portray these contexts as they were because, as Garber (1996: xxii) states, 'we read from where we are, and from our own cultural and historical position'. However, it is important to historicise trans identity. Just because we read from our own position it does not mean that we cannot grasp the historical or cultural position of someone from the past; though, of course, we can never wholly grasp that past, as demonstrated by the ongoing debate surrounding early-modern sex and gender. We must accept 'the impossibility of *fully* reconstructing and reentering the culture of the [seventeenth] century, of leaving behind one's own situation' (Greenblatt 2005: 5, my emphasis). The reader's modern knowledge must be taken into consideration as well and we must ask: 'How do we work with translating terms for naming genders and sexualities in comparing texts and cultures of the past which may not be translatable to modern understandings of gender or to contemporary understandings of gay, lesbian, bisexual or queer difference?' (Spurlin 2014: 205).

I argue that the past is translatable to modern understandings if we see the translation of very old source texts as a rewriting of the past; indeed, this helps us to see that all translation, no matter how old the source, is a rewriting of the past: the source text is not a historical artefact but a living body of words. Through translation, the source text can be 'reinserted into a vivid here and now as an active intrusion' (Scott 2014: 29). The translator is an intruder on the source text, an 'inventive interventionist' who can rewrite an original from any perspective they choose (Boase-Beier and Holman 1998: 14). These texts certainly lend themselves to interpretative translations: 'Erauso was both a rebel and a conformist, a hero and an outlaw, able to represent either side of any controversy. Because Erauso's experience joins all possibilities, it invites readers [...] to see what they choose to celebrate or repress' (Velasco 2000: 172). Is it, however, going too far to rewrite a text, written in a time when 'transgender' and 'queer' did not exist as

terms, from a transgender perspective, or with a queer agenda?<sup>18</sup> Sherry Simon (1996: 15) asks, ‘what would be the result of a translation which blatantly redirected the intention of the original text, consciously contravening its intentions?’. She goes on to state that ‘feminist translation implies extending and developing the intention of the original text, not deforming it’ (Simon 1996: 16). However, translation is perhaps always a ‘deforming’ of the original text as it can never be wholly ‘faithful’ to it and translation is a political act, a manipulation and we can appropriate texts through translation for political agendas (Tymoczko 2000: 16; see also von Flotow 1997: 32-33). A re-translation of Erauso’s or d’Eon’s texts can counter the fossilisation of seventeenth- or eighteenth-century gender identifications but can also be a locus of trans engagement today by allowing past conceptualisations of gender to engage with modern ones. A translation with a queer agenda is not about ‘faithfully’ portraying the source text but about using that text, appropriating its content, to influence how people see gender today. In order to use d’Eon and Erauso to shine a light upon gender today it is necessary to look more closely at their own gender identifications in their writing and how they used their writing as part of their identification.

### 3. Two undecidable transgender memoirs

#### 3.1 Gender undecidability

Here I will examine in more detail the ways in which both Erauso and d’Eon can be said to have an undecidable gender in order to argue that any translation of their autobiographical texts needs to be aware of such undecidability. Indeed, the translation of undecidability is important because Erauso and d’Eon used their writing as an important outlet to express their shifting gender at a time when they had to outwardly present themselves as one sex or another and appear to make a definitive choice. I argue that Erauso and d’Eon are transgender because they oscillate, because they are

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<sup>18</sup> According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford 2017), ‘transgender’ as a term was first used as an adjective in 1974 and a noun in 1987 (it was being used to indicate a middle ground between the sexes in the 1990s) and ‘queer’ was first used as a derogatory term in 1894 to mean ‘(male) homosexual’ and then was reclaimed as a positive term in the 1980s.

undecidable – this is a fresh take on a debate over how to label them which has lasted for centuries. In order to argue that this debate is both sterile and unnecessary I shall elucidate some of the conclusions that have been drawn on why Erauso and d’Eon crossed the gender divide by those who have come before me.<sup>19</sup>

One of d’Eon’s biographers, Frédéric Gaillardet (1970: vii), asks of the Chevalier: ‘what reasons were the cause of the disguise which began or ended his career? What political or personal events, what private or public considerations led him to adopt [...] the clothes of the opposite sex?’. Unsurprisingly, Gaillardet has no watertight answer to these questions. Robert Baldick (1970: xix) tries to explain d’Eon’s change of gender with two ideas; the first is that d’Eon became a woman on orders from Versailles so that ze could not take part in what would be a scandalous duel with the son of a French Ambassador called Guerchy whom d’Eon had insulted. Baldick (1970: xix) himself, however, describes how being dressed as a woman did not prevent d’Eon from duelling in England. Burrows et al. (2010: 6) also agree with Baldick’s first possibility: ‘As a woman he was far less likely to become the victim of kidnap or assassination by government agents, or Guerchy’s relations, who had not forgotten his role in the Ambassador’s recall and death’. That d’Eon dressed as a woman out of necessity does not explain why ze took on a feminine voice in hir writing.

The second of Baldick’s (1970: xiv) ideas is that d’Eon was a transvestite (or at least that ze was afraid to be perceived as one) but to avoid this label, ze claimed to really be a girl forced by ‘her’ parents to dress as a boy (despite the fact that many people from hir home town knew ze had been assigned the male sex at birth). D’Eon did use hir dress as an important part of the renegotiation of hir gender, despite some arguments that d’Eon dressed as a woman reluctantly (see Brogan 2010 and Conlin 2010). Kimberley Chrisman-Campbell has made a specific study of d’Eon’s dress, examining what clothes ze purchased. She claims that in d’Eon’s account books ‘there is evidence that d’Eon voluntarily wore at least some items of women’s clothing (particularly corsets) long before he was compelled to do so’ (Chrisman-Campbell 2010: 98). Chrisman-Campbell’s discovery proves that d’Eon’s identity vacillated, that ze wore corsets while ostensibly a man, but it does not prove that d’Eon was a transvestite. Havelock Ellis (1928) certainly

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<sup>19</sup> In naming Erauso and d’Eon ‘transgender and ‘undecidable’ I am, of course, labelling them. These are two terms that I try to leave as open to doubt as possible – they themselves connote uncertainty.

thought ze was, however, and perhaps thanks to Ellis's research, 'since the eighteenth century, he has been known as one of the most famous transvestites in history' (Champagne, Ekstein and Kates 2001: ix). Marjorie Garber (1992: 265) also considers d'Eon to be a transvestite, she states that 'we are told that all the references in d'Eon's journal, kept during the last years of life and presumably for d'Eon's eyes alone, are written in the feminine gender'. We are told this by Edna Nixon in her biography of the Chevalier entitled *Royal Spy* (1965).

There are many biographies of d'Eon (see Kates 1995) and some of their writers, and those who in turn reference them, seem to have been unwilling or unable to consult d'Eon's own papers. As Garber is 'duped' by Nixon, Magnus Hirschfeld is by Gaillardet. Hirschfeld (1991: 334) considers d'Eon to have a very weak sex drive; though he does write of relationships d'Eon had with women based, presumably, on Gaillardet's largely fictional (see Baldick 1970 and Kates 1995: 561) account of d'Eon's life in which ze is supposed to have taken many lovers before becoming engaged to the playwright de Beaumarchais and fathering the English king George IV (see Gaillardet 1970: vii and Burrows et al. 2010: 2). Burrows et al. (2010: 2) believe that Gaillardet's portrait of d'Eon as a man who dressed as a woman to seduce other women was taken by so many to be true because of the 'precedent' of Choisy's memoirs in which Choisy does seduce girls dressed as a woman. I have argued elsewhere, however, that while Choisy did seduce young women that is not the reason ze cross-dressed (Rose 2017).

According to Gary Kates (1995: 562), 'the reasons for d'Eon's behaviour are a complete mystery [...] the story of a public figure successfully assuming a female identity every day for over thirty years is something without precedent'. As I have argued in the introduction, I see Choisy as something of a precedent. Though Choisy did not live as a woman for as long as d'Eon, in hir memoirs ze does claim to successfully pass as the Countess des Barres for quite some time. Furthermore, despite his conviction that d'Eon's behaviour cannot be explained, Kates (1995: 592) offers an explanation, claiming that d'Eon's crossing was for political reasons:

He did not do it because he felt compelled to dress as a woman: there is no evidence of his cross-dressing before he was legally declared a woman in 1777. He did not even represent himself as unusually effeminate [...] Nor

had he always longed to be a woman [...] Rather, the evidence reveals that d'Eon's gender transformation must be seen as part of a midlife moral and spiritual crisis brought on by his political status as an exile in London.

I find this argument unlikely. By ascribing d'Eon's transformation to a 'midlife crisis', Kates inserts a twentieth-century trope into an eighteenth-century context in which the idea of 'autobiography' as a distinct genre that tackled ideas of modern self-identity and subjectivity was not yet fully developed (see Anderson 2011); I shall return to ideas of autobiography and self-identity in the following section. This is also a striking departure from the position Kates held in a 1991 article in which, as already indicated in section 2, he followed Hippocrates's one-sex model of gender fluidity. There he argued that d'Eon was neither out for publicity, trying to rehabilitate a failed career, nor mad (Kates 1991: 174), but dreamed of 'a world where someone's biological sex might not predetermine their gender identity; a world in which gender identity might be considered fluid and malleable' (Kates 1991: 189). Though why d'Eon would 'dream' of this world is unclear if Kates believes ze lived during the time of the one-sex model where gender was not yet prescribed by sex. Kates (1991: 178) does not go so far as to consider d'Eon transgender but in this article he gives more time to the idea that d'Eon wanted to *become a woman* on hir own terms.

Joseph Harris (2010: 185) also sees d'Eon as believing in a world where one can change their character despite their upbringing in contrast to what Choisy believed a century before: 'Choisy's and d'Eon's narratives are founded on fundamentally different paradigms. For Choisy, one bears the stamp of one's upbringing throughout adulthood, while for d'Eon, character is always open to possible renegotiation through the twin forces of custom and costume'. D'Eon knows that this renegotiation is transgressive, however, which is perhaps why, as we have seen, ze claims to have been forced to dress a certain way by hir parents in hir memoir. Choisy also hopes to diminish and explain hir transgression by seeing hir identity as rooted in the fact that hir mother dressed hir as a girl in childhood; ze portrays hir penchant for the feminine as a 'weakness' ze is powerless to resist, as can be seen in this chapter's epigraph.

Demonstrating how difficult it is to pin d'Eon down, Kates, as one of d'Eon's translators, along with Champagne and Ekstein, departs again from his previous ideas and

describes d'Eon's memoir as 'certainly the story of a transgendered person; but it narrates the journey of a supposed male-to-female transvestite, when the actual situation involved male-to-female transgendered life' (Champagne, Ekstein and Kates 2001: x). They claim that 'his autobiography thus bears witness to his profound ambivalence concerning gender. While forced by society to be either a man (1728-77) or a woman (1777-1810), d'Eon's natural state seems to have been far more indeterminate and unstable' (Champagne, Ekstein and Kates 2001: xx). What suggests a transgender experience is that while d'Eon was a man ze wore women's corsets and while ze was a woman ze wore both hir Dragoon's uniform and hir Cross of Saint-Louis on hir female clothes, both vestiges of hir life as a soldier (see Baldick 1970: xvii and Burrows et al. 2010: 10). The only thing that is clear is that there is no 'right' reading to be made of d'Eon. I shall now examine Erauso's case with a view to arguing that there is no 'right' reading of hir either because ze is also undecidable.

As we have seen with d'Eon, it would appear that the most popular twentieth-century label for those who transgressed gender boundaries in the early-modern period was that of transvestite. The title of the Steptos's translation, *The Lieutenant Nun: Memoir of a Basque Transvestite in the New World* (a title obviously never chosen by Erauso), suggests that they see Erauso as a sensationalist cross-dresser. It is highly likely that the addition of this term in the title is to attract the reader's attention, in much the same way that Choisy's memoirs, originally called *Mémoires de l'abbé de Choisy habillé en femme* [memoirs of the abbot de Choisy dressed as a woman] were translated with the less subtle and more sensationalist title of *The Transvestite Memoirs* (Scott 2008 [1973]). In her foreword to the Steptos's translation, Marjorie Garber makes reference to her book *Vested Interests* (1992) to explain 'a "category crisis" and a related manifestation I call the "transvestite effect." A category crisis is a failure of definitional distinction, a borderline that becomes permeable, permitting border crossings from one apparently distinct category to another' (Garber 1996: xiv). She talks of crossing borders only in one direction, there is no vacillation. Encarnación Juárez Almendros (2006: 131) also sees Erauso as a transvestite but she highlights hir hybridity: 'despite hir man's suit and having obtained official permission to live in such, hir autobiography is a different and hybrid work, because in reality what is narrated within is the life of a man and a woman' (Almendros 2006: 130, my translation). Eva Mendieta (2009: 19) also considers that 'both

the character's gender and the literary genre of the work itself possess the same hybrid quality' and, like Almendros, she also labels Erauso a transvestite: '[her] transvestism is total and definitive' (Mendieta 2009: 166). She goes on to say that 'women who disguise themselves as men because they believe that, psychologically, they *are* men, are totally different from women who dress as men for limited periods of time' (2009: 192). The latter category best fits the definition of a 'transvestite', and Mendieta (2009: 194) puts Erauso in the former category, arguing that Erauso was, in fact, a transsexual: 'Her transvestism is superficial in nature; she was not pretending to be a man, she probably felt that she was a man'. It is true that when Erauso returned to the Americas with hir dispensation from the Pope ze lived the last twenty years of hir life as a mule driver called Antonio de Erauso (Velasco 2011: 69).

Mendieta finds proof for Erauso's transsexualism in a letter of 1626, written by Pedro de la Valle: 'She has no more breasts than a girl. She told me that she had used some sort of remedy to make them disappear. [...] it hurt a great deal, but the effect was very much to her liking' (in Stepto 1996: xxxiv). Indeed, other theorists also make reference to this letter to show Erauso's quest for total masculinity; though they do not all use it to argue for transsexualism (see Velasco 2011: 75). Chloe Rutter-Jensen (2007: 87, my translation) does 'assume the controversial position that Erauso's narrative expresses the desire for (and the "fact" of) a sex/gender change long before its technical possibility'. She refers to Erauso in the masculine and claims that 'despite the fact that throughout the narration he rarely recognises his feminine sex, the story concludes (as it starts) with a specific allusion to his masculinity' (Rutter-Jensen 2007: 89, my translation). This allusion is subtle because, as Rutter-Jensen (2007: 89, my translation) herself notes, '[Erauso] is identified by the women with the feminine gender' – Erauso threatens to stab some passing women (and herein lies the masculinity we must assume) because they refer to hir as 'Señora Catalina'.

In my analysis of the source text in section 4.1 below, I will show that Erauso frequently recognises hir feminine sex in grammatical gender throughout the text. As will become apparent in the following section, it is also problematic to talk of the 'story' in the singular. Rutter-Jensen (2007: 91) spends much of her article claiming that Erauso is exclusively a transsexual and refuses to see hir as undecidable. However, she says that:

Even though he changes to a different gender, his feminine past is constantly invoked as a reminder. He is not Antonio de Erauso, more appropriately he is Antonio de Erauso and the Lieutenant Nun [...] His feminine birth and status as a monk are constantly added to his new name.

(Rutter-Jensen 2007: 92, my translation)

If Erauso's feminine gender is always there as a reminder and ze is always both a nun and a lieutenant, then ze must be undecidable: 'Erauso does not fit into the category of the chaste woman because he is a man. However, neither is he allowed to be a virile man, because she is a woman' (Rutter-Jensen 2007: 93, my translation). In a similar vein to Rutter-Jensen, Sandy Stone (2006: 222) uses the Chevalier d'Eon as an example of a historic transsexual and goes on to say about hir and similar accounts that 'the authors also reinforce a binary, oppositional mode of gender identification. They go from being unambiguous men, albeit unhappy men, to unambiguous women. There is no territory between' (Stone 2006: 225). On closer inspection, I argue that neither d'Eon nor Erauso are ever unambiguous men or women.

This section has shown that for centuries theorists have fought over how to categorise both d'Eon and Erauso, who have variously been appropriated as proponents of or precedents for transvestism and transsexualism (Rutter-Jensen 2007; Garber 1996; Morris 2010; Ellis 1928). It might be going too far to claim d'Eon and Erauso as 'transgender' by today's standards but like Leslie Feinberg (1996: 85) I consider Erauso to be an early 'transgender warrior'. A close analysis of both Erauso and d'Eon's lives and works reveals that they were undecidable.

### 3.2 Genre undecidability

I have argued that Erauso and d'Eon are undecidable and in this section I wish to take the idea of undecidability further by applying it, not just to what they wrote, but how they wrote their life stories. I shall discuss how the nature of the two memoirs, and any memoir, is part fact, part fiction and how this makes them, in and of themselves, undecidable. The genre of all texts is 'trans', all genre is 'trans-genre' because nobody can

follow Derrida's (1980: 55) call that 'genres are not to be mixed', not even Derrida himself. It is impossible not to mix genres and no text can stay within the boundaries of any one recognisable genre, even if most texts are 'pigeonholed' by publishers, reviewers, libraries and book stores. Derrida (1980: 56) argues that 'as soon as the word "genre" is sounded [...] as soon as one attempts to conceive it, a limit is drawn', and once that limit is drawn, restrictions abound: 'one must not cross a line of demarcation, one must not risk impurity, anomaly, or monstrosity' (Derrida 1980: 57).

In some senses, what trans-lation and trans-gender do is highlight the fact that all writing and all gender cross that line of demarcation for both textual and biological genre; they both risk monstrosity because they are necessarily hybrid, they are multiple and in-between and I will return to the idea of the monstrous in-between in Chapter Two. In the following quotation from John Frow (2006: 11), 'texts' could be replaced with 'bodies' and all uses of 'genre' could be easily replaced with 'gender': 'Do texts in fact "belong" to a genre, in a simple type/token relation [...], or should we posit some more complex relation, in which texts would "perform" a genre, [...] or would be composed of a mix of different genres'. Just as texts are mixtures, so too are bodies: 'Mixtures are in bodies, and in the depth of bodies: a body penetrates another and coexists with it in all of its parts, like a drop of wine in the ocean, or fire in iron' (Deleuze 1990: 5-6). That bodies are mixtures of other, past and future, bodies (reflecting the idea that texts are mixtures of other texts) is something I will return to when I look at Derrida's concept of the spectre.

According to Frow (2006: 2), 'genres create effects of reality and truth, authority and plausibility [...] These effects are not, however, fixed and stable, since texts [...] do not "belong" to genres but are, rather, uses of them'. Erauso and d'Eon's texts are uses of both autobiographical and fictional genres. In fact, G. Thomas Couser (2012: 18) refers to memoir as 'a transgendered genre that is indeterminate in number' due to the possibility that it can be singular or plural in English and masculine or feminine in French. As briefly mentioned above, the concept of the autobiography was not fully formed when Erauso and d'Eon were writing as 'the word was fabricated toward the end of the eighteenth century at which time three Greek elements meaning "self-life-writing" were combined to describe a literature already existing under other names' (Olney 1980: 6). Indeed, Couser (2012: 23) distinguishes 'memoir' from 'autobiography' by claiming that autobiography attempts to 'write the whole life' and that 'autobiography is more comprehensive,

memoir more limited, in scope'. Despite this, I use the terms 'autobiography' and 'memoir' interchangeably to mean 'an account of a person's life given by himself or herself, esp. one published in book form' (Oxford, 2017). But, contrary to what this suggests, autobiography is not a straightforward art form that shows us the true thoughts and feelings of the writer:

We assume that life *produces* the autobiography as an act produces its consequences, but can we not suggest, with equal justice, that the autobiographical project may itself produce and determine the life and that whatever the writer does is in fact governed by the technical demands of self-portraiture and thus determined, in all its aspects, by the resources of this medium? (de Man 1984: 69)

When one scrutinises the autobiographical genre one comes to see that the author does not have the authority over the text they presumed they had. This denial of the author does not make him or her entirely 'otiose' (Burke 1998: 27), however, because 'the author will reappear as a desire of the readers, a spectre spirited back into existence by the critic himself', this return cannot happen without a death and the author 'must continue to be dead though he has returned' (Burke 1998: 30). The presence of the author as a spectre needs closer examination and will be briefly discussed later in this chapter and in the following chapters. Here we are interested in the idea that the author can only come back 'on the condition that his life is discontinuous, fictive' (Burke 1998: 31); and, paradoxically, nowhere is the author's life more fictive than in autobiography. As Jeremy Tambling (1990: 9) states, the speaking subject is never whole and the narrator is never quite the same person as the author: 'the unity of the self is a fiction and the self writing about itself inevitably constructs a subject divided and different from the writing self'. As a genre, 'self-writing' creates the effect of reality and truth but that effect is itself taken from fiction.

I use 'self-writing' here to indicate a form of autobiography but this wording necessarily evokes Foucault's work on Self Writing in which he contrasts the writings of the *hypomnēmata* with epistolary writing. The former is not intended to reveal what is hidden within the writer but 'to capture the already-said, to collect what one has

managed to hear or read' (Foucault 1994: 211) while the latter works to bring 'into congruence the gaze of the other and that gaze which one aims at oneself when one measures one's everyday actions according to the rules of a technique of living' (Foucault 1994: 221). Foucault makes it clear that the *hypomnēmata* are not what we would now think of as an intimate journal in which the author confesses their deepest feelings and bares their soul but we can use the analogy of the *hypomnēmata* to better understand how all writing is a mixture of voices as Bakhtin (1981: 262) has argued and I shall return to Bakhtin's concept of multivocality when I come to address the palimpsest in section 5 below. Foucault (1994: 214) uses the analogy of the chorus to show how many voices make the whole: 'In a chorus there are tenor, bass, and baritone voices, men's and women's tones'. The *hypomnēmata* and epistolary writing are both forms of self writing that help us to get a clearer understanding of what is happening with the memoirs we are examining here because neither form is 'a decipherment of the self by the self' (Foucault 1994: 217). In the *hypomnēmata* we see that 'writing as a personal exercise done by and for oneself is an art of disparate truth' (Foucault 1994: 212) while in correspondence the writer looks for themselves in the gaze of the other. In both acts the self is shaped by the mediation of the other – the first by the writings of others and the second by the presence of the addressee.

An addressee is always present, however, even if the text is not a letter and therefore has no literal addressee. I have argued that the genre of the autobiography must involve the genre of the novel and therefore it involves both the 'already-said' and an addressee in the implied reader. The novel always 'addresses itself to a reader' (Iser 1974: 57) just as the letter addresses itself to a recipient and both the reader and the recipient are producers of meaning. When Wolfgang Iser focuses on the reader instead of the writer he finds that the reader expects certain things from certain genres based on past experience. Over time the reader's expectations can change which accounts for the fact that one text can garner multiple meanings (Iser 1974: xiii-xiv). Furthermore, works of art specifically play with those expectations and the reader must readjust to accommodate the unexpected (Iser 1974: 58). And the unexpected is accepted because it is introduced through the mixture of genres: 'the overlapping of different forms makes it possible to communicate the unknown through the known, which brings about the expansion of our experience' (Iser 1974: 59). I will also discuss the fact that the genre of

the novel also includes the genre of the autobiography in chapters two and three when examining fictional memoirs.

Both Erauso and d'Eon wrote with full knowledge of the self-fashioning power of writing because they both manipulate their texts to portray the life story they wanted others to attribute to them. They self-fashion themselves through the use of particular narrative styles. Erauso's autobiography 'can be associated with three narrative forms: the picaresque novel and the soldier's journal [...] and the religious autobiography' (Mendieta 2009: 19). Both Erasuso and d'Eon looked to those who had written confessions. Tambling (1990: 194) asks: 'Is not the confessant the actor above all? Yet confession as acting means also, of course, self-fashioning, and implies the presence of metonymic displacements and a glossing of the (textual) self'. Erauso's predecessor was Teresa de Avila (Almendros 2006: 129) and d'Eon, whose contemporary was Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 'explicitly acknowledges that his model [for part of his manuscript entitled *A Special Request*] was Saint Augustine's great late-Roman autobiography, the *Confessions*' (Champagne, Ekstein and Kates 2001: xi). According to Tambling (1990: 2), 'those addressed by a confessional discourse are "interpellated" [...] and are subjected, i.e. made to define themselves in a discourse given to them [...] and secondly, made to think of themselves as autonomous subjects, responsible for their acts'. Those making confession believe that they are confessing to acts they had control over (and therefore that is why they need absolution). According to Butler (2006: 195), however, we are not autonomous subjects, responsible for our acts because, as she states in *Gender Trouble*, taking her lead from Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 'there need not be a "doer behind the deed," but [...] "the doer is variably constructed in and through the deed"'.

The idea that there is no doer behind the deed would seem to preclude the idea of 'self-fashioning', and it does, but there is a paradox at work here which is brilliantly summed up by Stephen Greenblatt in his study on self-fashioning in Renaissance England. He notes that after his study, 'the human subject itself began to seem remarkably unfree, the ideological product of the relations of power in a particular society. Whenever I focused sharply upon a moment of apparently autonomous self-fashioning, I found not an epiphany of identity freely chosen but a cultural artifact' (Greenblatt 2005: 256). However, what we also have to understand is that 'in our culture to abandon self-fashioning is to abandon the craving for freedom, and to let go of one's stubborn hold

upon selfhood, even selfhood conceived as fiction, is to die' (Greenblatt 2005: 257). This echoes Diana Fuss's (1989: 104) quotation that 'fictions of identity, importantly, are no less powerful for being fictions'. Selfhood is fictional but we cling to it in order to live and as Butler would say, following her reformulated ideas on performativity given in her 2016 talk on gender in translation, to find our own identity is a kind of freedom. But we can only be free if society accepts our choices:

We are all ethically bound to recognize another person's declared or enacted sense of sex and/or gender. We do not have to agree upon the 'origins' of that sense of self to agree that it is ethically obligatory to support and recognize sexed and gendered modes of being that are crucial to a person's well-being. (Butler 2014, n.p.)

For Butler, seeing gender as performative does not preclude the belief that gender is essential. She does not argue against the language of ontology but believes that laying claim to an essential self is performative; saying 'this is who I am' is the deed, the performative moment (Butler 2016b, n.p.). In the early-modern period and in a society that followed the two-sex model there were 'few possibilities for the expression of intermediate or shifting positions in sexual definition' (Gilbert 2002: 40); one of those possibilities must have been to express oneself, or perhaps 'one's selves', through writing. According to Charles Taylor (2010: 178), when Montaigne began to write his reflections in the sixteenth century, he shared the common belief that his 'self-writing' would 'serve to recover contact with the permanent, stable, unchanging core of being in each of us'. As Taylor (2010: 178) says, this is the 'virtually unanimous direction of ancient thought' (following the Aristotelian position). However, Montaigne's writing led him to believe in 'a terrifying inner instability' (Taylor 2010: 178). Indeed, Headlam Wells (2005: 7) concedes that 'though humanists argued about the nature of "man", they agreed [...] that there was an irreducible essence of human nature'. Even if society as a whole believed that each person had an essential sense of self, it does not preclude the idea that this core could be complex or divided.

### 3.2.1 Undecidable source texts

Erauso as an author is both complex and divided. Ze is not just divided in hir own writing but is actively divided by others because the original manuscript of hir autobiography no longer exists. According to Stepto, the original manuscript was kept by the Urbizu family of Seville (descendants of Erauso's first patron Juan de Urquiza) for a century after it was written; in the eighteenth century this manuscript was copied by Cándido María Trigueros and then this version was again copied by Juan Bautista Muñoz in 1784 (Stepto 1996: xlvi). There are now three versions of Erauso's autobiography available – there is one manuscript held in the Madrid Royal Academy of History (Bautista Muñoz's transcription) and two manuscripts are held in Seville Cathedral (transcriber and date of transcription unknown). The title of the manuscript in Madrid claims that it was 'written by herself [Catarina de Araujo] on the 18<sup>th</sup> of September 1646 on returning from the Indies to Spain [...] arriving in Cadiz on the 18<sup>th</sup> November 1646' (1784: 206v, my translation). Rima de Vallbona (1992: 3) sees this as potential proof that it was not written by Erauso hirself because there is irrefutable evidence that Erauso arrived in Cadiz in 1624. While this could have been a mistake in transcription it certainly adds to the feeling that what we have in front of us, in the Madrid manuscript, is significantly removed from Erauso's hand, perhaps so much so that we cannot really call it *Erauso's memoir* at all: 'it is very probable that there was an original version of the text in which only one authorial voice could be heard. At a given moment that text began to be filled with other voices that enriched its literary value, but added elements that were far removed from the vital context of the historic Erauso' (Mendieta 2009: 45). While the text might be embellished in places and simply wrong in others, Erauso did exist, ze did pen, dictate or inspire a written account of hir life and according to Vallbona (1992: 2) it is even said that Erauso hirself handed the manuscript to the editor Bernardino de Guzmán in 1625. The three extant manuscripts are, however, all we have to go on.

Two copies of Erauso's text have been published based on the Madrid manuscript; the first, *La Historia de la Monja Alférez, doña Catalina de Erauso escrita por ella misma* [the story of the lieutenant nun, Miss Catalina de Erauso written by herself], was transcribed by Joaquín María Ferrer in 1829. Ferrer claims to have transcribed his version from a text held by his friend Felipe Bauzá called *Vida y sucesos de la Monja Alferez Doña*

*Catalina de Araujo, doncella natural de San Sebastian de Guipuzcoa, escrita por ella misma* [Life and Events of the Lieutenant Nun, Miss Catalina de Araujo, Natural Maiden of San Sebastian de Guipuzcoa, Written by Herself] which itself was copied from Bautista Muñoz's manuscript; that version being copied in Seville from various papers in the possession of the poet María Trigueros (Ferrer 1829: xvii).

The manuscript currently in the Madrid Royal Academy of History has a very similar title but it is much longer (see appendix I) so this would seem to confirm that, as indicated by Ferrer himself, his version is not taken straight from Muñoz's version but from a copy of that. He explains that the copyist made mistakes with place names, character names and dates which he corrected by comparing authentic documents (Ferrer 1829: xxiii). While Ferrer seems to have thought that he was 'correcting' mistakes, others have thought he was compounding them: according to Manuel Serrano y Sans (in Vallbona 1992: 2, my translation), Ferrer's edition of the text is 'without interest or literary value due to being plagued with anachronisms and absurd inventions'. Ferrer's publication also departs from the manuscript by dividing the story into twenty-six chapters when the Madrid manuscript has only twenty.

The second version of Erauso's text based on the Madrid manuscript is entitled *Vida i sucesos de la monja alférez, Autobiografía atribuida a Doña Catalina de Erauso* [Life and Events of the Lieutenant Nun, Autobiography Attributed to Miss Catalina de Erauso] and my investigations have confirmed that this text, edited by Rima de Vallbona, was faithfully transcribed from the manuscript currently held in the Madrid Royal Academy, as Vallbona (1992: 3) asserts. That Vallbona's title claims that what we are reading is the autobiography 'attributed' to Erauso in contrast to the title of the Madrid manuscript (and therefore Ferrer's text) which assures us that what is in front of us is 'written by [Erauso] herself', will become more and more germane as my discussion of the text's authorship develops.

In the 1990s Pedro Rubio Merino discovered two more manuscripts purporting to be Erauso's autobiographies in the Santa Iglesia Cathedral of Seville. Rubio Merino's version is entitled *La Monja Alférez: Doña Catalina de Erauso, Dos Manuscritos inéditos de su autobiografía conservados en el Archivo de la Santa Iglesia Catedral de Sevilla* [The Lieutenant Nun: Doña Catalina de Erauso, Two Unedited Manuscripts of her Autobiography Kept in the Archive of the Holy Cathedral of Seville]. The first Seville

manuscript is entitled *Vida y sucesos de la Monja Alférez, Da Catharina de Erauso* [Life and Events of the Lieutenant Nun, Miss Catharina de Erauso]; the second is untitled. I shall henceforth refer to them as Seville M-1 and Seville M-2.<sup>20</sup> Rubio Merino (1995: 18, my translation) believes that the two manuscripts, which were found at different times and in different locations, were copied by the same amanuensis even though the variations are ‘notable and frequent’. Having seen the Seville manuscripts myself I can attest to the fact that they appear to have been written by the same hand, though the handwriting of M-1 is neater (see appendix II).

Although both Seville M-1 and M-2 vary from each other, the stories contained in each are similar which makes Rubio Merino (1995: 17) think that a previous manuscript was the source for both copies. Like Vallbona, Rubio Merino (1995: 46, my translation) assures his reader that ‘the edition which we make today of the two autobiographical manuscripts of the Lieutenant Nun, aim to maintain maximum fidelity to the original text’. Though of course the term ‘original text’ must be used with some caution, as there is no ‘original’ text to be faithful to. What Rubio Merino’s publication is faithful to is the two manuscripts he discovered, not to Erauso’s ‘original text’, wherever that might be. The complicated textual history of the memoir makes it difficult to come to any definitive conclusions about the text and aptly mirrors the difficulty of coming to definitive conclusions about the identity found within. And the fact that this identity is hard to define is caused by the various manuscripts: gender usage is not only inconsistent within the texts but is also inconsistent between the texts. This is something I shall address in more detail in the following section with a close reading of Erauso’s texts.

Before I move on to a close analysis of Erauso’s text, however, it will serve my argument that all texts are multiple to investigate how a text with a clear origin such as d’Eon’s can still be unclear in its genre. D’Eon’s text, unlike Erauso’s, is available in its original form. As was found to be the case with Erauso, it would be more appropriate to talk of d’Eon’s texts, as hir memoir is made up of various writings and letters. These writings are kept in the archives of the Brotherton Library at the University of Leeds and, according to Champagne, Ekstein and Kates (2001: ix) they are what d’Eon originally

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<sup>20</sup> The manuscripts themselves are labelled M-1 and M-2, I have added ‘Seville’ to avoid any confusion with the Madrid manuscript.

planned to include in *hir* memoir.<sup>21</sup> D'Eon had organised a publisher, been paid an advance and hired an English translator but, somehow, the publication never came to be (Champagne, Ekstein and Kates 2001: ix). The title of the 2001 English translation, *The Maiden of Tonnerre: The Vicissitudes of the Chevalier/Chevalière d'Eon* is a direct translation of d'Eon's intended title for *hir* memoir: *La Pucelle de Tonnerre: Les Vicissitudes du Chevalier et Chevalière d'Eon*. The translation includes *La Grande Epître Historique de la Chevalière d'Eon en 1785* [the great historical epistle of the chevalier d'Eon in 1785] addressed to the Duchess of Montmorenci-Bouteville, a collection of d'Eon's correspondence and a manuscript describing the lives of those who could be seen as 'religious precedents': females who dressed as men for varying reasons and were subsequently sainted. We can already see d'Eon's memoirs slipping from the category of autobiography here as they merge with those of correspondence and biography, seen in this final chapter called the 'Pious Metamorphoses'.

The 'Pious Metamorphoses' section details the lives of women who were sainted despite gender transgressions and 'examples abound of women who disguised their sex on their way to pious, exemplary lives. These examples provide models that d'Eon emulated, as transgendered disguise is shown to be a crucial component of holy, respected lives' (Champagne, Ekstein and Kates 2001: xxi). D'Eon *hirself* refers to these women as 'follow[ing] a courageous instinct that led them to march to a different drummer' and as 'so many mirrors reflecting my own image' (Champagne, Ekstein and Kates 2001: 141). While d'Eon did not include Joan of Arc amongst these historical precedents it is clear that she was *hir* main inspiration, *ze* explicitly references her in the title *ze* chose for *hir* unpublished work: *La Pucelle de Tonnerre* [the maid of Tonnerre] echoes Joan of Arc's 'Pucelle d'Orléans' [maid/virgin of Orléans] and the idea of both as characterised by their virginity. Joan herself could well have been inspired by the same women as d'Eon. In her day, Guillaume Bouille, an adviser to Charles VII 'justified a woman wearing men's clothing if undertaken from the perspective of modesty [...] Moreover, she could wear male clothing if asked to do so by divine revelation, as other female saints had done' (Harris 2013: 7). We see the same attitude to Erauso's cross-

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<sup>21</sup> Other writings, which shall not be examined here as they were not intended by d'Eon for *hir* memoir, and not included in the English translation, can be found the Paris National Archives and municipal archives in Tonnerre.

dressing, though Joan of Arc paid the ultimate price for her participation in warfare, something Erauso avoided.

In order to ‘present himself as an eighteenth-century Joan of Arc, d’Eon invented at least four major myths about himself regarding his childhood, his diplomacy in Russia, his trial in England, and his conversations with his mother between 1777 and 1779’ (Champagne, Ekstein and Kates 2001: xvi). D’Eon claims that *hir* parents raised *hir* as a boy after they lost their only male heir; *ze* claims that in Russia *ze* dressed as a woman in the service of the Empress Elizabeth; *ze* claims that while in England *ze* was discovered to be a biological female and a trial was carried out to verify this; and *ze* represents correspondence between *hirsself* and *hir* mother in which she corroborates the fact that d’Eon was born female. D’Eon specifically chose these myths to fashion *hir* narrative identity. D’Eon also presents *hirsself* as the innocent virginal woman by never writing about desire or love, coming across as almost asexual. It would appear that it was their statuses as virgins that saved both Erauso and d’Eon, the latter also used *hir* female virginity as a virtue and it prevented *hir* from being suspected of perversion (Champagne, Ekstein and Kates 2001: xxiii).

By becoming a virtuous woman d’Eon could keep the same sort of status in society that *ze* had enjoyed as a diplomat and a soldier in receipt of the Cross of Saint-Louis. However, to the modern-day reader, d’Eon’s gender deception is made clear by the fact that after *hir* death *ze* was identified as a man; in fact, no reader of d’Eon’s papers would have ever thought they were reading the ‘truth’ as *hir* memoirs were never made available in *hir* lifetime, only after *hir* death and the revelation of *hir* male sex. We have a situation where deceit is revealed: ‘the person who is crossing intends to deceive her or his immediate audience, although in fiction the reader is typically apprised of the “real” identity of the character’ (St. André 2010b: 278). Although with both d’Eon and Erauso I would argue that while the deception is revealed, the reader is never apprised of their ‘real’ characters, whatever they may be.

No matter how hard we look, Erauso and d’Eon’s texts only ever have an ‘implied author’; each text points to a figure ‘who is outside and precedes it’ (Foucault 1979: 14) – the figures of Erauso and d’Eon are caught up with the scholarly investigation of their texts – all those who come to Erauso and d’Eon believe they can somehow ‘know’ them via their texts but they will only ever be the implied authors. All scholars (myself included)

who look at Erauso and d’Eon construct their identities to make them into the authors of the texts they are reading. This is unavoidable: ‘these aspects of an individual, which we designate as an author [...] are projections, in terms always more or less psychological, of our way of handling texts: in the comparisons we make, the traits we extract as pertinent, the continuities we, assign, or the exclusions we practise’ (Foucault 1979: 21). We can never ‘know’ a d’Eon or an Erauso free of mediation. Any ‘interpretation’ of Erauso and d’Eon is always them ‘plus interpreter’, and, as we have seen in the discussion of how Erauso and d’Eon have been labelled, the outcome of any investigation depends on what the interpreter feels is pertinent or should be excluded. This has a bearing on translation.

What emerges from this consideration of confession and self-writing as self-fashioning are discussions of the originality of Erauso’s and d’Eon’s texts and their authorities as authors. As Marilyn Morris (2010: 147) states about d’Eon’s memoir: ‘the problem of the story’s veracity, or lack thereof, raises important questions regarding the source of authority in the construction of an individual self, particularly a transgendered self’. The writer constructs an identity in writing but the reader also constructs one in reading. The translator, as both reader and re-writer does the same. In the next section I shall consider how the translators of these two texts have read and re-written these identities.

#### 4. Translating transgender identity

##### 4.1 Translating Erauso

Erauso’s memoirs were translated by mother and son duo, Michele and Gabriel Stepto, in 1996.<sup>22</sup> Their translation is largely taken from Ferrer’s edition of the Madrid manuscript, *La Historia de la Monja Alférez*: ‘The present translation into English is based largely on a 1918 edition of Ferrer’s *Historia*, though we have also consulted Muñoz’s *Vida y sucesos*, recently made available in an excellent edition edited by Rima de Vallbona’ (Stepto 1996: xlvi). Despite this assurance that Vallbona’s text was consulted, Pérez-Villanueva (2014: 36) criticises the Steptos’s translation because it ‘is based on Ferrer’s edition and

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<sup>22</sup> A previous translation was carried out by James Fitzmaurice-Kelly in 1908 entitled *The Nun Ensign*, which can be found as an appendix in Vallbona’s text (Fitzmaurice-Kelly 1992). It will not be consulted here in the interests of space.

effectively ignores the work of Rima de Vallbona'. Pérez-Villanueva (2014: 36) considers this to be 'unfortunate' as 'the departures that Ferrer had taken from the Madrid manuscript created openings for Stepto and Stepto to make judgements that would further depart from the original text and increase the sexual content in the story'. The 'implied author' of the Steptos's translation is necessarily different from the 'implied author' of the 'original' texts and they extracted traits and made exclusions with their choice of source text even before the translation proper began.

The translation includes a foreword by Marjorie Garber and an introduction by Michele Stepto. In her foreword, Garber (1996: xvi) is very interested in Erauso's 'border crossings', her crossing of the border between Spain and the Basque country, between the old world and the new: 'the disruptive gender identities (marked in the text by "male" and "female" pronouns) and geographical wandering between Spain and Peru are undertaken by a figure already exceptional and transgressive'. The reader is therefore made aware in the paratextual material of the translation that Erauso was a transgressive figure; however, it is hard to tell if 'the text' Garber refers to is the Spanish source or the English translation. In the Spanish text, male and female pronouns are non-existent, not only because this is a first-person account but also because subject pronouns are rarely used in the Spanish, the ending of the verb already denoting the subject (but not their gender). In the English translation, the gender-neutral *I* is prevalent, but where third-person pronouns are used for Erauso, they are always made 'female'.

Erauso's gender is marked on adjectives, not pronouns. Readers cannot directly access a sense of Erauso's unusual use of grammatical gender in the English text, something Michele Stepto (1996: xlvi) readily admits:

There are several challenges facing the translator who would render Catalina's memoir in English. One, at least, is insurmountable – there is no English equivalent for the gender inflections of the Spanish adjective, which make a primary, grammatical notation of gender with practically every sentence, thus setting up a drumbeat of sexual self-identification that reverberates from one end of the text to the other. The fact that Catalina almost invariably uses masculine endings to describe herself is lost

in English, as are those rare moments when she chooses a feminine ending.

Stepto is clearly aware of how important this grammatical use of gender is and yet she marks it down as an inevitable loss in English. After openly discussing this loss from the original which she and her son took no steps to compensate for, she goes on to say that 'it has always seemed to us that the best translations were those that hued [sic] most closely to the original text [...]. For this reason, nothing has been added here, *nothing left out*' (Stepto 1996: xlvii, my emphasis). Stepto openly admits they accrued translation losses and then claims that nothing has been 'left out'; it is questionable as to whether the Steptos's removal of grammatical gender (which is important by their own admission) is really hewing 'most closely to the original text'.

The back cover of the paperback version of the translation includes this quotation from Roberto González Echevarría: 'The Steptos' translation, without betraying the original, turns this memoir into compelling literature in English' (Stepto and Stepto 1996). We can see that translation is still being discussed in terms of betrayals and originals. González Echevarría, like theorists centuries before him, is of the opinion that it is possible not to betray the original text or author (and that this should be the ultimate goal of any translator). Betrayal is inevitable and that becomes acceptable because the source text is not 'original' in the way Echevarría or the Steptos suggest. The translators had to omit (or betray) something, and I do not criticise them for that, but in my opinion they chose to omit exactly what makes this memoir so compelling.

In order to demonstrate why this memoir is so compelling I shall now analyse in detail some key moments in the memoir where Erauso's use of grammatical gender is unusual and see how the Steptos have dealt with it in translation. I have taken quotations from *La Historia de la Monja Alférez*, *Vida i sucesos de la monja alférez* and both of the Seville manuscripts. *La Historia de la Monja Alférez* will be used as the main source because this is the text the Steptos used for their translation.<sup>23</sup> In the Spanish quotations, the gendered words are underlined, while the gender used shall

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<sup>23</sup> There are more differences between the four sources than grammatical gender, for example *Vida i sucesos* and the Seville manuscripts use Basque spelling, however, as the main focus of this thesis is grammatical gender those differences will not be remarked upon.

be indicated in parentheses after the appropriate word in my English gloss. Stepto and Stepto's English translation will come after the Spanish example.

In Chapter One, Erauso introduces hirself variously as 'Doña Catalina de Erauso' in Ferrer's text (Erauso 1829: 1), 'D<sup>a</sup> Catalina de Araujo' in both the Madrid manuscript and Vallbona's text (Erauso 1992: 33), 'el Alferez Cathalina de Erausso' in Seville M-1 and Rubio Merino's text (Erauso 1995: 53) and 'el Alferez D. Cathar<sup>a</sup> de Erausso' in Seville M-2 and again in Rubio Merino's transcription (Erauso 1995: 95). Ze describes what happened when ze left the convent aged fifteen:

eché no sé por dónde, y fui calando caminos y  
*I-got-going no knew for where and I-was making-marks-on paths and*  
pasando lugares por me alejar, y vine a dar á Vitoria,  
*passing places to myself to-distance and I-came to to-give in Vitoria*  
que dista de San Sebastián cerca de veinte leguas, a pie  
*which is-a-distance from San Sebastian nearly of twenty leagues on foot*  
y cansada. (Erauso 1829: 5)  
*and tired(f)*

I set off without knowing where I was going, threading my way down roads and passing villages, until I came to the town of Vitoria, some twenty leagues from San Sebastian, on foot, tired. (Stepto and Stepto 1996: 4)

The feminine gender is also presented in Vallbona's text and she adds a note to indicate that: 'the feminine is employed in the manuscript as in the Ferrer edition' (Vallbona in Erauso 1992: 36, my translation). Both Seville manuscripts also use the feminine gender here (Erauso 1995: 54, 96). At this point Erauso has fashioned shorts, a short jacket and leggings out of the dress ze wore in the convent and ze has cut hir hair short. While ze has yet to fashion for hirself a male persona with an alias, ze is, to all intents and purposes, dressed as a man. However, ze still uses feminine grammatical gender and this shows that it is not simply a change of clothes which indicates a change of gender. Erauso does take up the male name of Francisco de Loyola when ze moves to Valladolid which ze keeps when ze then moves on to Estella:

Entré en Estella, donde me acomodé por paje de don Carlos de Arellano, del hábito de Santiago, en cuya casa y servicio estuve dos años, bien tratado y vestido. (Erauso 1829: 9)  
*two years well treated(m) and dressed(m)*

I headed for Estella in the province of Navarre, which must be about twenty leagues off. I found work there as a page to don Carlos de Arellano, a native of Santiago, and remained in his house and employment for two years, well-fed and well-clothed. (Stepto and Stepto 1996: 6)

In *Vida i sucesos* (Erauso 1992: 38) the two past participles are feminine: 'tratada' and 'vestida'. Why the gender is different in Ferrer is only something we can guess at; according to Danielle Clarke (2003: 194), 'even where full editions are concerned, editorial procedures do not necessarily take adequate account of the specifically gendered aspects of women's texts, particularly where scribal publication of translation/paraphrase are concerned'. While I would not label this a 'woman's text', it is possible that Ferrer's edition of Erauso's work (or the work he transcribed from) does not take full account of the gendered aspects of the text. We now know that Vallbona's version is more accurate than Ferrer's as it is taken directly from the Madrid manuscript so Erauso is still using the feminine gender despite his change in costume.<sup>24</sup> Despite Ferrer's seemingly erroneous interpretation of the Madrid manuscript, Seville M-2 also uses masculine endings on 'tratado' and 'vestido' (Erauso 1995: 97).<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, this next excerpt somewhat weakens the hypothesis that Ferrer was changing grammatical endings on purpose as we have a clear example, in both Ferrer's and Vallbona's (Erauso

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<sup>24</sup> We must also always bear in mind that the Madrid manuscript itself is open to question, Vallbona's text might be an accurate transcription of the Madrid manuscript, but how much was the Madrid manuscript itself an accurate transcription of the original?

<sup>25</sup> This passage is not mentioned in Seville M-1.

1992: 98) versions, of Erazo using the feminine gender while dressed as a man. Erazo has stolen a horse and has been caught:

Rodeáronme ministros, y dijo el alcalde: «¿Qué hemos de  
*They-surrounded-me ministers and said the mayor what we-have to*  
hacer en esto?». Yo cogida de repente, no sabía qué decir; vacilante  
*to-do in this I caught(f) by start no knew what to-say unsteady*  
y confusa, que parecería delincuente. (Erazo 1829: 83)  
*and confused(f) that I-seemed criminal*

The deputies surrounded me and the mayor said, “Well, what do we have here?” The whole thing was so sudden that I didn’t know what to say, and there I stood, confounded and stammering, the very picture of guilt.

(Stepto and Stepto 1996: 53)

The suggestion here could be that as Erazo has been caught off-guard in a moment of weakness ze reverts to the feminine gender. Rubio Merino claims that there are moments in the Seville manuscripts where Erazo is ‘betrayed by her feminine sentiments’ (Erazo 1995: 30, my translation). In chapter seven of M-1 (Erazo 1995: 67) and chapter eight (Erazo 1995: 111) of M-2, Erazo describes being completely alone in the desert after his two companions have died of the cold along with their horses, ze is completely lost and:

tan cansada, aflixida y lastimada de dos pies [...]  
*So tired(f) sorrowful(f) and wounded(f) of both feet [...]*  
arrimándose a un árbol, comencé a llorar, cosa que no hice  
*putting-myself against a tree I-began to cry thing that not I-did*  
después que estuve en las Indias. (Erazo 1995: 67)  
*since that I-was in the indies*

You can imagine my wretched state, dead tired, barefoot, my feet in shreds. I propped myself against a tree and wept – for what I think was the first time in my life. (Stepto and Stepto 1996: 27)

The wording of M-2 is different but the three gendered participles used as adjectives are exactly the same. In both Ferrer (Erauso 1829: 40) and Vallbona (Erauso 1992: 69), the feminine gender is also used. That Rubio Merino thinks that Erauso is ‘betrayed’ by ‘her’ feminine sentiments suggests that he thinks that ze is inherently feminine and this femininity slips out when ze cannot help it, that ze is playing at being a man. However, there is no obvious reason why Erauso switches and the switches can be used as evidence of Erauso’s vacillating, and undecidable, gender identity; ze is inherently both masculine and feminine.

In order to prove the above it is necessary to do some quantitative research. I have looked through the four texts and counted each instance of feminine and masculine gender markers:<sup>26</sup>

Manuscript	Feminine markers	Masculine markers
Madrid: Ferrer	22	87
Madrid: Vallbona	33	76
Seville: M-1	40	36
Seville: M-2	16	48

Table 1: Gender markers in Erauso’s texts

We can see from this that Velasco’s (2000: 7) estimation that the Madrid manuscript includes a predominance of masculine pronouns, while the Seville manuscript includes more feminine pronouns is just; the ‘Seville manuscript’ in the singular must be M-1, because M-2 is unfinished it cannot be used to argue for a predominance of masculine

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<sup>26</sup> In gathering this data, I took note of gendered adjectives, past participles used as adjectives and gendered nouns. I only counted adjectives or past participles used to refer to multiple persons when Erauso is referring to himself and one woman. For example, Erauso and his charge María Dávalos are ‘consolados’ [soothed] (Erauso 1992: 90), in the masculine despite both being ‘biological’ women. I did not count those where other men were present as the masculine form would dominate no matter Erauso’s gender identification at the time. Furthermore, where the gender marker was repeated, as in ‘ciudadano Romano’ or ‘buena cristiana’ I only counted one marker as the gender of the second word is redundant being given already in the first.

markers. That there are more masculine markers than feminine in the majority of the texts is not something I, or anyone else, can fully explain.

In a footnote provided by Vallbona, Roslyn M. Frank (in Erauso 1992: 35) affirms that the use of gender in the Basque language, Euskara, is problematic because no grammatical gender exists. Adjectives did not take masculine or feminine suffixes and the only time gender was observed was on verbs in dialogue which indicated the listener's gender not the speaker's. According to Frank (in Erauso 1992: 35), it was not uncommon for a Basque woman to refer to herself in the masculine in a monologue with no unusual sexual connotation. This is not a satisfactory explanation for Erauso's appropriation of masculine gender though, because the manuscript is written in Castilian Spanish and 'without a doubt, Erauso also knew Castilian: we know that she learned to read and write [in the convent] and this she could only have done in Castilian' (Mendieta 2009: 35). Mendieta (2009: 42) looks into the idea that Euskara may have interfered in Erauso's use of Castilian syntax and she concludes that 'if the fluctuation only appears in relation to the gender of a protagonist who conceals her sexual identity throughout the story, I believe that, rather than grammatical interference, it reflects uncertainty with regard to how she should be classified'.

The only conclusion we can take from this data is that the two grammatical genders are constantly mixed. When Erauso admits that ze is a woman in confession to a bishop ze starts using only feminine gender markers in Seville M-1 (Erauso 1995: 86) – for example, 'me asentaron en un libro por ciudadana Romana' (Erauso 1995: 91) [they settled me in a book as a Roman(f) citizen(f)] and 'estuve tentada de cortarles las caras' (Erauso 1995: 92) [I was tempted(f) to cut their faces]. However, in three versions of the story there are actually two confession scenes.<sup>27</sup> When ze is first injured ze confesses to a priest in the Madrid manuscript: this is just 'declaré mi estado' (Erauso 1992: 102) [I declared my status]. Vallbona replicates Ferrer's note: 'As this declaration was made in confession, it was not divulged and did not cause the admiration it subsequently caused in Guamanga when Erauso revealed the secret ze had guarded so well for so many years to the bishop of the diocese' (Vallbona in Erauso 1992: 102, my translation). In Seville M-1 this scene is more explicit: 'declaré que era mujer' (Erauso 1995: 82) [I declared I was a

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<sup>27</sup> Seville M-2 is cut off before Erauso has confessed.

woman] but hir secret is still kept and ze uses masculine gender markers until the confession to the bishop when feminine markers take over.

The idea that confession has the power to reveal what is within, or force the confessant to live by the ‘truth’ they have admitted, is complicated here. It is only Erauso’s later confession to the bishop that leads to hir exclusive adoption of feminine gender markers in Seville M-1: ‘he took me by the hand and asked me softly and closely if I was a woman. I answered him yes’ (Erauso 1995: 86, my translation). It is also revealing that in the first confession Erauso speaks the words – ‘declaré’ [I declared] – but in this later confession it is the bishop who uses the word ‘woman’, Erauso merely agrees. Ze does not own the title of ‘woman’ out loud. Furthermore, Erauso uses the masculine gender in Ferrer and Vallbona after ze has confessed, Vallbona (in Erauso 1992: 111) even notes that one would expect Erauso to use feminine gender markers exclusively from the revelation of hir femaleness onwards but ze does not. The above example from Seville M-1 describing Erauso’s time with the Roman senate is in the masculine in Vallbona: ‘me asentaron en un libro por Ciudadano Romano’ (Erauso 1992: 123) [they entered me in a book as a Roman(m) citizen(m)] and in Ferrer (Erauso 1829: 117).

Despite the predominance of masculine markers in Ferrer, and even after the ‘confession scene’, chapter headings always use the feminine gender. However, they are also, for the most part, in the third person and so it is possible that they were not chosen by Erauso hirself but were added later:

Capítulo XVIII. Mata en el Cuzco al Nuevo Cid, quedando herida.

*Chapter XVIII s/he-kills in the cuzco to-the New Cid remaining injured(f)*

(Erauso 1829: 85) (same gender in Erauso 1992: 101)

Chapter 18 – In Cuzco, she kills the New Cid and is herself wounded.

(Stepto and Stepto 1996: 55)

Because subject pronouns are rarely used with verbs in Spanish, ‘mata’ [he/she kills] could be either masculine or feminine. The Steptos chose to make it ‘she kills’, adding a gender marker. It could be said that this choice of feminine gender in third person pronouns is compensation for the lack of gender elsewhere: for example, they do not

show that 'herida' [injured] is feminine. In contrast, the chapter headings of Seville M-2 use the masculine gender whenever a gendered word must be used:

Cap. 15 Dánle una comisión. [...] Mata en la ciudad de la  
*They-give-her/him a commission [...] s/he-kills in the city of La*  
Paz a un criado del Corregidor y, sentenciado a horca,  
*Paz to a servant of-the magistrate and sentenced(m) to gallows*  
se libra. (Erauso 1995: 124)  
*him/herself s/he-frees*

In Ferrer (Erauso 1829: 73) and Vallbona (Erauso 1992: 93) the chapter heading is much shorter and carries no gender at all, but the Steptos select the feminine gender again:

Chapter 15 – She travels to La Paz and murders a man (Stepto and Stepto 1996: 40)

It is possible that Erauso did have a hand in these titles, and they therefore need to be translated with care, because they are not all written in the third person. In the Madrid manuscript the narrator uses the first-person singular in the subheading for the final chapter. Vallbona's *Vida i sucesos* has 'Embarquéme i pasé a Cartagena' (Erauso 1992: 115) [I enlisted myself (on a ship) and passed to Cartagena]. Stepto and Stepto's translation, following Ferrer's version which uses 'embarcase' (Erauso 1829: 106) [he/she embarks] is, 'she embarks in Tenerife and sails to Cartagena and from there leaves with the fleet for Spain' (Stepto and Stepto 1996: 71). Pérez-Villanueva (2014: 38) states that 'by losing the use of the first person singular pronoun at this critical juncture in the text, Stepto and Stepto break the autobiographical content revealed in this section [...] where the narrator and protagonist merge into a single voice'. This adds weight to the argument that Erauso was both writer and narrator, not just a narrative voice used by another writer entirely, and that ze chose the grammatical gender of hir words.

What this close reading of Erauso's source texts has shown is that we will never definitively know Erauso or how much Erauso really switched because we cannot be sure

which of the versions we have left are most like the text ze wrote, or why ze switched. Mendieta (2009: 15) claims that ‘when she discarded her nun’s habit, Erauso also symbolically discarded the restrictions of her sex and began a personal adventure in which she tried to discover her true self’. Given the linguistic switches I would argue that when Erauso wrote (or dictated) hir memoirs, ze had not yet discovered this ‘true’ self and I would argue that it is not the translator’s job to find that self (if it could ever exist). That the Erauso of these stories switches gender is something that the Anglophone reader deserves to be aware of.

#### 4.2 Translating D’Eon

It should be clear by now that we are dealing with ‘two’ complicated source texts which make their translation challenging; I shall now look at d’Eon’s memoir in more detail to see how hir translators have dealt with such a nebulous source text and whether they too believe that translating grammatical gender is an ‘insurmountable’ problem like the Steptos.

What d’Eon’s shifting grammatical gender does is compound the nebulosity of hir text. Just as Erauso’s text is unreliable (we get hir story at least third hand if we consider that we have to go through the original amanuensis and Juan Bautista Muñoz before we get to Ferrer/Vallbona) so is d’Eon’s; in both texts, ‘the writing subject endlessly disappears’ (Foucault 1979: 15). In order to see how d’Eon ‘endlessly disappears’ in hir own writing I will now turn my attention to the source text and its translation. As mentioned above, Roland A. Champagne, Nina Ekstein and Gary Kates’s 2001 translation of d’Eon’s writings comprises various correspondences currently kept in the Leeds Brotherton Library but *La Grande Epître Historique* will be the only part of the translation examined in detail here. In their introduction the translators explain that ‘d’Eon’s grammar is a key to the gender transformation he narrates [...] d’Eon shifted frequently between male and female when identifying himself’ (Champagne, Ekstein and Kates 2001: xxi). They explain how they have translated these shifts into English: ‘To give the reader a sense of the ambivalence with which d’Eon “marked” his own gender, we the translators indicate each instance with an *m* or an *f*’ (Champagne, Ekstein and Kates 2001: xxi).

The French quotations below are my own transcriptions from the manuscript which I consulted in the Brotherton Library Collection (d'Eon 1785).<sup>28</sup> Again, I have underlined the gendered words and used parentheses in the gloss. D'Eon begins by describing how ze was educated as a boy (though here ze is claiming to be a girl who was raised as a boy), ze claims to have had two personalities and was therefore confused when having to choose a career; ze took refuge with the Dragoons:

Je me conduis de facon que personne ne peut dire si je suis fille ou  
*I myself conducted of way that nobody not can to-say if I am girl or*  
garcon. Si je suis blessée, je ne serai pas deshonorée pour avoir  
*boy If I am injured(f) I not will-be not dishonoured(f) for to- have*  
été à la guerre. Si je suis tuée je serai couverte de la poussière  
*been to the war if I am killed(f) I will-be covered(f) in the dust*  
de la gloire militaire. (d'Eon 1785)  
*of the glory military*

During the day I will act in such a way that no one will be able to tell whether I am a girl or a boy. If I am wounded<sup>f</sup> I will not be dishonored<sup>f</sup> in having been a warrior. If I am killed<sup>f</sup> I will be shrouded<sup>f</sup> with the dust of military glory. (Champagne, Ekstein and Kates 2001: 8)

That d'Eon should use the feminine gender in a passage which describes hir time as a soldier could well have been hir way of emphasising to the reader that ze was a girl dressed up as, and acting like, a soldier. Further on in this passage, d'Eon talks about how ze will be able to hide among the officers because they sleep alone. The original French has 'je n'y entrerai que comme officier, ainsi que couchant seule il ne sera pas facile de me decouvrir' (d'Eon 1785) [I will only enter as an officer, so sleeping alone, it will not be easy to discover me].

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<sup>28</sup> I transcribed the text to the best of my ability, maintaining d'Eon's spelling and use of accents (ze misses accents on many words which need them in modern-day usage).

One problem caused by the handwritten form of the manuscript centres around the word 'seule' [alone] which is in the feminine but is my decipherment of the handwriting. The word 'seule' is written underneath other letters which had been written over the top in a different coloured pen. It is possible that what was added was 'eul' to make the feminine 'seule' a masculine 'seul' (see figure 1).

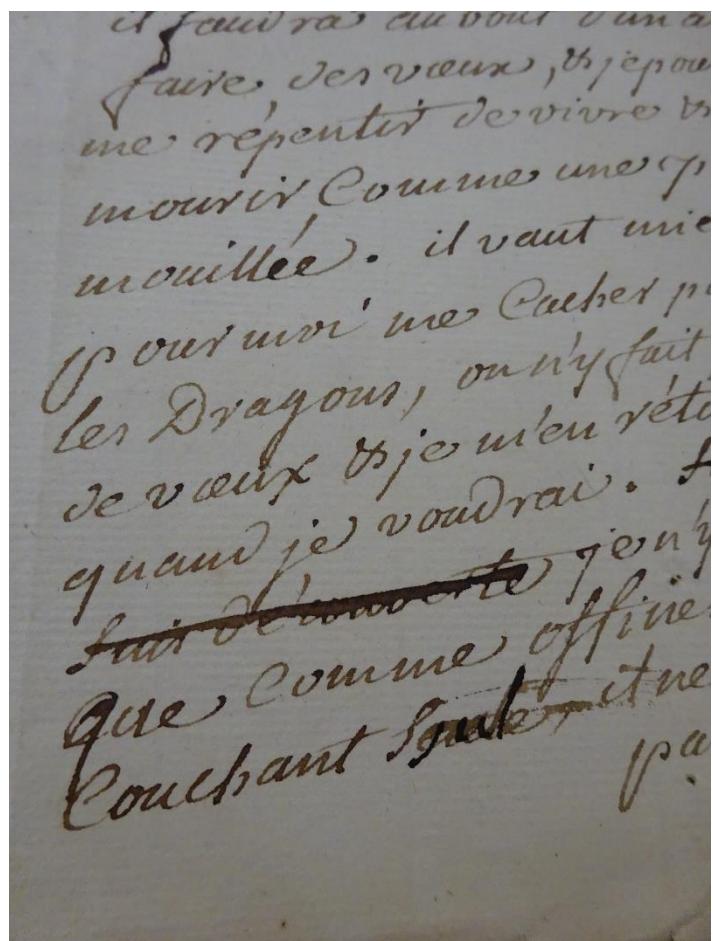


Figure 1: *La Grande Epître Historique de la Chevalier d'Eon en 1785*, page 5 recto,

BC MS Chevalier d'Eon/01

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I have worked from the same manuscripts as Champagne, Ekstein and Kates and it seems that maybe to avoid this transcription challenge, they have opted to translate the sentence as 'I will serve only as an officer; given the way they bed down at night' (Champagne, Ekstein and Kates 2001: 8), thus avoiding any need to choose a gender for 'alone'. This translation, however, 'loses' the idea of discovery, that d'Eon is afraid of

being discovered, of being seen to be a woman, that what is ‘underneath’ the Dragoon uniform is hir true identity. This idea of being seen, that what we see with our eyes must be the truth, especially pertaining to anatomy, is something I will return to in Chapter Three. Here, d’Eon wants what is ‘underneath’, what is ‘real’, to be hir femaleness and this is legitimised by hir fear that others might see it and this would confirm it as ‘true’.

When d’Eon uses different grammatical genders in the same sentence, ze could well be indicating the undecidable nature of hir identity. D’Eon is in conversation with Dom Bernard (hir Uncle’s friend and confessor) and explains who hir own confessor is:

«C'est l'abbé Lebel Docteur de Sorbonne – je le connois depuis long-  
*It-is the-abbot Lebel Doctor of Sorbonne I him know since long-*  
tems, c'est un homme savant et pieux. J'irai le voir, je  
*time it-is a man knowledgeable and pious I-will- go him to-see I*  
lui parlerai» m'en étant donc allé contente.<sup>29</sup> (d’Eon  
*to-him will-speak myself-there being therefore gone(m) happy(f)*  
1785)

“The Abbé Lebel, a doctor of the Sorbonne. I have known him for a long time. He is knowledgeable and pious. I will go see him and talk to him.”

And so I left<sup>m</sup> contented<sup>f</sup> (Champagne, Ekstein and Kates 2001: 10).

In this passage d’Eon uses the verb *aller* with an adjective (*allé contente*). There was disagreement in the seventeenth century over whether verbs of movement such as *aller* [to go] should agree in the past tense when used with an infinitive. For example, ‘ma sœur est allé visiter ma mere’ could be exchanged for ‘ma sœur est allée visiter ma mere’ [my sister went to visit my mother]; though Claude Favre de Vaugelas (1647: 501-502) claims the former is grammatically correct. However, the verb of movement is not being used with an infinitive here but an adjective, d’Eon might therefore genuinely be indicating the undecidable nature of hir identity by combining the masculine ‘allé’ with the feminine ‘contente’.

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<sup>29</sup> There are no speech marks in the original but I have added them here to make the passage clearer.

A short examination of grammatical agreements in early-modern French will show that agreement between subjects and past participles used with *être* was not inconsistent in d'Eon's time despite d'Eon's own inconsistency and it is very likely that by using the extra *e* on the end of past participles with *être*, ze was deliberately breaking the rules of, and playing with, standardised grammar. The most common way to form the past tense is to use the verb *avoir* as an auxiliary with a past participle; in today's usage the participle only ever agrees with preceding direct objects and only in three particular cases (see Hawkins and Towell 2001: 213). The past tense can also be formed using *être* as an auxiliary: today, in these cases, the past participle always agrees in number and gender with the subject. In the eighteenth century there was always agreement between subjects and past participles taking *être* (Champagne, Ekstein and Kates 2001: xxi).<sup>30</sup>

Nathalie Fournier's (1998: 316) *Grammaire du français classique* describes grammatical changes made to classical French during the seventeenth century; agreement of the past participle with the subject takes place with passive verbs and with transitive verbs. In his *Remarques sur la langue française*, Vaugelas (1647: 178, my translation) declared that 'the participle in the passive preterite not being indeclinable, takes the number and gender of the nouns which precede and follow it'. In fact, the only real debate over agreements with *être* centres on the use of a verb of movement before an infinitive – here the 'participle could agree with the subject (which is the norm with the verb *être*) or could remain invariable' (Fournier 1998: 317, my translation).

In another passage in which d'Eon is with Dom Boudier, ze has gone to stay at the St. Denis Abbey where ze is served dinner and ze is:

Reconnoissante et confuse à l'exces d'etre traité en uniforme  
*Grateful(f) and confused(f) to the-excess to-be treated(m) in uniform*  
 comme une mère d'enfans, je voulais partir après le caffé. (d'Eon  
*like a mother of-children I wanted to-leave after the coffee*  
 1785)

<sup>30</sup> Whether past participles should agree with preceding direct objects or not has been the subject of much debate; they often did not agree (agreement is now obligatory in Modern French) (see Rickard 1989: 74; Petitjean 1991 and Fournier 1998). However, these past participles agree with objects and not subjects and reveal nothing about d'Eon's gender identity so in this thesis I am only interested in past participles that agree with the subject (and therefore the auxiliary *être*).

Appreciative<sup>f</sup> and yet painfully embarrassed<sup>f</sup> at being treated<sup>m</sup> like a mother while in uniform, I wanted to leave after the coffee. (Champagne, Ekstein and Kates 2001: 29)

Here d'Eon is evidently dressed as a man in uniform because ze describes being confused at being treated like a woman while wearing male clothes. To begin with, ze uses the feminine gender and then when ze talks of hir uniform ze uses the masculine gender. The fact that ze uses the feminine gender while dressed as a man aligns with those instances in which Erauso's gender does not match hir clothes and suggests more than conventional transvestism. However, we must remember d'Eon's constant double-bluff, ze is trying to make hir reader think that ze really *is* a woman. Furthermore, d'Eon's fiction is trying to make the reader think that in this scene ze is dressed as a man but is really a woman underneath, something hir fellow diners are apparently aware of (this scene occurs after d'Eon has been discovered to be a 'real' woman, ze is on hir way to Paris where ze will be forced to dress as a woman but is still wearing male travelling clothes). That ze is being treated like a mother and trying to convince the reader ze is a woman but uses the masculine gender on 'traité' intimates a vacillating gender identity.

In a conversation with Madame Louise (the former king's daughter) in which d'Eon is claiming that the king asked hir to carry out espionage by cross-dressing, ze remarks:

J'ai été elevée ainsi, votre Auguste père le savoit et s'est  
*I-have been raised(f) this-way your august father it knew and himself-is*  
servi de moi. Mais maintenant qu'il est mort, je suis devenu une  
*served of me but now that-he is dead I am became(m) a*  
servante inutile. (d'Eon 1785)  
*servant(f) useless(f)*

I was raised<sup>f</sup> like this. Your illustrious father knew it and made use of me. But now that he is dead, I have become<sup>m</sup> a useless servant<sup>f</sup> (Champagne, Ekstein and Kates 2001: 29).<sup>31</sup>

Here d'Eon uses the feminine gender throughout, except for 'devenu' which is masculine. D'Eon uses the masculine gender on the verb 'become' which is, I argue, a 'trans' verb of transition. In the epigraph above, Choisy (1995: 82) also uses the past participle 'became' in the masculine directly before a feminine noun: 'et suis redevenu femme' [and I became again(m) a woman] – D'Eon (1785) hirself says 'je suis devenu fille malgré moi' [I became(m) a girl despite myself]. D'Eon constantly claims to be fighting an internal dualism, but this is a Platonic dualism:

It is not at all the dualism of the intelligible and the sensible, of Idea and matter, or of Ideas and bodies. It is a more profound and secret dualism hidden in sensible and material bodies themselves. It is a subterranean dualism between that which receives the action of the Idea and that which eludes this action. (Deleuze 1990: 2)

This dualism is hidden but, like the undecidable, it is not a concealment that can ever be uncovered. It is a 'pure becoming' that 'moves in both directions at once. It always eludes the present, causing future and past, more and less, too much and not enough to coincide in the simultaneity of a rebellious matter' (Deleuze 1990: 2). This usage of the verb 'become' therefore hints to undecidability because it suggests that before this becoming d'Eon was female but ze does not fully become male because the gender on 'servant' remains feminine – ze has become both masculine and feminine.

Throughout, d'Eon is in an in-between state: hir constant double use of gender markers 'indicates his entrapment in the duality of genders; that is, as d'Eon revealed an affiliation with one gender, then the self's alliance with the other gender was both concealed and implied in the same affirmation, and vice versa' (Champagne, Ekstein and

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<sup>31</sup> This passage forms part of a myth created by d'Eon suggesting that he dressed as a woman to spy in Russia, something which is thought to be untrue (Champagne, Ekstein and Kates 2001: xvi).

Kates 2001: xxiii-xxiv). Just as we cannot know precisely why Erauso uses different grammatical genders at certain times we cannot be entirely sure why d’Eon does either. When and how often both d’Eon and Erauso choose to use the feminine grammatical form (or the masculine) could, of course, be entirely capricious and a product of free-form playfulness. Speaking of both d’Eon and Choisy, Harris (2010: 179) argues that ‘although a general rationale is sometimes detectable behind their grammatical choices, both frequently embrace their status as living solecisms from the perspective of linguistic and sexual orthodoxy’. What all these writers have are memoirs which ‘prolong, supplement and even supplant the various gender performances that characterized their lives’ (Harris 2010: 179). As Champagne, Ekstein and Kates (2001: xxiv) say, ‘while the Chevalière claimed several times to have buried his dragoon self, the autobiography literally resurrects him. And the d’Eon who is resurrected is beyond the categories of male and female’. While both d’Eon and Erauso spend a good deal of their lives living as only one gender (d’Eon as the Chevalière in England and Erauso as Antonio in the New World), it is their autobiographies that make them undecidable. My in-depth examination of these transgender texts has proven that because their writers specifically choose to play only with grammatical gender, they had an undecidable gender identity, even if that identity would not have been called ‘transgender’ in their times. The question now is how to represent that undecidability in translation.

##### 5. Translation possibilities: The palimpsest

As we have seen in section 3.2, we are dealing with undecidability on many levels, not just on the level of the language used by the protagonists, though I do address the linguistic level in my after-word below. What I am searching for is an extra-linguistic translation process that attempts to show not only Erauso’s and d’Eon’s multiple source texts, but to highlight the multiplicity of every text and body. Every text is unstable, not just a translated text and every body is undecidable, not just a transgender body; because of this we could see transgender identity as formed of layers of different bodies and identities the way that translation is often considered to be formed of layers of (inter)text. Derrida (2004: 389) claims that ‘to write means to graft. It’s the same word’. If

we take ‘graft’ here to mean ‘attach layers’ we can directly compare this to how Jean Bobby Noble (2006: 84) sees ‘transed bodies as grafted where one materialization is haunted by the other, as opposed to crossing or exiting’. And Gérard Genette’s concept of the hypertext also uses the idea of the graft.

According to Genette (1997: 1), hypertextuality is a form of transtextuality which is ‘all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts’. Hypertextuality is ‘any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the *hypertext*) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the *hypotext*), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary’ (Genette 1997: 5). With the graft we can help to eliminate ideas of an ‘original’ or ‘right’ gender or text: ‘the graft is not something that happens to the properness of the thing. There is no more any thing than there is any original text’ (Derrida 2004: 389). Furthermore, ‘each grafted text continues to radiate back toward the site of its removal, transforming that, too, as it affects the new territory’ (Derrida 2004: 390). The translation transforms the original as in Walter Benjamin’s (2012: 77) concept of the afterlife: ‘In [translations] the original’s life achieves its constantly renewed, latest and most comprehensive development’. The ‘first’ text or body is not exited or passed up but transformed by the new text or body, subsumed but not forgotten: ‘The apparently “present” statement is not the statement of any present, not even of any past present, of any past defined as having taken place, as having been present. Far from any essence, you are straightway plunged by the imperfect into the already opened thickness of another text’ (Derrida 2004: 372).

It is helpful to see transgender identity in this way too because we can challenge the idea that transgender people or translation should ‘pass’: The concept of passing in terms of (trans)gender can be paralleled with the concept of passing in terms of translation with illuminating consequences for both. According to Bornstein (1995: 127), ‘through the mandate of passing, the culture uses transsexuals to reinforce the bi-polar gender system, as transsexuals strive for recognition within their new gender, and thus the privilege and chains of their new gender’. The concept of the transgender person becomes invisible just as passing a target text off as an original work encourages the invisibility of the translator: ‘The traditional virtue of translators [...] has been their invisibility as humble scribes, scribbling transparent texts in the cellar of the castle of literature’ (Levine 1991: xii). With the graft, the ‘first’ body (the rejected body) and the

'first' text (the source text) are proven never to have been 'first' and are made visible as a trace residing beneath the surface of the new body or text; the text and the body are shown to be in a continual process of becoming in which resides 'the paradox of infinite identity (the infinite identity of both directions or senses at the same time – of future and past)' (Deleuze 1990: 2).

Erauso and d'Eon shift between a feminine and masculine gender identity – neither identity is ever entirely forgotten just as the source text of a translation and a translation's influences and intertexts are always residing beneath the surface, haunting the text. D'Eon's 'transition':

Possessed a layered quality that defies two-dimensional paradigms. His surreptitious donning of corsets and his stubborn insistence in continuing to wear his Cross of Saint-Louis atop his female attire, suggests the need for a model of gender identity that can accommodate stratification and gradation equally well as homogenization. (Burrows et al. 2010: 10)

Both d'Eon and Erauso indicate in their memoirs that they experienced an oscillation between the masculine and the feminine and there is an oscillation between source text and target text that goes both ways because the source text influences the translation but the translation also modifies the source text, as seen in Benjamin's (2012) theory of the 'afterlife' of the text. This fluidity in both gender and genre can be exemplified by the palimpsest.

For now, I focus on the palimpsest as embodying Genette's idea of the hypertext (what we might now think of as intertext), I shall return to the idea of the hypertext as a digital medium in chapter two. For Genette (1997: 398), the analogy of the palimpsest represents the hypertext and its 'duplicity of the object', meaning that there is always undecidability because 'a hypertext can be read both for itself and in its relation to its hypotext' (Genette 1997: 397). Palimpsests were created as early as Egyptian times when a shortage of paper was dealt with by erasing text from used parchment or papyrus to make room for new texts. They were used on a domestic scale by the ancient Greeks and the Romans and the practice came to an end in the fifteenth century with the increased availability of paper (Dillon 2007: 13). The erasures were imperfect and the old text would

reappear centuries later underneath the new text. The old text could be mathematical and the new religious as with the Archimedes Palimpsest: in the thirteenth century a tenth-century manuscript written by Archimedes was erased to make room for a book of orthodox Christian prayers. Both texts are now visible (see Dillon 2007 and Easton and Noel 2010).

The Archimedes palimpsest is a demonstration of how the palimpsest is ‘an involved phenomenon where otherwise unrelated texts are involved and entangled, intricately interwoven, interrupting and inhabiting each other’ (Dillon 2007: 4). The texts we are interested in here – the source, the target and their intertexts – however, are not unrelated. The texts underneath influence and inspire the text on the surface and so they are even more entangled – one cannot exist without the other. For example, d’Eon’s text is heavily influenced by an existing narrative tradition, his text includes the pre-texts, or hypertexts in Genette’s terminology, of Joan of Arc, Pope Joan and ‘the title of the main autobiography – *The Great Historical Epistle* – was meant to evoke the New Testament letters of Saint Paul. The use of quotations from Paul throughout the autobiography [...] makes that allusion obvious’ (Champagne, Ekstein and Kates 2001: xi). Erauso was influenced by picaresque texts, religious autobiographies and soldier’s journals (Almendros 2006: 131; see also Stepto 1996: xxxiv for the influence of the picaresque tradition). Parts of d’Eon’s and Erauso’s texts, therefore, are palimpsestuous even before we come to a translation. And this palimpsestuous nature is visible in d’Eon’s physical text as well because some parts of the text are crossed out but what is underneath is still legible and, as mentioned above, some words, like ‘seule’ are written over in a different pen. This idea of purposefully flagging up the intertextual nature of the source texts in a translation, which itself would be doubly intertextual given the translator’s influences are added to the author’s, works well with these particular texts because any translation carried out today would have to be a retranslation: ‘Because retranslations are designed to challenge a previous version of the source text, they are likely to construct a more dense and complex intertextuality so as to signify and call attention to their competing interpretation’ (Venuti 2013: 104).

These translations are not only retranslations but they are translations of memoirs in which ‘the writing and rewriting of the self over a period of time through constant revisions [...] confounds the notion that there is one definitive or fixed version’ (Anderson

2011: 8). Erauso hirself may not have written all the versions of hir autobiography but both hir text and d'Eon's have been constantly revised – there is no definitive, 'original' version as shown in section 3.2. The palimpsest is the perfect embodiment of the layering we find in the graft, and it can dispel notions of the 'originality' and 'authority' of all writing because:

A text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture.  
(Barthes 1977: 146)

As we saw above, the author can be both dead and alive and Seán Burke (1998: 48) explains this as possible with the 'writerly' text because there is 'a closure of representation' and because of the multivocality of texts emphasised by Bakhtin (1981: 262). I will say more about Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia and how this negates the supposed singularity of the text in Chapter Three. For now I wish to note that multivalency in texts 'reflects a dissolution of hierarchies and the emergence of an anti-authoritarian discourse' (Bakhtin 1981: 262). The author is not dead, his or her function has changed, he or she has become one voice among many.

Multivocality is highlighted in the palimpsest: 'the texts which inhabit the palimpsest's surface [...] cannot be hierarchically ordered, or dissociated; they are not separate predicates; they are not the essential attributes of the palimpsest' (Dillon 2007: 43). If this is the case, the palimpsest could help to dispel notions of the 'essentiality' of gender, or highlight the idea that any essence is complex and undecidable. According to Dillon (2007: 92), the palimpsest 'serves as the hymen that holds the masculine phenotext and the feminine geno-text together and apart'. The terms phenotext and genotext were coined by Julia Kristeva; the genotext is 'a process, which tends to articulate structures that are ephemeral (unstable, threatened by drive changes, "quanta" rather than "marks") and nonsignifying (devices that do not have a double articulation)' (Kristeva 1984: 86). The phenotext denotes 'language that serves to communicate', it is 'a structure [...] that obeys the rules of communication' (Kristeva 1984: 87). The genotext is not

interested in ‘meaning-making’ or in communicating to an addressee, it ‘moves through zones that have relative and transitory borders and constitutes a *path* that is not restricted to the two poles of univocal information between two full-fledged subjects’ (Kristeva 1984: 87). The genotext and the phenotext can never be separated, however, and the presence of the genotext in every phenotext means that no text is ever final or can ever ‘encompass the infinite totality of that [signifying] process’ (Kristeva 1984: 87-88). The two texts, one in constant motion, one a seemingly stable structure (that the process of the genotext constantly undermines) are held together and apart by a membrane in

A process that eliminates the spatial heterogeneity between [the two texts] [...]. As a result, they exist in a hymenic fusion or marriage which at the same time preserves their separate identities and inscribes difference within the heart of the identity of the palimpsest. The vellum of the palimpsest thus represents the ‘inter’ – the between of the texts – a between that is no longer that of difference, but of identity, an identity redefined as, and traversed by, difference. (Dillon 2007: 97)

Trans experience could be the ‘between of bodies’, a between that is characterised by queer notions of identity as unstable. Homi Bhabha’s (2004: 56) Third Space is based on a similar hybrid status, it is ‘the “inter” – the cutting edge of translation and renegotiation, the *inbetween* space – that carries the burden of the meaning of culture’. Bhabha (2004: 56) then claims that by ‘exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves’. We can reject binary notions of gender and embrace the others of ourselves (those others haunting us beneath the grafts of new bodies) by allowing identity as queer, as multiple.

According to Sarah Dillon (2007: 124-25), the palimpsest has a role in the queering of textuality, writing, reading and identity because it is ‘a figure for the poststructuralist notion of the *spectralized* subject, “queer” and “the palimpsest” can be understood as structurally comparable figures for the essential involutedness of identity, be it sexual, gender or racial’. Palimpsests are ‘uncanny harbingers to the present of the murdered texts of former ages [...] they also capture the imagination with their spectral power’

(Dillon 2007: 13); with the palimpsest, the murdered texts and identities from former ages are brought back to life or, indeed, they are shown to have never really passed beyond the veil. The author and all their past (and future) lives and the source text and all its past (and future) iterations haunt the translation. Chapter Two will develop these ideas of the author as spectre and the haunted text by looking at Derrida's *Specters of Marx* (2006 [1994]).

Derrida's (2001b) concept of a 'relevant' translation is also prescient here: translation itself is involuted because everything is translatable and also untranslatable, or, to put it another way, nothing is translatable or untranslatable (2001b: 178). As Benjamin (2012: 77) has it in 'The Translator's Task', everything is untranslatable because as soon as a text is translated the 'original' is changed, the 'original' can never be fully represented in another language (not least because there is no equivalence in language) because once translation has taken place the original is no longer the text one was trying to represent because it has gone through this very process of representation. At the same time, translation is always already there as a possibility: 'For a text to be a text it must already, from the start and before any translation, bear this property of being translatable. In this sense, the translation does not come later, but is there from the start as a proper and incipient possibility of the text' (Butler 2016a: xxi).

Any 'text both requires and forbids its translation' (Chamberlain 2012: 265) and has at its heart a double bind which is exemplified by the hymen: the understanding of the language of the other (what is strange and foreign), 'interrupt[s] the *hymen* even as it consummates it' (Derrida 1979: 150). The hymen is an apt analogy because of what it signifies as both the Greek God of marriage and the symbol of virginity – Derrida (2001b) suggests that translation is equally contradictory in that it signifies both original writing and derivative writing. The Greek god Hymen also suggests the idea of the palimpsest/translation and suggests the double bind of translation as both an enlightenment and an obfuscation of the source text as the God is represented 'as a young man carrying a torch and veil' (Oxford 2017). Translation acts as another veil placed on the source text: 'we cannot discover and recover essences, but, instead add veils that, depending on how they are received, may grow into part of the body we are simultaneously trying to unveil' (Van Wyke 2010: 43). So by adding veils the translation adds to the source text: the word hymen was perhaps chosen for the God of marriage

because, etymologically, it has links with the verb ‘sew’ meaning ‘join together with thread’ (Oxford, 2003), the hymen joins the source text and the target text together so that, as we saw above, the source text changes, becomes different to itself and lives on and survives in this altered form (see Benjamin 2012: 76).

Perhaps a translation should literally show its divisions, its multiplicities. Venuti (1992: 12) describes translation as never having one single identity but ‘always a lack and a supplement, and it can never be a transparent representation, only an interpretative transformation that exposes multiple and divided meanings in the foreign text and displaces it with another set of meanings, equally multiple and divided’. In exposing these internal contradictions, the translation can point to the multiplicities of the characters it represents. Instead of passing, Sandy Stone (2006: 232) asks transsexuals to become ‘posttranssexual, ‘to be consciously “read”, to read oneself aloud – and by this troubling and productive reading, to begin to write oneself into the discourses by which one has been written’. A translator could also write themselves into their text and into textual discourse by allowing their status as translator to be consciously ‘read’.<sup>32</sup> In order to expose the contradictions inherent to the text, the author and the translator, experimental methods could be used. Translation can actually help us to move beyond ideas that an experimental text or body is counter to the traditional text or body:

For too long traditional and experimental forms of writing have been seen as separate currents, mistrustful of one another; literary translation [...] suggests a more intimate and constructive fusion of the rearguard and the avant-garde, a fusion which has implications for the very making of translational texts: translation [...] calls for the harnessing of new kinds of paratext, or hypertext, new communicational channels. (Scott 2014b: xi)

As mentioned in the introduction, a transdisciplinary, or ‘entangled’ approach can bring this experimentation. Fitzgerald and Callard (2014: 17-18) explain this thus: ‘It is not our desire for control that undergirds our positive turn to experiment. Quite the opposite:

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<sup>32</sup> Of course, we must add the caveat that being ‘consciously’ read suggests that we can make other people see us as we wish to be seen, something we can never really do because clothes, texts, embodiments are always interpreted differently by different people.

we are compelled by the promise of digressions, transgressions, mistakes and the subterranean existence of not-as-yet-played-out narratives'. A scientific stance on experimentation, the idea of constantly repeating the experiment, suggests the palimpsest if every layer we try is not discarded but kept underneath. The difference here is that we are not repeating in order to find the perfect solution, we are repeating precisely to create some of the possible not-as-yet-played-out-narratives the text holds within. Translating the text multiple times in multiple ways is an enactment of the fact that all writing is a game, the author plays with writings that have come before: 'the writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His only power is *to mix writings*, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any one of them' (Barthes 1977: 146, my emphasis). I am aiming to make my translations ludic manipulations of the undecidability of these trans texts.

## 6. Conclusion

In summary, what makes Erauso and d'Eon hard to 'read' is the transdisciplinary stance needed to try and understand and (re)present or (re)produce their lives. This transdisciplinarity is, like translation itself, an act of violence and is something that is embodied in the palimpsest: 'the palimpsest becomes a figure for interdisciplinarity – for the productive violence of the involvement, entanglement, interruption and inhabitation of disciplines in and on each other' (Dillon 2007: 2). If we want to acknowledge the violence of translation and of openly identifying as transgender (the violent revelation that both writing and gender are products of effort not of creative genius or biology) then we can play with transgender identity in translation. The translator can replicate Erauso and d'Eon's gender play in a translation that is itself playful. In their writings Erauso and d'Eon make everyone, including the reader, question the stability of gender; in writing down transgender experiences, implicit lived performances become explicit literary performances: 'in contexts where deceit regarding gender is made salient, everyone's gender may begin to be doubted' (Kessler and McKenna 2006: 176).

I am not trying to get to the 'truth' of d'Eon's or Eraso's identities. Gaillardet (1970: xi) says that his biography of d'Eon aims to 'reveal the truth, to catch nature as it

were in the act, to strip the man and show him, as much as possible, in a state of physical or moral nakedness which leaves the eye in no doubt'. Aside from the fact that much of Gaillardet's biography was complete fiction and therefore could not possibly 'reveal the truth', the purpose of any work on d'Eon or Erauso, biography or translation, should not attempt to leave the reader 'in no doubt'. By writing Erauso's and d'Eon's texts as palimpsests, I am exemplifying the fact that I am 'adding another layer to the involution of texts that characterizes [their] history' (Dillon 2007: 9). Any biographer or translator of the two figures cannot possibly hope to represent them fully, unequivocally or to reveal their 'true' identity, they can only add to the layers of identity that Erauso and d'Eon created for themselves and that other biographers or translators have added before them. The reluctance to give a definitive portrait is queer: 'there is an underlying belief permeating the field that sometimes things cannot be explained and that is okay. In this, queer theory seeks to allow for complexity and the holding of uncertainties' (Giffney 2009: 7). Queer theory allows theorists, and translators, to go to extremes, Giffney (2009: 9) talks of theorists writing about queer theory, but the same could apply to translators translating with queer theory: 'There is a valuing of difficulty because of the concerted effort made by theorists not to make things easy or palatable but to challenge the reader to work through concepts with the same expenditure of energy exerted by the writer'.

What I have shown through the palimpsestuous translation of transgender identities is that we can expose all gender as complex. And we can also expose the unoriginality of any writing: the palimpsest does not rest on any of the translation's sources as being definitive or authoritative but is constantly moving between writings, demonstrating that nothing comes first, not even the source text. If we create a true palimpsest of translation over source text, then we can place an early-modern and twenty-first-century reading together; we can create something recognisable and yet incomprehensible, normative and yet non-normative, multiple and yet unified, masculine and yet feminine, foreign and yet domestic. Through experiment and risk we can expose all writing and all gender as always already queer.

The next chapter will consider how, despite queer arguments against the idea of an essential identity or gender, intersex children are still assigned by doctors what is presumed to be their 'correct' sex, without their consent. Harris (2010: 182) looks to d'Eon's constant switching between worlds, one masculine and associated with war,

blood and duty to the king, the other feminine and associated with religion, purity and duty to God and sees 'a sense of metaphysical rootlessness not unlike that which we find in the hermaphrodite Herculine Barbin's memoirs in the nineteenth century'. I shall be exploring the translation of intersex identity through the translation of Barbin's memoirs and the 2002 novel *Middlesex* by Jeffrey Eugenides. The chapter will continue to focus on the translation of textual undecidability but will also consider how to deal with sexual undecidability.

## Chapter One: After-word

In this section I will discuss my own translation strategies for dealing with transgender undecidability, looking firstly at linguistic strategies that focus around a new 'gendered' font and then extra-linguistic strategies that focus around the palimpsest.

The specific instances of shifting gender markers do have to be dealt with in translation because ignoring these, as the Steptos do, impoverishes such non-normative texts. Using an 'm' and an 'f' in superscript, as Champagne, Ekstein and Kates do, is one way to translate the phenomenon of an extra 'e' in French and would also work for Spanish words that end in 'o' (masculine) or 'a' (feminine). This strategy works well for an academic rendering or annotation of the memoirs. However, I want my solution to stretch the English language, to be ludic in order to resist translation and gender norms. To that end, I have designed a new font which uses the symbols of Mars and Venus on certain letters to indicate if a word was originally masculine or feminine. With this font, the masculinity or femininity of a word is not given in an after-thought but becomes part of the word itself as in the French and Spanish. The font was created for me by a professional typographer who put the symbol of Mars on letters with a curve at the top (a, c, m, e, o, s, q, p, g, n) and the symbol of Venus on letters with a curve at the bottom (a, c, e, o, b, d, u, s, v) (see figure 2).

Character (in Times Gender)	Character (in Times Gender)
ð	♀
ā	܂
܂	܃
܄	܅
܆	܇
܈	܉
܊	܊
܋	܋
܌	܌
܍	܍
܏	܏
܏	܏
܏	܏
܏	܏
܏	܏
܏	܏
܏	܏
܏	܏

Figure 2: the masculine and feminine gendered characters of my font called ‘Times Gender’, based on Times New Roman

The limited amount of letters does restrict translation choices and there is no reason why many more, if not all twenty-six, letters could not be ‘gendered’ in the future. Concurrent with finding this solution for translating the ‘trans’ appropriation of grammatical gender is my consideration of how to translate ‘trans texts’.

I will now turn my attention to how one might actually create a palimpsestuous translation. Butler (1994: 38) warns against challenges that become legible as they are ‘readily recuperable’, what subversive practices have to do is ‘overwhelm the capacity to read, challenge conventions of reading, and demand new possibilities of reading’. The way we read both bodies and texts need to be challenged. However, Lawrence Venuti (2008: 255) considers that translators can only become more than marginal by ‘limiting their discursive experiments to perceptible deviations that may risk but stop short of the parodic or the incomprehensible’. In order to create a readable experimental translation I have made my own palimpsest which involves layers of text made from acetate paper. My translation is entitled *The Life and Adventures of Catalina de Erauso: ‘The Lieutenant Nun’* incorporating the titles given to the work by Bautista Muñoz and Ferrer, Vallbona and the Steptos.

The first layer is Vallbona's 'supposedly' seventeenth-century reading (supposedly, on the basis that the Madrid manuscript was actually transcribed in the eighteenth century). The second layer is Ferrer's nineteenth-century transcription. The third layer is made up of my translation notes distinguished by being in red font and the fourth layer is my twenty-first-century translation (see figure 3) (the order in which my translation layers are placed can be varied – the translation does not have to be on top, it could even come between the source texts); each 'page' of my translation therefore actually comprises four pages altogether. Because Ferrer and Vallbona's versions of the story are so similar it is possible to have each page of the source texts and the translation map roughly on top of each other by using different fonts and font sizes. For example, each page of the first four-page section ends in Erauso mentioning hir profession as a nun: 'i entonces se trató de profesión' (Vallbona), 'y entonces se trató de mi profesión' (Ferrer), 'and then I was meant to become a nun!' (my translation). There is an extra, invisible, layer to the translation as well because the ultimate layer of any text always belongs to the reader and the text and the trans identity are written anew with every reading.

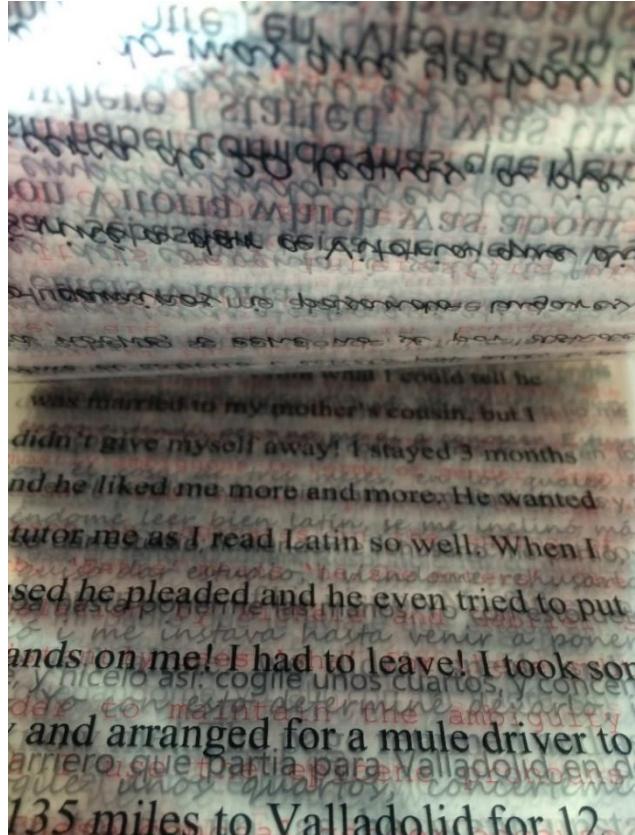


Figure 3: My palimpsest of Erauso's texts

Following my transdisciplinary methodology any translation must be iterative, creative and innovative, as Clive Scott (2008: 73) notes when we come to carry out an experiment 'multiple texts/trials will be necessary'. For this reason, I have also created a digital version of my translation (see figure 4).

Capítulo 1		
Su patria, padres, nacimiento, educación, fuga		
CAPITULO PRIMERO		
Su patria, padres, nacimiento, educación, fuga y correrías por varias partes		
Naci y	Hir homeland, parents, birth, upbringing, escape	
Guipúz		
de Gale		
Naci	I was	
su casa	el año	year 1
Conven	de Ga	de Ga
con mi	en su	me up
donde	entra	Conve
Estando	monja	Domin
Monja	enton	and pro
era rob	Estan	fight
A la ne	una m	and ta
a medi	la cui	just a
qual m	a medi	the co
fui por	a med	aunt d
dexéme	cual r	me to
Yo fu	keys t	key to
conve	had st	had st
Estando	Estan	excus
La prin	á la p	said, "Go on, lie down."
tocándo	tia, tocándome	and lie down."
		- Anda acuéstate.

Figure 4: A digital translation of the beginning of Chapter One in Ferrer (1829: 1-5) and Vallbona (1992: 33-35)

Here the palimpsest is suggested more than shown and I have experimented with slightly different layers: the first (bottom) layer is Vallbona's version of the source text, the second layer is Ferrer's, the third layer is my first translation draft and the top layer is my 'final' translation. This translation shows its multiplicities, not only in its sources but also in my translation drafts, in order to point to the multiplicity of the character it

(re)presents and also to the idea that no work that gets put down on paper is ever really 'final', even once it has been published.

## Chapter Two: Translating Intersex

‘He wished at that moment that his whole life had not been a secret, that lots of people were like him, instead of his being alone in a world where everyone was secure in their place as either woman or man’. (Winter 2011: 414)

### 1. Introduction

In *Annabel*, the intersex protagonist Wayne Blake regrets the fact that ‘he’ lives in a ‘world where everyone was secure in their place as either woman or man’.<sup>33</sup> Wayne’s sense of the world is a bit too clear-cut, however. As we saw in Chapter One, people have been experiencing doubt about whether they are a ‘woman’ or a ‘man’ or both, and writing about this doubt, for centuries. According to Stacey D’Erasmo (2011), ‘these days, more than a few people custom-mix their identities through hormones and surgery. There aren’t only two or three or even four genders, but as many as can be imagined, and they change over time’. Despite this, ‘fiction that attempts to contemplate this state of affairs is still rare’ (D’Erasmo 2011; see also Holmes 2008: 116).

Intersexuality seems to have first become a subject to be fictionalised in the nineteenth century: Julia Ward Howe wrote *The Hermaphrodite* in 1846. But the subject disappeared for more than a century until Alain Roger wrote a French novel of the same name, *L’Hermaphrodite* in 1977. The twenty-first century, however, has seen a proliferation of English-language texts exploring intersexuality: *Middlesex* by Jeffrey Eugenides (2002), *Annabel* by Kathleen Winter (2011), *Golden Boy* by Abigail Tarttelin (2013), *Alex as Well* by Alyssa Brugman (2013), *Double Exposure* by Bridget Birdsall (2014), *None of the Above* by I.W. Gregorio (2015), *Lum* by Libby Ware (2015), two memoirs called *Intersex: A Memoir* by Aaron Apps (2015a) and *Born Both: An Intersex Life*

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<sup>33</sup> Intersexuality ‘refers to a physical and/or chromosomal set of possibilities in which the features usually understood as belonging distinctly to either the male or female sex are combined in a single body’ (Holmes 2008: 32).

by Hilda Viloria (2017) and a collection of poetry entitled *Dear Herculine* also by Aaron Apps (2015b).<sup>34</sup>

Apps's poetry collection is addressed to Herculine Barbin, and his work 'is an intertextual project that recalls portions of [Barbin's] memoirs [...]. Herculine's experiences are set against and interwoven into the author's experiences as an intersexed body' (Ashata Press, no date). Barbin's memoir, *Mes souvenirs* (1874) [My Memoirs], helped make hir the most famous 'hermaphrodite' of the nineteenth century (see Dreger 1998) and ze is seen almost as the 'original' textual hermaphrodite who started the textual exploration of intersexuality by writing a memoir which 'provided the model: speak instead of being spoken about' (Fassin 2014: 241, my translation). Because of this I explore *Mes souvenirs* in this chapter. I read this alongside the 2002 novel *Middlesex*, whose author, Jeffrey Eugenides also draws intertextual inspiration from Barbin's memoir.

Calliope Stephanides, the narrator of *Middlesex*, claims that Barbin's memoirs 'make unsatisfactory reading, and it was after finishing them years ago that I first got the idea to write my own' (Eugenides 2002: 19). Despite this connection, *Mes souvenirs* and *Middlesex* are rarely studied together. One exception can be found in *Intersex: A Perilous Difference* (2008), in which Morgan Holmes uses both Barbin and Eugenides's texts as case studies for her exploration of the treatment of intersexes both in history and in fiction. My reading takes up and advances Holmes's comparison. Arne De Boever (2012) also reads *Middlesex* alongside Foucault's introduction to Barbin's memoir though he does not mention Barbin's own text and he does not consider their translations. These two texts, written centuries apart, both have protagonists who problematise the idea that sex is natural and this in itself causes problems for translation.

In order to consider why these texts are difficult to translate, I will begin by introducing them in turn. *Mes souvenirs* was first published by Ambroise Tardieu in 1874 in a medical journal. It then fell into obscurity until the 1970s when it became a cornerstone of much queer theory with its rediscovery by Michel Foucault. He republished the story under the name *Herculine Barbin dite Alexina B* (2014 [1978])

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<sup>34</sup> This list is not exhaustive.

[Herculine Barbin called Alexina B].<sup>35</sup> Barbin was assigned the female sex at birth; however, in hir early twenties ze was declared, by a doctor, to be biologically male. Ze was forced to move to Paris to live and work as a man. There ze wrote hir memoirs until hir suicide. As will already have been apparent, I continue to use epicene pronouns to refer to my protagonists in this chapter. Holmes (2008: 169) also uses epicene pronouns to refer to Barbin, explaining that ‘my use of “hir” in such cases is not intended to decide for hir that s/he is transgendered or transsexed, but to allow the recognition of multiple sex and gender identifications’. Barbin can definitely be said to have a multiple gender identity because throughout the text ze switches between masculine and feminine gender markers.

While Holmes’s case study of Barbin’s memoirs touches on the issues involved in translating intersex, her case study of Eugenides’s *Middlesex* typifies research into the novel: it completely ignores the translation challenges it engenders. The text’s protagonist, Cal/lie, is assigned the female sex at birth but does not menstruate during puberty or develop breasts; ze tries to hide this fact for as long as possible but is eventually taken to a doctor who declares hir to be intersex. The doctor offers Cal/lie surgery to become a ‘proper’ girl but ze refuses and therefore never has ‘corrective’ surgery. In both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries intersex children were operated on according to which sex doctors chose for them (see Dreger 1998: 181). Typically, doctors who advocated corrective surgery excluded the parents from any decision being made about the sex of their child (Callahan 2009: 7). Today, parents are becoming more involved and an ‘increased access to information and support has resulted in more parents choosing to delay or refuse surgical intervention’ (Shapiro 2010: 169). Changing attitudes to intersexuality are helping to pick apart the concept of binary sex because intersex babies reveal invaluable information about ‘non-intersex’ babies: all babies are *made to fit* into the category of male and female. As Alice Domurat Dreger (1998: 4) notes, ‘when we focus on hermaphrodites [...] we sometimes forget how much variation in sexual anatomy there is among undoubted males and females’. What Barbin, Cal/lie, and all intersex people demonstrate is Butler’s point from *Gender Trouble* that sex is as

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<sup>35</sup> Although most commonly known as Herculine, Barbin was christened Adélaïde Herculine Barbin and was known to hir family and friends as Alexina. When ze became a man ze was known as Abel. Throughout the memoir, Barbin uses the pseudonym Camille (which is unisex in French).

cultural as gender, it is not ‘natural’: ‘the cultural construction of “sex” is made all too apparent in the medical management of intersex bodies’ (Carroll 2010: 191).

I will discuss the medical management of intersex both past and present in more detail in section 2. What Barbin’s memoir and hir treatment show is that the nineteenth-century medical management of intersex bodies was established around the idea that desire revealed ‘the truth’ of the intersex body. According to Holmes (2008: 91), this idea is still prevalent and, indeed, she criticises Eugenides for adhering to the same idea in *Middlesex*. Given the wide gap in time between my primary sources in this chapter I will start by discussing how hermaphroditism has been seen over the past two centuries, starting in Barbin’s time and ending today. What is important in the medical management of intersex for my research is that, firstly, surgery seems to demand a binary decision on the part of the surgeon and, secondly, translation into certain languages would seem to demand similar moments of decision by the translator over such elements as gendered pronouns. Thirdly, though, both language and translation can experience and reinvent and, in reinventing, can suggest more flexible and less binary positions and identities. I use the case studies of Barbin and Cal/lie to consider how the surgical decision manifests itself in texts and the treatment of these texts by critics, readers and translators and to consider how we can use translation to think about other, less permanent, options for new-born babies.

I will argue that one of the ways we can move on from the rigid and binary categorisation of babies is to think of intersex people as undecidable, and to see this undecidability as something positive. This turn to undecidability is a move away from the use of ‘ambiguity’ to describe intersex people. When describing genitals it seems to mean ‘not one of two’ (the prefix ‘ambi’ points to ‘two’ rather than ‘more than two’). This, according to the Intersex Society of North America (no date) is not true: ‘Saying someone has an intersex condition isn’t the same as saying she or he was born with “ambiguous genitalia”, because some people with intersex conditions have genitalia that look pretty typically masculine or feminine’. I shall consider how Barbin and Cal/lie are undecidable medically and how their texts mirror this undecidability by shifting between genres. Most critics short-circuit undecidability and I will read the source texts for specific instances where translation can maintain it. Undecidability can and will be found to affect sex, gender, texts (both fictitious and not), hypertexts, intertexts, translation and transness.

As transness is a trope of undecidability so too is undecidability, along with all these other concepts, a trope of transness. Both *Mes souvenirs* and *Middlesex* are undecidable texts about undecidable protagonists and I ask here how translation can deal with both sexual and textual undecidability.

## 2. Hermaphroditism through the ages

Whilst fiction and autobiography relating to sexual undecidability may be rare compared to texts about cis-gender characters, intersex has been recognised for centuries (though, of course, not under the name 'intersex') and case reports abound (see Gilbert 2002). In the early-modern period, hermaphroditism 'told [...] stories: about order, knowledge, nature and culture; about what it meant to be an outsider and what it meant to be human' (Gilbert 2002: 1). Intersex can still tell us those things today despite the change of name and of attitudes towards the 'condition' which have changed dramatically over the years.<sup>36</sup> It is important to look at the history of intersex because 'intersex, contrary to the dominant medical story currently in play, is an historical phenomenon and not a neutral biological fact' (Holmes 2008: 31). I am attempting to expose intersex as a construction and to do this we have to understand that it is a construction with a long and complicated history which works very hard to hide its constructedness. Furthermore, 'what it means to be a male, a female, or a hermaphrodite [...] is specific to time and place' (Dreger 1998: 9-10). This specificity of time and place throws up interesting challenges for translation where the target text is always situated in a different time and place to its source.

In Chapter One I argued against the popular idea that many people followed a one-sex model in the early-modern period. This model supposedly meant that 'early medical practitioners, who understood sex and gender to fall along a continuum and not into the discrete categories we use today, were not fazed by hermaphrodites' (Fausto-Sterling 2000: 32). However, according to Ruth Gilbert (2002: 3), 'sexual ambiguity,

<sup>36</sup> Until the early twentieth century intersexuality was known as hermaphroditism but 'hermaphroditism in fact retains little purchase outside of myth, since in its most literal sense (the dual possession of full male and female sexual reproductive organs) it has never been known to occur in humans' (Hsu 2011: 91) (see also Intersex Society of North America, no date). 'Intersex' was first used in 1901 by German Scientist Richard Goldschmidt (See the Organisation Intersex International Australia Limited 2012).

whether embodied or enacted, anatomical or erotic, has always generated confused responses'. My research into opinions on early-modern sex and gender in Chapter One revealed that Gilbert's 2002 book, *Early Modern Hermaphrodites: Sex and Other Stories*, questions the idea that people still followed Hippocrates's one-sex model in the early-modern period. I briefly return to a questioning of the one-sex model here in order to consider the early-modern treatment of intersex.

According to Dreger (1998: 32), by the early-modern period people were following Aristotle: 'later thinkers formed from the writings of Aristotle a different [...] tradition that imagined hermaphrodites to be doubly sexed beings. That tradition specifically held that hermaphrodites had extra sex (genital) parts added on to their single "true" sexes'. While the Aristotelian position allowed for genital doubling this made no difference at all to the body's single sex, 'for this was determined, according to Aristotle, by the heat of the heart and, regardless of corporeal morphology, was always decisively determined as male or female' (Tidd 2000: 76). This meant that binary notions of sex were unharmed by hermaphroditism. Aristotle studied under Plato (Callahan 2009: 10) and the idea of binary sex follows Plato's fourth-century BC ideas in *The Symposium* (2008): he writes, through Aristophanes, that there used to be three types of human – male (offspring of the Sun), female (offspring of the Earth) and androgynous (offspring of the Moon). In order to control these beings (and invent heterosexuality), Zeus had them all cut in half, effectively destroying the category of the androgynous. These half-beings now roam the Earth looking for their other half, be that male or female, and 'the desire and pursuit of the whole is called love' (Plato 2008: 26). Plato certainly does not argue against homosexual love but he does argue for binary sex that is only ever male or female. Binary sex is a postlapsarian idea – 'for some of the early Fathers [...] the difference between human nature before the Fall (prelapsarian) and human nature after the Fall (postlapsarian) was expressed through sexual difference: prelapsarian humanity was virginal; postlapsarian humanity was sexual' (Bernau 2012: 73). After Adam and Eve had been tainted by 'original sin' Christians had to decide whether to live spiritually or carnally, and Christ and the saints were the models for a spiritual life (models that both Erauso and d'Eon followed); an unwavering devotion to a spiritual life was hard, however, because of the indelible mark of original sin (Bernau 2012: 73).

These debates over how hermaphrodites were seen in the early-modern period are important not just for how these texts could be translated today but for how they were viewed and translated in the past – an adherence to the one-sex model has fed directly into the reception of my first text, Barbin’s memoir. David Glover and Cora Kaplan (2009: xiv-xv) believe that:

According to current medico-legal orthodoxy, whatever a person’s sexual tastes may be, it should in principle be possible to classify everyone unambiguously as either male or female. Yet, if one looks at ‘sex’ from the long-term historical perspective recommended by Foucault, the fate of Herculine Barbin suggests that to define identity like this is also to close down some of the options that once had been available to those who felt themselves to be ‘different’.

They suggest that in Barbin’s time people were not made to fit into the labels male or female. However, while Foucault makes it clear in his introduction to Barbin’s memoir that a hermaphrodite was free to choose whichever sex he or she wanted, he also makes it clear that this decision had to be final:

When the time came to marry, the hermaphrodite was free to decide for themselves if they wanted to forever be the sex they had been assigned, or if they preferred the other. The only imperative: to never change, to keep what you had chosen until the end of your days on pain of being considered a sodomite. (Foucault 2014: 10, my translation)

Foucault’s reading of Barbin is unique compared to those readings of intersex history by Gilbert or Glover and Kaplan or of Barbin by the theorists I look at in section 3.2 because it was his reading of the memoir which gave rise to much of the theory through which intersex is discussed – he is not one in a long list but the one at the forefront of research into theories of sex. The imperative that a hermaphrodite must choose demonstrates the fear felt by the medical establishment surrounding these figures: if someone was free to choose a sex it suggests that no sex could be forced upon them, perhaps because one

could not be medically ‘proven’ to prevail, but it is equally clear that the hermaphrodite could not be allowed to remain ‘undecidable’. In the late nineteenth century, when Barbin was writing, sex was open to doubt but this was stringently covered up.

Nevertheless, this ‘cover-up’ was not universally agreed upon by all who studied or were involved in the treatment of intersex. In 1910 Magnus Hirschfeld, considered a founder of sexology along with Richard von Krafft-Ebing (see Wolff 1986), wrote, in *Transvestites: The Erotic Drive to Cross Dress*, of ‘sexual intermediaries’ by which ‘we understand manly formed women and womanly formed men at every possible stage, or, in other words, men with womanly characteristics and women with manly characteristics’ (Hirschfeld 1991: 18). Hirschfeld (1991: 229) cites Otto Weininger as having also written an important book that supports ‘the teaching of sexual intermediaries’. In 1903, Weininger published *Sex and Character* in which he argues that all people are a mixture of the male and the female. He asks: ‘Is it really the case that all “men” and all “women” are totally different from each other, and that all those on either side of the divide, men on the one hand, women on the other, are completely alike in a number of respects?’ (Weininger 2005: 10). Both Hirschfeld’s and Weininger’s work demonstrates that by the beginning of the twentieth century, men and women were considered different but they were also considered similar and, furthermore, it was acknowledged that no two women or men were the same. Gender was beginning to be seen on a spectrum:

It must be assumed from the outset that there are not only extreme males with the smallest residues of femininity on the one hand, extreme females with totally reduced masculinity on the other hand, and a concentration of those hermaphroditic forms in the middle, with nothing but empty spaces between these three points. (Weininger 2005: 13)

As we saw with Foucault’s description of the categorisation of the ‘undecidable’ hermaphrodite before marriage, medical practitioners clung to their rigid categorisations in order to contain the hermaphroditic body despite new ideas about the instability of sex and gender.

According to Dreger (1998: 29), the period from 1870 to 1915 was the ‘Age of Gonads’ in which medical men agreed that ‘every body’s “true” sex was marked by one

thing and one thing only: the anatomical nature of the gonadal tissue as either ovarian or testicular'. This ensured that the hermaphrodite could be controlled, could be made to fit into society's categories of male and female, and suppressed the troubling discovery that sex was open to doubt. The late nineteenth century seems to be the location of a calcification of medical opinions on sex which lasted for some decades: 'because of the near-constant international exchange of ideas and reports, medical discourse on hermaphrodites in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries tended to follow a standard pattern, no matter what the nationality or disciplinary affiliations of the author' (Dreger 1998: 75). However, these authors and doctors who agreed that there must be one true sex did not agree on 'which traits were significant or necessary to malehood or femalehood' (Dreger 1998: 83). This must have meant that an intersex person who was classified as 'male' by one doctor could have just as easily been classified as 'female' by another if they differed on what made up a man or a woman.

The medical discourse of truth was being used to keep people in their proper places and to maintain heterosexuality as the norm. Today, in the wake of feminist and queer theory the interrelation between the terms 'gender' and 'sexuality' has come under theoretical and political scrutiny, but 'the characteristics we think of as belonging to the categories of sex, gender, and sexuality were generally supposed to belong naturally together – even if some people violated the rules' (Dreger 1998: 89). The study of intersex and other trans identities has helped to uncover sex and gender as separate categories (though both cultural) because, as Butler (2006: 152) argues, 'it does not follow that to be a given sex is to become a given gender'. Butler's (2004b: 344) point is that exceptional cases like cross-dressers or drag artists expose the workings of the gender paradigm to us. However, Andrea Rossi (2013: 189) claims that 'the case of the hermaphrodite Barbin is too exceptional to be held as paradigmatic and that, moreover, our society has since produced far more flexible mechanisms to deal with "abnormal selves". This is undeniable'. It is true that treatment of intersexuals has changed since Barbin's time but it is not 'undeniable' that treatment is more 'flexible'.

Hird and Germon (2001: 163-164) neatly summarise the treatment of intersexuals as falling into three different phases:

The first phase understood the intersexual as two sexes in one body. One of these sexes dominated and gender assignment was based on this natural domination. Phase two considered there to be one true sex, decipherable only by physicians. Gender assignment was based on the physician's expert declaration of the individual's true sex. In the most recent phase physicians and the psychiatric community conjoin expertise to uncover the best sex appropriate to morphology, psychology and, [...] expediency.

While the search for a 'best' sex would appear to consider the best interests of the child, using evidence gleaned from *Middlesex* which I shall examine in more detail later, I would argue that 'best' really refers to the sex that society can most easily accommodate, especially the sex which would lead to a heterosexual relationship. 'Best', therefore, is still a normative term and it could be argued that a 'best' sex is simply a 'true' sex under another name. This search for a 'best' sex continues today and has its basis in the nineteenth-century idea of the one-body-one-sex rule, a rule which was created to keep males and females as separate categories (see Dreger 1998: 197 and Holmes 2008: 36). These rules forced all human beings to be 'decidable' in terms of sex and, preferably heterosexual, in terms of sexuality. My texts involve protagonists who break these rules, who are undecidable in terms of sex and are undecidable in terms of gender and sexuality and my research considers how to make sure that any translation of these texts can continue to break the rules and be faithful to undecidability.

### 3. Two undecidable intersex memoirs

#### 3.1 Medical undecidability

Before I analyse my two source texts in detail and examine linguistic examples of undecidability, a consideration of how the protagonists are undecidable both medically and textually will allow me to argue that sexual undecidability is reflected in textual undecidability; and to argue that this is something the translators of these texts should be aware of, and when they are not, the potential for a queer text to be given new life in

translation is lost. Here I will examine in more detail the ways in which Barbin and Cal/lie have unreliable and undecidable bodies.

In an attempt to explain away Barbin's condition, medical practitioners of the time claimed ze was no hermaphrodite at all: ze was a boy who had been mistaken for a girl; it was thought that Barbin suffered from hypospadias. This was a condition where one is born male but the penis is deformed (see Dreger 1998). The medical reports which were published alongside the memoir tell a slightly different story. The medical journal in which Barbin's memoir was originally published was titled: 'La question medico-légale de l'identité dans les rapports avec les vices de conformation des organes sexuels' [The Medical-Legal Issue of Identity in Relation to Irregular Formation of the Sexual Organs] and included all of Barbin's medical reports. Dr Chesnet (2014: 148-150), a doctor examining Barbin in 1860 (when the intersex condition was first discovered), notes that: she has a small penis or an enlarged clitoris which can become erect but which can only be erect for a limited time; she has only one descended testicle, the left one being higher but able to be produced when pressed; she has a vulva, labia, a feminine urethra independent of an imperforated penis and a short vagina but has never menstruated. He concludes that 'Alexina is a [...] hermaphrodite without doubt' but 'a man' because of 'an evident predominance of the masculine sex' (Chesnet 2014: 150, my translation).

Dr Goujon (2014: 153-158), whose examination comes in 1869 and was carried out post-mortem, reports that 'the individual' could play the man or the woman during sex but he was sterile in both cases, he had an imperforated penis susceptible to erection which could attain the same size as a penis belonging to a regularly formed individual (5 centimetres in length or 2.5 when flaccid);<sup>37</sup> this organ was more of an enlarged clitoris than a penis as sometimes in a woman a clitoris could reach the volume of the index finger. He also had a vagina (depth of 6.5 centimetres) ending in a cul-de-sac which would admit the index finger without resistance. Goujon (2014: 159, my translation) concludes that after his study it is readily evident that 'if it is sometimes difficult and even impossible to recognise the true sex of an individual at birth, it is not so at a more advanced age and above all at the approach of puberty'.

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<sup>37</sup> Throughout Tardieu's journal Barbin is never once 'named' as Herculine Barbin but is anonymous, it was Foucault who travelled to places Barbin describes in the memoir, found hir school and 'gave' hir back hir name (see Fassin 2014).

The medical discourse of both Chesnet and Goujon serves to demonstrate the determinedness of the medical establishment to find a ‘true sex’ in the face of staggering evidence that one does not exist. In order to drive home the idea that every person has a ‘true’ sex Goujon (2014: 160, my translation) goes so far as to note that ‘hermaphroditism does not exist in man or in superior animals’. It is a strange position to take after such a clear description of a human being with hermaphroditism, but Goujon evidently thinks that the diagnosis of Barbin as ‘truly’ male effectively ‘cures’ hir of hir hermaphroditism. In Tardieu’s journal it is clear that there was no consensus between doctors as to what counted as definitive markers of the female or male sex. Tardieu notes a disagreement between himself and a M. Gallard who attaches ‘far too much importance to the necessary existence of a protruding penis of several centimetres as a constant sign of the masculine sex’ (Tardieu 1874: 40, my translation). Despite these differences of opinion, Barbin was made to become legally male.

Regardless of these medical conclusions, in his introduction to the memoir, Michel Foucault refers to Barbin with both masculine and feminine pronouns.<sup>38</sup> Holmes (2008: 85) criticises Foucault’s introduction because she thinks he accepts Barbin as male following the medical reports: ‘Foucault’s use of the masculine pronoun to refer to Alexina, paired with his characterization of hir body as “graceless”, accepts the very medical “truth” sought/produced regarding Alexina’s sex that Foucault’s introduction claims to question’. However, Foucault switches between using feminine and masculine gender to refer to Barbin on pages 14-16 and he ultimately believes that ‘it is clear that it is not from the point of view of the sex finally discovered, or rediscovered, that she writes. It is not the man who finally writes’ (Foucault 2014: 17, my translation).

Foucault (2014: 17, my translation) believes that Barbin is ‘always for herself without a certain sex’ and this is where his introduction can be criticised – in his insistence that Barbin actually has no sex at all. Foucault could be accused of suggesting that the female sex is a non-entity when compared to the male because ‘she [woman] has no “proper” name. And her sexual organ, which is not *one* organ, is counted as *none*. The negative, the underside, the reverse of the only visible and morphologically designatable

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<sup>38</sup> The introduction was first included with the 1980 American translation, it was first published in French in the journal *Arcadie* and was then published in 1994 in a collection entitled *Dits et écrits*. Before being included in the 2014 text, it had never appeared in a French edition of the text (Fassin 2014).

organ [...]: the penis' (Irigaray 1985: 26). However, Foucault's mistake is that he believes Barbin to have no sex because ze is somehow not regulated, like the rest of humanity, by relations of power (cf. Gomolka 2012 for a critique of Foucault's introduction).

According to Butler (2006: 127), Foucault contradicts his theory of sexuality developed in *The History of Sexuality, Volume I*. He says that Alexina was the 'subject without identity' (Foucault 2014: 18, my translation) and that 'the intense monosexuality of the religious and scholastic life serves to reveal tender pleasures which discover and provoke sexual non-identity' (Foucault 2014: 18, my translation): he believes that Barbin lives in a world where sexual identity, as a category, does not exist. Butler (2006: 134) makes it very clear that Foucault's introduction is a misreading because: 'Whether "before" the law as a multiplicitous sexuality or "outside" the law as an unnatural transgression, those positionings are invariably "inside" a discourse which produces sexuality and then conceals that production'.<sup>39</sup> Butler objects to the notion that there can be a 'self-relation' before power; even if we did suppose that Barbin had no identity, Butler's point is that a 'non-identity' is still situated in relation to the structures which create identity. With this argument, Foucault undermines his later point that while we can never escape power, the individual can 'subvert its strategic orientations and benefit from the unanticipated consequences yielded by such subversions' (Lafrance 2002: 122).

Within the memoir Barbin is known as Camille, in reality ze was Herculine when 'female' and Abel when 'male'; Eugenides's novel tells the story of Calliope, or both Callie and Cal, who is also considered to be intersex but unequivocally male by the medical characters that come into contact with hir. Despite this, and in opposition to Barbin's actual treatment, Cal/lie is offered surgery to continue living as a female. Ze is referred to Dr Luce of the Sexual Disorders and Gender Identity Clinic of New York Hospital whose report on Cal/lie reads thus:

At birth, somatic appearance was of a penis so small as to appear to be a clitoris. The subject's XY karyotype was not discovered until puberty, when she began to virilise [...]. During examination, undescended testes could be palpated. The 'penis' was slightly hypospadiac [...] Blood tests confirmed an

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<sup>39</sup> See Fassin 2014: 233 for a defence of Foucault's position.

XY chromosomal status. In addition, blood tests revealed that the subject was suffering from 5-alpha-reductase deficiency syndrome. (Eugenides 2002: 434-435)

Here, Eugenides is replicating medical discourse, not only by using medical terms but also by putting ‘penis’ in quotation marks. He is ironising the ideology of ‘true’ sex within medical discourse; Dr Luce believes Cal/lie’s true sex to be male but because hir ‘best’ sex is actually female, the ‘penis’ is not really a penis. Because Cal/lie is a girl in Dr Luce’s eyes ze is characterised by a lack even when ze is not actually lacking: ‘[women’s] lot is that of “lack”, “atrophy” (of the sexual organ), and “penis envy”, the penis being the only sexual organ of recognized value’ (Irigaray 1985: 23). 5-alpha-reductase deficiency from which Cal/lie suffers is a form of male pseudohermaphroditism which leads to children who seem like ‘perfect’ girls becoming male during puberty (see Dreger 1998: 39). It can sometimes be caused by an ‘inheritable genetic sequence’ (Dreger 1998: 40) and Eugenides bases Cal/lie’s deficiency on an incestuous relationship between hir grandparents who are a brother and sister who married on the crossing from Greece to America. I will discuss how using an incestuous relationship as the cause of or explanation for Cal/lie’s intersexuality opens up a moral angle on the condition in more detail in section 4.3 below.

The recommendation that Cal/lie have surgery to become female is made on the basis that ze has been a successful girl up to the age of fourteen – ‘in speech, mannerisms, and dress, the subject manifests a feminine gender identity and role, despite a contrary chromosomal status’ (Eugenides 2002: 437) – and on the basis of Cal/lie’s answer when asked if ze is attracted to boys or girls. Ze makes strategic use of heteronormative assumptions and tells Dr Luce that ze likes boys – ‘she expresses sexual interest in males exclusively’ (Eugenides 2002: 437) – even though ze spends hir school years in love with a girl known only as ‘The Obscure Object’. Dr Luce tells Cal/lie that ze is a girl but that ze needs surgery, he believes he knows best (as many doctors did until the twenty-first century (see Callahan 2009)) and, given Eugenides’s use of the ‘speaking name’ ‘Luce’ which means ‘light’ in Italian, the reader is meant to assume that the doctor is (that all doctors are) enlightened and therefore correct.

In hir appointments with Dr Luce, Cal/lie is surrounded by an imperative to make a decision about hir sex and as we shall see from a close analysis of *Middlesex* in the next section, Cal/lie can never make such a decision. As Goujon (2014: 159) claimed that it is easy to 'know' someone's sex from puberty (the implication being that we then know which sex they desire), Dr Luce feels that Cal/lie should live as a woman because ze said ze was attracted to men. However, for the very same reason, Cal/lie thinks ze should live as a man because ze is attracted to women. Cal/lie makes a confession to Dr Luce which is actually a lie, ze is saying what ze thinks Dr Luce wants to hear and is following a (heterosexual) script. This mirrors the way that many transsexuals, when applying to doctors for permission to have surgery, would say what they knew their doctors needed to hear as opposed to what they really felt (Shapiro 2010: 103).

Cal/lie is being incited to tell 'the truth' about hir sexual desires: through confession the subject owns their 'core' sexual identity which is then monitored and controlled. According to Foucault (1978: 101), discourses of knowledge (telling the truth) and power (controlling the subject), are productive as well as constraining, they limit what we can do but they also open up new ways of thinking about ourselves. Because Cal/lie is confused about how to remain heterosexual in the eyes of society, ze runs from the discourse of power which tries to control hir, to categorise hir, and ze ultimately remains intersex and undecidable. Holmes (2008: 91) criticises Eugenides for his assumption, popular in Barbin's time, that 'desire reveals something innate, and inherently true, about one's sex'. However, just as Eugenides mimics medical discourse in Dr Luce's report, he could also be parodying the medical management of sex here to shine a light on the fact that desire still plays a big role in decisions about sex. According to De Boever (2012: 56), '*Middlesex* [...] reflects Judith Butler's critique of Michel Foucault – the fact that Foucault, in his introduction to Herculine Barbin's memoirs, appears to present hermaphroditism as a sex outside of power'. Cal/lie does not exist outside of power (in the same way that Barbin cannot) as we see with Dr Luce's attempts to categorise hir. They both subvert these discourses of power, however: neither is made decidable through surgery and both make their undecidability manifest by writing it down.

Barbin and Cal/lie present the reader with a decision that cannot be made. Sara Salih (2004: 34) describes Barbin as 'neither here nor there, but neither is she in some

discrete third place. She is an amalgamation of binary opposites, a particular configuration and conflation of male and female'. What Barbin does is use the binary gender system to create a place for hirself with linguistic gender, a place which is not completely destroyed by prevailing medical discourse because it appears in hir memoir. As Anna Livia (2001: 192) says, 'sexually liminal communities may use linguistic gender in ways both paradoxical and ironic; they call the very system whose simple binary excludes them into play to generate their own meanings and construct their own network of alliances. Barbin uses the linguistic binary to hir advantage, as Erauso and d'Eon do. Livia (2001: 192) goes further to suggest that 'grammaticalized gender, which many feel as a trap to limit people in their gender roles, also provides linguistic devices for expressing gender fluidity'. Both Barbin and Cal/lie need ways to express gender fluidity because they have bodies which do not fit the norm and, after an examination of their texts' undecidability, I will argue that translation can provide them with these ways.

### 3.2 Generic undecidability

I have been considering the bodies represented in these texts as 'undecidable' and now I want to argue that the texts themselves participate in, and add to, this undecidability. When Tardieu reproduced Barbin's memoir in his journal he did not leave it unedited; in a footnote on the first page he writes 'I reproduce here the text almost in its entirety as it was transmitted to me. I remove only the passages which prolong the story without adding any interest' (Tardieu 1874: 63). When Barbin starts hir new life in Paris, he inserts a comment in square brackets:

Here ends the truly interesting part of the memoirs of the young B... [...] from this day on, his sad life is consumed with bitter reflections on his fate. He stays 5 years in the Company offices and spreads recriminations on everything and everyone [...] His journal is nothing but a parade of complaints and contradictory declamations. (Tardieu 1874: 159, my translation)

This is not a footnote but an aside in the main text; the reader cannot miss it. Tardieu does not explicitly state here that he has cut parts of the following pages of the memoir but we can perhaps deduce from his tone and his early editorial note that he did cut some of the more repetitive and self-indulgent passages, of which we can assume there were a few.

According to Andrea Rossi (2013: 187), when the journal was first published in French it was 'without any commentary accompanied only by a number of archival materials [...] documenting the cultural and scientific resonance of the story in the 19<sup>th</sup> century: a critical gaze deliberately leaving an interrogative mark over the ambiguity of the text'. Given that, along with these archival materials, Tardieu included his own introduction to Barbin's text and annotated the memoir, it is hard to see how the journal comes 'without any commentary'. However, these extra materials certainly do add to the undecidability of the text. By including these extra texts Tardieu almost changes the genre of Barbin's work from memoir to case history. He moves it from the singular to the exemplary, a move that is linked to the work of power and categorisation. Through his intervention, Barbin's text is now, and will always be, pervaded with medical discourse. And Tardieu's introduction certainly did not leave an interrogative mark over Barbin's ambiguity but attempted to eradicate it entirely. In the introduction, Tardieu (1874: 62) assumes that there is a true sex, that it can be discovered, and that, in Barbin's case, it is male (see also Holmes 2008 and Wing 2004).

Foucault republished the memoir in 1978 with its new title (*Herculine Barbin dite Alexina B.*) and despite Tardieu's assurance that Barbin is male, he uses the feminine in 'dite' [called], emphasising what he tells us in his preface. Foucault's publication, republished by Gallimard in 1994 and 2014, frames the memoir with paratexts: before the memoir comes a preface by Foucault himself and after the memoir comes a dossier which includes Tardieu's introduction, the medical reports that were made on Herculine pre- and post-mortem, legal documents pertaining to Herculine's change of name and her birth certificate, a story written by Oscar Panizza called 'A Scandal in the Convent' which was loosely based on Herculine's story and a postface by Eric Fassin. An extra frame is also added due to the fact that it was Foucault that rediscovered this text and without his intervention it would not be widely available today. The front cover of the English translation actually gives the impression that Foucault is the sole author of the text (see

also Gomolka 2012: 63 who sees Foucault's interference as presenting more of a 'biography' than an autobiography).<sup>40</sup> Foucault's entire *oeuvre* thus frames the memoir as does all the criticism of Foucault's preface discussed in the above section.

The addition of paratexts to Barbin's work moves the text even further away from the genre of 'memoir'. However, just because Barbin originally titled hir work 'My Memoirs' it does not mean that its 'true' genre is that of memoir. As discussed in Chapter One, as with any life-writing, the narrative is not a simple retelling of the 'truth', as Couser (2012: 9) states: 'Especially in life writing [...] genre is not about mere literary form, it's about force – what a narrative's purpose is, what impact it seeks to have on the world'. The purpose of Barbin's narrative is, I would argue, to tell hir story in hir own words; as Fassin (2014: 250, my translation) says, 'Barbin is not "called", she (or he) calls hirself'. This is a nod to Foucault's title and an acknowledgement of the fact that Barbin constructs hir story, like any writer. There is, as in all texts, a double structure of 'story' and 'discourse' (Bennett and Royle 2004: 55), the telling of the actions versus the way they are told. As Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle (2004: 56) point out, 'these two levels can never be entirely separated'. These two levels are always present in both fiction and life-writing and this means that 'memoir shares many narrative techniques and devices with the novel – so much so that sometimes the two are indistinguishable on the basis of internal evidence alone' (Couser 2012: 9). Memoir is simply another way of constructing a self, an identity, a 'sex'. There is no true genre, just as there is no true sex, no matter how hard we study the 'internal evidence'.

In what is a common trope of life writing, Barbin (2014: 58, my translation) declares that hir memoir is stranger than fiction:

When I return to this distant past, I believe myself dreaming!!! Only memories of this sort crowd my imagination!!! If I were to write a novel, I could, on interrogating these memories, provide more dramatic and striking pages than were ever created by an A. Dumas, a Paul Féval!!!

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<sup>40</sup> As a parallel to the prominence of Foucault in the English text, according to Fassin (2014: 227), the French version was more or less invisible until the 2014 edition was published because Foucault removed himself from the text. It appears that the popularity of the text is indelibly linked to Foucault being present as its discoverer, its champion.

In a similar vein to Erauso and d’Eon, Barbin writes a persona which masks hir ‘true’ self, and part of hir inspiration could in fact have been what also inspired d’Eon in hir autobiography, namely Rousseau’s *Confessions* (Tidd 2000: 77). But just as we discovered that d’Eon’s and Erauso’s texts-as-confessions (and Erauso’s actual confessions) were not necessarily a revelation of who they really were, Barbin cannot possibly communicate the ‘truth’. We can hear Abel’s voice in Camille’s story at a time when the Camille of the story should not know of Abel’s forthcoming existence: ‘[Barbin’s] literary anxiety acts as a metaphor for her/his anxiety over sexual identity and potency, as literary form mimes the autobiographical subject’s ambiguous corporeal morphology, thereby observing the common autobiographical trope of conflating textual body with authorial self’ (Tidd 2000: 77). As we saw in Chapter One, memoir is not without an agenda: ‘life writing does not register pre-existing selfhood, but rather somehow creates it. [...] in writing one’s life one may bring a new self into being’ (Couser 2012: 14). This reflects the medical establishment’s ‘creation’ of intersex: just as the self is not discovered but created by writing, the intersex person is not discovered but created by the medical establishment. Identity is created, it is not already there.

Barbin frequently uses the literary device of pathetic fallacy to allude to hir future. For example, when a storm arrives: ‘Était-ce un présage de l’avenir sombre et menaçant qui m’attendait? [...] ce foudroyant orage n’était que le prélude de ceux qui m’assaillirent depuis!!!’ (Barbin 2014: 36-37) [was it a presage of the sombre and menacing future which awaited me? [...] This explosive storm was only the prelude to those which assailed me afterwards]. In what Butler (2006: 135) calls a ‘kind of confessional production of the self’, Barbin creates a character who is more melodramatic than the Barbin who lived, ze can do this because of the blurring of genres between the autobiography and the novel. As Holmes (2008: 88) says, ‘the problem with autobiography is that it does not tell of the days, weeks, and perhaps months when *nothing* happened. Thus it is rather futile to try to determine Alexina’s lived experiences from the conventions of an autobiographical account’. Autobiography does not *often* tell of those days, but sometimes it does. In *La Nausée* Jean-Paul Sartre (1938: 144) writes under ‘Mardi’: ‘Rien. Existé’ [Nothing. Existed]. Barbin, however, does not do this and precisely chooses the parts of hir life to include and those to exclude and which order to put them in.

According to Couser (2012: 57), ‘fiction can go where memoir cannot, even when – perhaps *especially* when – it *simulates* memoir’. Jeffrey Eugenides’s 2002 novel *Middlesex* does exactly that and his memoiristic fiction makes for an interesting comparison with Barbin’s fictional memoir. *Middlesex* makes a specific point of experimenting with the levels of ‘story’ and ‘discourse’ in order to ‘denaturalize or defamiliarize our sense of how narratives function’ (Bennett and Royle 2004: 56). It is the undecidable genre of the text that marks the undecidability we perceived in Cal/lie’s life in the preceding section: ‘it is only this indeterminate hovering between two realms of signification – fact and fiction – that can do justice to the ambiguity of Cal’s life’ (De Boever 2012: 43). The experimentation found in *Middlesex* complicates the relation between what is true, primary, original, natural and what is deviant, secondary, belated, cultural; these relations are further complicated in the trans body and in translation.

The clinical report written by Dr Luce and read by Cal/lie is ‘a crucial plot device [...]. As the means of Callie’s self-discovery, the report allegorizes intersex medical intervention and formally reflects the construction of intersexed subjectivity at the moment of interpellation by the medical apparatus’ (Hsu 2011: 90). Barbin’s text makes clear how writing makes the autobiographical subject and Eugenides makes clear how the medical establishment makes the intersex subject. Barbin is also interpellated by the medical apparatus and this begins hir process of self-actualisation and self-fashioning.

Cal/lie writes a ‘Psychological Narrative’ (Eugenides 2002: 417) for Dr Luce; like Barbin’s narrative, it is a confession in which the confessant is the actor, but an actor who cannot act without hindsight nor outside of the prevailing discourses:

Sing, Muse, how cunning Calliope wrote on that battered Smith Corona!  
Sing how the typewriter hummed and trembled at her psychiatric  
revelations! [...] On that new-fangled but soon-to-be obsolete machine I  
wrote not so much like a kid from the Midwest as a minister’s daughter  
from Shropshire [...]. Half the time I wrote like bad George Eliot, the other  
half like bad Salinger. (Eugenides 2002: 417-418)

This excerpt is also a good example of Eugenides’s constant use of intertextuality and mythological references. ‘Sing, Muse, how cunning Calliope...’ references the fact

that Calliope, meaning ‘fair voice’, is one of the nine Greek Muses; she is the Muse of epic poetry and also the mother of Orpheus (Grant and Hazel 2002). As the Muse of epic poetry it is possible that Calliope is the Muse of the opening line of Homer’s *The Odyssey*: ‘Tell me, Muse, the story of...’ (Homer 2003: 3) (see Freely 2014: 101). However, Homer never mentions the Muse by name. Cal/lie even says on the second page ‘sorry if I get a little Homeric at times’ (Eugenides 2002: 4). This all points to Eugenides’s desire to have the novel read like a ‘comic epic’ (Eugenides 2007a).

Cal/lie writes ‘for an audience’ (Eugenides 2002: 418) which ze knows is Dr Luce. In this *mise-en-abîme* plot device Eugenides has Cal, the narrator, write an autobiography (*Middlesex* as a whole) in which Callie, the narrator’s ‘past’ self, also writes an autobiography. This use of the autobiographical genre brings us back to the point that life writing is self-invention (Couser 2012: 14), that, as we have already seen, the discourse of autobiography produces the subject it seeks to know. Because Callie admits to fictionalising hir ‘psychological narrative’, doubt is thrown onto Cal’s framing autobiography: ‘In this fictionalized autobiography, the adult Cal remembers her first foray into life-writing as derivative and inauthentic, but also, crucially, performative in that it serves to produce an identity contingent on the needs of a specific moment’ (Carroll 2010: 194; see also De Boever 2012: 64). Eugenides is explicitly commenting on the process of writing autobiography which is always performative. Indeed, Eugenides wanted to perform Barbin’s memoir again; when asked in an interview where his inspiration for *Middlesex* came from, Eugenides (2007a) answered: ‘In 1984, I read Michel Foucault’s *Herculine Barbin: Memoir of a 19<sup>th</sup> Century French Hermaphrodite* [...]. The memoir frustrated my readerly expectation. I thought to myself, rather hubristically, that I’d like to write the story myself’.

In making a direct comparison between *Middlesex* and *Mes souvenirs*, Eugenides points back to the fictional nature of Barbin’s text but also to the fact that Barbin uses narrative power which is ‘the only strategy left for the weak and dispossessed: without narrative power, they may not be heard’ (Bennett and Royle 2004: 58). Cal/lie’s story, however, has to be different from Barbin’s because of the narrative voice. Fiction enables the voice to be complex and incomplete; it puts voice (which implies many things, including sex) on the stage. Not only is Cal/lie an omniscient narrator, comprehensively relating the story of hir grandparents’ migration from Greece to America during a time

when ze was not even alive, but ze is also an Anglophone voice which uses different, less gendered linguistic gender than French (or Spanish). What makes both *Middlesex* and *Mes souvenirs* difficult to translate are the narrative techniques employed by both Eugenides and Barbin that make the texts and their protagonists undecidable, especially in relation to narrative voice which only adds to this undecidability. In the next section I will look at the translation challenges posed by these two texts in close detail.

#### 4. Translating intersex identity

##### 4.1 Translating Barbin

*Herculine Barbin dite Alexina B* was translated by Richard MacDougall in 1980 and given the English title *Herculine Barbin, Being the Recently Discovered Memoirs of a Nineteenth-Century French Hermaphrodite*. In the same way that the translators of Erauso's text chose a more sensationalist title for their translation, MacDougall's can also be seen as varying quite significantly, not only from Foucault's choice of title, but also from Barbin's. The new title removes ownership of the text from Barbin himself: they are no longer 'my' memoirs but the memoirs of 'a French hermaphrodite'. As Fassin (2014: 250) has noted, the memoir gives Barbin a chance to speak instead of being spoken about, but this title removes that agency. Furthermore, this new title labels Barbin from the beginning, 'the English reader knows the end before he/she knows the beginning' (Gomolka 2012: 67).

The title is not the only part of the translation to come under fire: MacDougall's translation of the paratexts has also been criticised, especially his translation of Tardieu's introduction which is included in the texts that come after Barbin's memoir. Holmes (2008: 82-83) states that 'in the first sentence Tardieu refers to Alexina only in ambiguous third-person pronouns. In the second sentence, however, Tardieu unequivocally declares Alexina to be "ce pauvre malheureux", a clearly male subject'. MacDougall cannot be as ambiguous as Tardieu in the first instance. In French, possessive pronouns anaphorise the possession and not the possessor so Tardieu (1874: 61) can write 'on va voir la victime d'une semblable erreur, après vingt ans passés sous les habits d'un sexe qui n'est pas le sien' [we shall see the victim of a similar error, after twenty years spent in the clothes of a sex which was not his/her own]. While English can maintain the ambiguity of 'victim',

MacDougall had to choose a gender for the pronoun possessing 'sex': 'We are about to see the victim of such an error, who, after spending twenty years in the clothing of a sex that was not his own [...]’ (MacDougall 1980: 122). Holmes (2008: 83) takes this as indicating that MacDougall ‘papers over Tardieu’s initial ambiguity and pronounces Alexina to be male, illustrating rather clearly that the translator apprehended Tardieu’s final decision regarding Barbin’s sex to be the only relevant decision’. MacDougall does pronounce Alexina to be male but it is impossible to tell if Tardieu really meant to be ambiguous in the first instance or if the rules of the French language simply inadvertently produced the ambiguity.

When it comes to the memoir itself, MacDougall does not show Barbin’s switches between masculine and feminine grammatical gender. He merely makes a note in his translation of Foucault’s preface:

In the English translation of the text, it is difficult to render the play of the masculine and feminine adjectives which Alexina applies to herself [...] The editors of the English-language edition have followed Herculine’s system wherever possible, italicizing the feminine nouns which she used in referring to herself. (MacDougall 1980: xiii-xiv)

This system of italicising follows Foucault who, in turn, follows Tardieu. On the first page of *Mes souvenirs*, Tardieu (1874: 63, my translation) writes in a footnote: ‘the words marked here in italics are underlined in the manuscript, because the author has introduced the visible affectation of speaking of themselves sometimes in the masculine, and sometimes in the feminine’. Italics are only used for the feminine gender, masculine gender being ‘unmarked’, with one exception which we shall come to in the first example. For Tardieu, this underlining is merely an ‘affectation’ and says nothing about the truth of Barbin’s gender. Foucault does not mention it at all, his focus being medical categorisation and not literary invention (Fassin 2014: 252), though I am arguing here that the literary invention is precisely what encourages us not to medically categorise Barbin (or at least to categorise hir as ‘undecidable’).

Following on from the fact that Foucault’s preface appeared in the American version before the French, Fassin (2014: 253) thinks that the American version has

‘covered over’ the French in terms of the gender play because this play has been completely forgotten, even Butler (2006) does not mention it. It is only on page 58 of the translation that the reader is given a clue to the fact that Camille is referred to with the masculine when ostensibly a woman (though not that ze uses the masculine to refer to hirself): ‘[Sara] took pleasure in using masculine qualifiers for me, qualifiers which would later suit my official status’ (MacDougall 1980: 58). The translation overshadows the source text to the target text reader’s detriment; as Anna Livia (2001: 180) says: ‘the French reader is given more information than the English reader, and therefore greater understanding of Herculine’s position’. Even though MacDougall does what Foucault does, and in that sense has produced a ‘faithful’ translation, I argue that the system of italicising is not enough to replicate the gender play in English.

It could be said that, by failing to replicate the gender play, MacDougall translates in a manner which ‘neutralises’ or ‘un-queers’ Barbin’s text; it ‘takes away from Herculine any possible (trans)agency and places h/her into one of two binaries that the French version seems determined to frustrate’ (Gomolka 2012: 69). Here it is helpful to compare MacDougall’s translation with the American translation of Tahar Ben Jelloun’s *L’Enfant de sable* [the sand child] by Alan Sheridan as evidence that MacDougall’s – willful or imposed – ignorance of the trans aspects of his source text is not an isolated example of ‘un-queering’ from the 1980s. Sheridan’s 1988 translation also ignores the very deliberate usage of linguistic gender in the source text; this is despite the fact that Sheridan was a prolific translator from the French, translating works of fiction and non-fiction by Sartre, Lacan, Foucault, Robbe-Grillet and Pinget (Sheridan 2007).

In *L’Enfant de sable* a father chooses to bring up his eighth daughter as a son to continue the male line. As the story progresses, the protagonist, Ahmed, begins to reclaim his/her feminine identity to become Zahra. Ahmed/Zahra, does not necessarily identify as trans but Jelloun uses language to reclaim an identity taken from her/him. Like Barbin, Ben Jelloun plays ‘on the bivalence that is possible in French but not in English’ (Sardin 2011: 308). For example, he takes advantage of the arbitrary gendering of nouns to place feminine and masculine nouns together – ‘tu seras le puits et la tombe de ce secret’ (Ben Jelloun 1985: 23) [you will be the well and tomb of this secret] – to suggest a double identity. Ben Jelloun ‘manipulates the French language in order to achieve [...] a politics of the subject and identity. English is incapable of following this movement, and

consequently, sometimes falls silent or, more often, does little more than translate slavishly' (Sardin 2011: 314). English is not entirely incapable of following this movement but neither Sheridan nor MacDougall attempt to find creative ways to replicate it. Or perhaps neither of the publishers were sufficiently interested in the gendered aspects of these texts to allow their translators free rein in this respect.

Barbin switches between a masculine and feminine gender identity on the very first page of *hir* memoir:

J'ai vingt-cinq ans et quoique jeune encore, j'approche, à n'en  
*I-have twenty-five years and although young still I-approach to not-it*  
pas douter, du terme fatal de mon existence. J'ai  
*not doubt [undoubtedly] of-the term fatal of my existence I-have*  
beaucoup souffert, et j'ai souffert seul ! seul ! abandonné  
*a-lot suffered and I-have suffered alone(m) alone(m) abandoned(m)*  
de tous ! [...] *Soucieux et rêveur, mon front semblait*  
*by all Worried(m) and dreamy(m) my forehead seemed*  
s'affraisser sous les poids de sombres mélancolies. J'étais *froide,*  
*itself-to-cave under the weight of sombre melancholies I-was cold(f)*  
timide, et en quelque sorte, insensible à toutes ces joies bruyantes  
*timid and in some sort indifferent to all these joys noisy*  
et ingénues qui font épanouir un visage d'enfant.  
*and naïve which make to-give-pleasure [bloom on] a face of-child*  
(Barbin 2014: 25)

I am twenty-five years old, and, although I am still young, I am beyond any doubt approaching the hour of my death. I have suffered much, and I have suffered alone! Alone! Forsaken by everyone [...] Anxious and brooding, my brow seemed to sink beneath the weight of dark melancholic thoughts. I was cold, timid, and, in a way, indifferent to all those boisterous and ingenuous joys that light up the faces of children. (MacDougall 1980: 3)

From the first page, MacDougall has reneged on his decision to imitate Barbin's use of italics, as 'cold' is not italicised to match '*froide*'. Furthermore, we can see in the masculine '*soucieux*' that italics are not just used to feminise words.

Barbin can use both masculine and feminine grammatical gender because ze is writing after the discovery of hir intersex status. A common trope of life-writing, borrowing 'from the classical epic genre' is to 'begin not at the beginning but rather at some intermediate or penultimate point, then circle back to some point of origin and tell the story chronologically up to and beyond the opening vignette' (Couser 2012: 64). Starting the narrative at the age of twenty-five instead of at birth may be conventional, but in the case of Barbin's memoir it presents quite singular problems as we are forced to attend carefully to the gendering of both the Barbin who writes and the Barbin being written about; though at times the distinction between the two does not hold. According to Livia (2001: 179), 'the solipsistic masculine qualifiers *soucieux* and *rêveur* apply equally to the Camille of the time of writing and the Camille of long ago, while the socially oriented feminine *froide* and *timide* apply only to the earlier Camille'.<sup>41</sup> Livia's argument suggests that she thinks that the Abel who writes has entirely rejected hir feminine identity but, only a page later she says: 'through the use of the French linguistic gender system, Camille lets the reader know of her painful gender ambiguity from the first page of the narrative' (Livia 2001: 180). The question then becomes whether Camille is always ambiguous or whether hir 'ambiguity' is an effect of alteration through time.

Whether Barbin really is undecidable throughout the text needs addressing because MacDougall seems to think that hir switch from feminine to masculine grammatical gender is fairly clear cut. In the same footnote in which he notes the difficulty of replicating Barbin's use of adjectives, he states that these adjectives are 'for the most part, feminine before she possessed Sara and masculine afterward' (MacDougall 1980: xiii). I shall return to this point in a moment. Barbin possesses hir lover Sara, daughter of Madame P..., headmistress of the school where Barbin teaches, at almost precisely the mid-point of the memoir. And it is true that here ze uses masculine grammatical gender:

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<sup>41</sup> We should note that '*timide*' is not actually feminine in French but invariable.

Sara m'appartenait désormais!!... Elle était à moi !!!... Ce qui, dans  
*Sara to-me-belonged from-now-on she was to me [mine] that which in*  
 l'ordre naturel des choses, devait nous séparer dans le monde nous  
*the-order natural of things should us separate in the world us*  
 avait unis !!! Qu'on se fasse, s'il est possible, une idée  
*had united(m) that-one to-themselves makes if-it is possible an idea*  
 de notre situation à tous deux ! Destinés à vivre dans la  
*of our situation to all(m) two [us two] destined(m) to to-live in the*  
 perpétuelle intimité de deux sœurs [...] Assurément j'étais moins  
*perpetual intimacy of two sisters assuredly I-was less*  
 troublé, mais je n'avais pas la force de lever les yeux sur  
*troubled(m)but I not-had not the strength to to-lift the eyes on*  
 madame P..., pauvre femme qui ne voyait en moi que  
*madam p poor woman who not saw in me only [only saw in me]*  
 l'amie de sa fille, tandis que j'étais son amant !...  
*the-friend(f) of her daughter while I-was her lover(m)*  
 (Barbin 2014: 75)

Henceforth, Sara belonged to me!!... She was mine!!!...What, in the  
 natural order of things, ought to have separated us in the world had united  
 us!!! Try to imagine, if that is possible, what our predicament was for us  
 both! Destined to live in the perpetual intimacy of two sisters, [...] Undoubtedly, I was less disturbed, but I did not have the strength to raise  
 my eyes to Madame P. Poor woman, she saw me only as her daughter's  
 girlfriend, while in fact I was her lover! (MacDougall 1980: 51-52)

In the French Barbin writes 'unis', 'tous' and 'destinés' as masculine plural. Because in French the masculine is seen as the standard and always takes precedence over the feminine, these could refer to one man and one woman or two men but not two women. According to Butler (2006: 136), Barbin's use of the masculine here is a usurpation through language which 'suggests a participation in the very categories from which s/he feels inevitably distanced, suggesting also the denaturalized and fluid possibilities of such

categories once they are no longer linked causally or expressively to the presumed fixity of sex'.

In order to ascertain whether Barbin's use of shifting gender identity is as simple as feminine before possession and masculine after possession of Sara, I counted the instances of both masculine and feminine grammatical gender markers before and after the incident. Does the text have a linear narrative of development: female – sexual encounter – male?

	Before possession of Sara	After possession of Sara
Feminine gender markers	98	36
Masculine gender markers	15	114

Table 2: Gender markers before and after page 75 of *Herculine Barbin dite Alexina B.* (2014)

Barbin is not made male by hir sexual dominance of Sara. Though clearly the pronominal emphasis does shift, Barbin is not unequivocally female then unequivocally male. MacDougall's translation, however, 'produces a sterilised context that restricts the formation of an indefinite self, qualifying Herculine as necessarily either man or woman from the very beginning' (Gomolka 2012: 77). Barbin is indefinite, or, using my terminology, undecidable. To emphasise my point I elucidate some examples of shifting grammatical gender both before and after the 'possession' on page 75 of the memoir in table 3:

Before possession	After possession
Page 40: 'heureux' [happy] (masculine)	Page 76: 'fou' [mad] (masculine)
Page 44: 'heureux' [happy] (masculine)	Page 77: 'assis' [seated] (masculine)
Page 49 : 'honteux' [ashamed] (masculine)	Page 78: 'arrivé' [arrived] (masculine)
Page 71: 'jalouse' [jealous] (feminine)	Page 79: 'inculpée' [accused] (feminine)
Page 73: 'émue' [moved] (feminine)	Page 80: 'invitée' [invited] (feminine)
Page 74: 'folle' [mad] (feminine)	Page 81: 'seule' [alone] (feminine)

Table 3: Examples of gender markers before and after page 75 of *Herculine Barbin dite*

*Alexina B. (2014)*

While Livia (2001: 177) and MacDougall argue for a more or less permanent switching of gender in the scene where Barbin possesses Sara, Wing (2004: 107) argues for that shift when Camille writes in Paris:

Et maintenant seul!... seul!... pour toujours ! Abandonné,  
*And now alone(m) alone(m) for always abandoned(m)*  
 proscrit au milieu de mes frères ! [...] De mon arrivée à Paris,  
*excluded(m) in-the middle of my brothers From my arrival in Paris*  
 date une nouvelle phase de ma double et bizarre existence.  
*dates a new phase of my double and bizarre existence*  
 Elevé pendant vingt ans au milieu de jeunes filles, je fus  
*brought-up(m) during twenty years in-the middle of young girls I was*  
 d'abord et pendant deux années, au plus, femme de chambre. À  
*at-first and during two years in-the most woman of chamber at*  
 seize ans et demi j'entrais en qualité d'élève-maitresse à l'école  
*sixteen years and half I-entered in quality of-teacher-student at the-school*  
 normale de... À dix-neuf ans j'obtins mon brevet d'institutrice  
*normal of At nineteen years I-obtained my diploma of-teacher(f)*  
 (Barbin 2014: 122)

And now, alone!...alone...forever! Forsaken, outlawed in the midst of my brothers! [...] My arrival in Paris marks the beginning of a new phase of my double and bizarre existence. Brought up for twenty years among girls, I was first and for two years at the most a lady's maid. When I was sixteen and a half I entered the normal school of ... as a student-teacher. When I was nineteen I obtained my teaching certificate. (MacDougall 1980: 98)

Barbin (2014: 132) does actually use feminine grammatical gender again in a passage where ze indirectly relays what a fellow railway worker has said: 'Il croyait tout bonnement que *recherchée* un jour par un jeune homme, je m'étais *rendue* à ses désirs' [he simply thought that sought(f) one day by a young man, I gave(f) myself to his desires]. This use of feminine gender could be a representation of what the man said but given its indirect nature we can never be sure of this.

Once this 'turning point' has been reached Barbin slips into despair and kills hirself; it would appear that at the end of Barbin's life hir 'shifting, anomalous gender identity becomes, ultimately, an insurmountable impasse' (Wing 2004: 117). Once ze is legally male ze cannot seem to find a way back to being female except in the writing down of hir past life. Barbin's shifting linguistic gender identity is what makes hir undecidable; in hir time this undecidability is what ultimately killed hir because sexual undecidability was unacceptable. After an exploration of *Middlesex* I ask if there is a way for translation to resurrect undecidability and to eradicate the impasse that shifting identity sometimes engenders.

#### 4.2 Translating Cal/lie

Cal/lie Stephanides also has a shifting, anomalous gender identity and it too proves to be an obstacle in translation, not least because some readers cannot see it. Eugenides (2007a) claims that *Middlesex* was intended to 'encompass many things aside from this sexual metamorphosis. It would concern all kinds of transformations, national, emotional, intellectual – you name it'. Daniel Mendelsohn (2002) believes that these other transformations, especially the transformation of Cal/lie's family from Greek to American,

completely overshadows the intersex storyline (cf. De Boever 2012: 5). It is certainly the case that the attempt to incorporate these multiple strands has an effect on the narrative; in order to tell all of these stories, Eugenides (2007b) had to write the novel from a hybrid perspective: 'Gradually I came up with a hybrid voice, well-suited to my theme, that shifted from first- to third-person on a dime'. Forty-something Cal/ie is the narrator of the text. This Cal/lie, who lives in Berlin, takes on the third-person voice to tell the story of hir grandparents' emigration from Greece to America and the first-person voice to tell the story of hir childhood, from birth to the age of fifteen. Throughout these two main narrative strands Cal/lie interjects to tell hir 'current' story.

Numerous critics of *Middlesex* (Hsu 2011: 92; Merton 2010: 45; Holmes 2008: 93; Mendelsohn 2002; Cohen 2007: 376; Shostak 2008: 408 and Carroll 2010: 196) argue that the shifting, hybrid voice created by Eugenides does not work, and does not even exist. Mendelsohn (2002) thinks that the Cal writing and the Callie being written about are split in two like the book: 'one is a fairly ordinary Midwestern girl [...], the other all-too-typically sardonic, post-everything American male. But like the two parts of the novel they inhabit, neither seems to have much to do with the other' (see also Brauner 2012: 160). This echoes D'Erasco's criticism of another twenty-first-century intersex novel, *Annabel*. She feels that the two 'halves' of the protagonist, Wayne and Annabel, are two separate characters and asks: 'What if [Annabel] and Wayne were less distinguishable from each other?' (D'Erasco 2011).

This comparison shows that not only do writers of intersex novels come under heavy scrutiny for signs of 'authenticity' (perhaps more than writers of cis-gender characters) but also that critics seem to be so intent on proving that intersex characters have two distinct identities, one 'before discovery' and one 'after discovery', that they do not make enough effort to perceive undecidability, they under-read the text. I argue this because there is textual evidence to demonstrate the confusion between Cal and Callie akin to that produced between the textual Camille and the writing Barbin.

Reading *Middlesex* closely, we can argue that it is frequently hard to distinguish when Cal is speaking and when Callie is speaking. At the beginning of chapter five, the narrator reminisces about Detroit and says 'I am nine years old and holding my father's meaty, sweaty hand [...] I have come downtown for our annual lunch date. I am wearing a miniskirt and fuchsia tights' (Eugenides 2002: 79). The narrator has digressed from the

main narrative and uses the vivid present which makes it clear that this is a memory. But the use of the present tense also complicates the voice: for me this is an example of the voice of Cal/lie, both Cal the narrator and Callie the nine-year-old combined. The present is haunted by the past here to the extent that the past becomes the present; the use of the first-person voice suggests that identity-through-time does not stay the same but that what is past is never truly past but also always present. Eugenides uses the vivid present sporadically throughout the novel:

Getting to my feet (as we did whenever Miss Barrie entered the room), I hear her ask, “Infants? Can any of you translate this little snippet and give its provenance?”

I raise my hand.

“Calliope, our muse, will start us off.”

“It’s from Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. The story of creation.” (Eugenides 2002: 198)

Like Barbin’s Camille who always includes Abel and vice versa, Cal always includes Callie and vice versa.

I argue that it is difficult to analyse ‘the Cal who narrates’ and to come to any definitive conclusions about that voice. The complicated narrative voice is tricky for translation into French and Spanish, two languages which must show gender where English does not. Just as with Barbin, Cal/lie narrates knowing hir intersex status: ‘Cal is likely to be reinterpreting his earlier experiences in the light of his later choice of gender role’ (Brauner 2012: 159). The translator must decide if Cal/lie has made a definitive choice about ‘his’ gender role as male or if it is possible for Cal/lie to be a hybrid voice. This is easier in Spanish as the preterite tense does not show gender unlike the French *passé composé* which requires gender on the past participle.

The novel begins:

I was born twice: first as a baby girl, on a remarkably smogless Detroit day in January of 1960; and then again, as a teenage boy, in an emergency room near Petoskey, Michigan, in August of 1974. (Eugenides 2002: 3)

J'ai eu deux naissances. D'abord comme petite fille, à Detroit, par une  
*I-have had two births at-first as little girl in Detroit by a*  
journée exceptionnellement claire du mois de janvier 1960, puis  
*day exceptionally clear of-the month of January 1960 then*  
comme adolescent, au service des urgences d'un hôpital proche  
*as adolescent(m) in-the service of-the casualty of-a hospital close*  
de Petoskey, Michigan en août 1974. (Cholodenko 2003: 11)  
*to Petoskey Michigan in August 1974*

The Spanish translator, Benito Gómez Ibáñez (2003: 11), conceals gender using the preterite: 'nací dos veces' [I was born twice]. However, the French translator, Marc Cholodenko, has to conceal gender by using a sentence that is not, perhaps, the most 'fluid'. 'I was born twice' would normally be translated into French as 'je suis né(e) deux fois' but this requires a choice of gender; Cholodenko chooses 'I had two births' instead. The use of the noun (birth) instead of the verb (to be born) is one way to conceal gender in French (see Livia 2001). Also on the first page, Cal gives a small summary of hir life:

I'm a former field hockey goalie [...] I've been ridiculed by classmates,  
guinea-pigged by doctors [...]. (Eugenides 2002: 3)

Je suis un ancien gardien de but de hockey sur gazon [...] J'ai été  
*I am a former keeper(m) of goal of hockey on turf I-have been*  
la risée de mes camarades, le cobaye des médecins [...].  
*the laughing-stock(f) of my classmates the guinea-pig of doctors*  
(Cholodenko 2003: 11)

He sido guardameta de hockey sobre hierba [...] Fui ridiculizado  
*I-have been goal-keeper(n) of hockey on grass I-was ridiculed(m)*  
por mis compañeros de clase, convertido en conejillo de Indios por los  
*by my mates of class converted(m) in pig of Indians by the*  
médicos. (Ibáñez 2003: 11)

*doctors*

The Spanish text uses the masculine gender where grammatical gender is necessary. Ibáñez may have chosen masculine gender because Cal is currently narrating, assuming 'he' would choose masculine gender markers. Cholodenko, on the other hand, could be choosing gender based on Cal/lie's gender at the time the activity took place: ze was ridiculed at school as a girl. It is arguable that in the Spanish translation, Ibáñez is reinterpreting Callie's early experiences in the light of what he perceives to be Cal's definitively male narrative voice.

Neither of the translators has a consistent strategy for dealing with the first-person aspects of this text which carry no gender in English. Both do attempt to make gender neutral where possible, and this happens more often in the Spanish translation as it is much easier to make the first-person gender-neutral:

How did Calliope feel about her crocus? [...] On the one hand she liked it  
[...] The crocus was part of her body after all. [...] But there were times  
when I felt that something was different about the way I was made.

(Eugenides 2002: 330)

Quels sentiments ce crocus faisait-il naître en Calliope? [...]  
*What feelings this crocus made-it to-give-birth in Calliope*  
D'un côté il lui plaisait [...] Le crocus faisait partie de son  
*from-one side it him/her pleased the crocus made part of his/her*  
corps après tout. [...] Mais parfois, je sentais qu'il y avait quelque  
*body after all but sometimes I felt that-it there was some*  
chose de différent dans la façon dont j'étais faite.  
*thing of different in the way in-which I-was made(f)*  
(Cholodenko 2003: 427)

¿Qué le parecía a Calíope su croco? [...] Por una parte  
*What to-him/her seemed to Calliope his/her crocus for one part*  
 le gustaba. [...] Al fin y al cabo, el croco  
*to him/her it-pleases at-the end and at-the tail [in the end] the crocus*  
 formaba parte integrante de su cuerpo [...] Pero a veces notaba  
*formed part integral of his/her body but at times s/he-noted*  
 que tenía una constitución algo diferente de la demás.  
*that s/he-had a constitution something different from the rest*  
 (Ibáñez 2003: 423-424)

Cholodenko chooses to make the narrative voice feminine here, perhaps following on from the use of 'she' in the previous paragraph. Ibáñez, on the other hand, avoids gender by using 'I had a different constitution from others' instead of 'there was something different in the way I was made' (this would need gender on 'made' [hecho/a]). And in Spanish, he can even avoid using the third-person possessive adjective because 'su' carries no gender and can be 'his' or 'her'. Furthermore, as we saw with Erauso, personal pronouns are not used as they are denoted in the verb. It is clear here that 'I felt that something was different about the way I was made' is being said by the narrator and is being made in hindsight and we cannot know if the 'female' Callie really did feel different at the time. What is not so clear, however, is that just because the 'I' of the present narration is contrasted to the 'she' of the past, the narrator must be male. In both French and Spanish the stakes surrounding the narrative voice and whether it should be male, female or in-between become even higher because the translator can – and in the case of the French translation above, does – choose to explicitly gender the narrative voice.

Despite moments where gender is concealed, Cal/lie ends both translations male. Towards the end of the novel Cal/lie's grandmother, Desdemona, asks hir, 'Are you a boy now?' and ze replies 'more or less' (Eugenides 2002: 528). Desdemona repeatedly calls Cal/lie 'honey' (Eugenides 2002: 528) after this question and the translations both make this term of endearment masculine – 'chéri' (Cholodenko 2003: 665) [dear] and 'cariño' (Ibañez 2003: 671) [dear] – as if Cal/lie's answer were definitive. On the final page, the French text concludes with masculine grammatical gender: 'heureux d'être rentré chez moi' (Cholodenko 2003: 667) [happy(m) to have returned home]. The Spanish text is

neutral: 'feliz de estar en casa' (Ibañez 2003: 673) [happy(n) to be at home], though this could be more due to the neutrality of 'feliz', a common Spanish word for 'happy', than to any actual choice on Ibañez's part to avoid gender.

In believing that Cal/lie is not definitively male I am reading textual undecidability where other critics have not.<sup>42</sup> They want Cal to be free to choose a 'middle' way but they then claim that the ending is no middle way at all because 'he' ends the novel as a man (see Cohen 2007: 384). At the end of the text, when Cal/lie has returned home for his father's funeral aged fifteen, ze blocks the doorway of the house to prevent his father's spirit from returning: 'It was always a man who did this, and now I qualified' (Eugenides 2002: 529). Sarah Graham (2009: 1-2) sees this as confirming Cal/lie's maleness. However, she also believes that 'the novel appears to end with an affirmation of intersexuality, the possibility of being "both/and" rather than "either/or"' (Graham 2009: 1) because Cal/lie describes himself as 'a new type of human being' and as having 'the face of my grandfather and of the American girl I had once been' (Eugenides 2002: 529). Graham (2009: 14) also later says that 'despite his wishes, Cal's body does not conform to the conventions of maleness and so his transformation from girl to boy is never quite complete'; her contradictory opinions show how difficult it is to pin down the narrative voice.

I have already made it clear that Eugenides's appropriation of medical discourse could be seen as a type of parody; *Middlesex*'s ending makes the reader think about how medical discourse treats intersex children today. Society at large wants Cal to be male and desire women (or be female and desire men if Dr Luce had his way), but Cal/lie is not 'perfectly' male; as ze never underwent 'corrective' surgery ze still has a hypospadiac penis and undescended testes. Eugenides's critics are looking to the end of the novel for the answers because 'this end is characteristically the place of revelation and understanding' (Bennett and Royle 2004: 55). I would argue that the ending of *Middlesex* is not a place of revelation and understanding where answers are provided even though his critics want to make it so.

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<sup>42</sup> De Boever (2012: 11) does read *Middlesex* as an undecidable novel; for him there is an aesthetic decision in the novel but that decision 'is not opposed to undecidability but can only claim to decide, precisely if it decides the undecidable'. See also Athanassakis (2011: 218) for an argument for Cal/lie as undecidable.

Again, a comparison with the reception of Kathleen Winter's *Annabel* is telling: according to D'Erasmo (2011), 'as often as [Annabel] tries to fly into the open space that gender ambiguity creates, it is pulled back by convictions and assumptions that contradict and deaden its richer aspirations'. So while 'a transgender or intersex character may open up many possibilities, [...] narrative is often anxious for closure, and so are readers' (D'Erasmo 2011). Winter is apparently caught by the gender binary: 'Winter is, moreover, working from the same binary model she is purporting to overturn: the idea that Annabel is a "girl" – and that this means someone softer, sweeter, gentler, more emotional – is given here' (D'Erasmo 2011). Annabel is too stereotypically feminine for D'Erasmo, and Cal could be accused of being too stereotypically masculine, but crucially, hir masculinity is represented as a performance: 'The cigars, the double-breasted suits—they're a little too much. I'm well aware of that. But I need them. They make me feel better. After what I've been through, some overcompensation is to be expected' (Eugenides 2002: 41).

As if to reiterate that doing a gender is a constant struggle, near the end of the text Cal/lie declares that: 'I never felt out of place being a girl. I still don't feel entirely at home among men' (Eugenides 2002: 479). It is definitely the present-day Cal/lie who is the narrator here but I do not see that this voice is conclusively male. Indeed, reading the French translation very closely, I have noticed that Cholodenko uses a play on words between the French homonyms 'mal' [bad] and 'mâle' [male]:

Je ne me suis jamais senti mal dans ma peau de fille. Je  
*I not myself am ever [I have never] felt bad in my skin of girl I*  
ne me sens toujours pas complètement chez moi  
*not myself felt still not [I still don't feel] completely home me*  
parmi les hommes. (Cholodenko 2003: 606)  
*[at home] among the men*

By hinting that Callie never felt male when ze was female Cholodenko is undermining Cal/lie's hindsight. It is an admission that the teenage Callie never felt male before discovering ze was intersex. This adds weight to the idea that the adult Cal/lie might still feel female, even if ze performs masculinity on a daily basis. Yes, Cal/lie ostensibly ends the novel as a 'conventional' male but ze still has unconventional genitalia, is only 'more

or less' a boy and does not feel entirely at home among men. Cal/lie 'belongs properly to neither sex' (Brauner 2012: 158). There is an aporia and therefore the queering of these texts through translation so that no definitive conclusion can be reached is important.

The text ends with the fifteen-year-old Cal/lie at hir father's funeral: this in itself is not closure because that should come with the forty-something Cal in Berlin, the narrator. The last we hear of the narrator's current life comes on page 520 (nine pages before the end) where Cal says:

You will want to know: How did we get used to things? What happened to our memories? Did Calliope have to die in order to make room for Cal? To all these questions I offer the same truism: it's amazing what you can get used to. (Eugenides 2002: 520)

The truism Cal offers does not really answer the last question, which most critics would answer as 'yes' because of their determination not to see the undecidability in the text; instead, 'undecidability splits the text, disorders it. *Undecidability dislodges the principle of a single final meaning* in a literary text. It haunts' (Bennett and Royle 2004: 249, my emphasis). Cal/lie goes on to say, 'In most ways I remained the person I'd always been' (Eugenides 2002: 520), a rather cryptic phrase because who Cal/lie has always been and whether ze has 'always' been the same person forms the basis of the entire debate around Cal/lie's gender. What this phrase does bring to light though, is that there is a 'person' underlying sexual difference.

Most telling of all, Cal/lie the narrator sees Callie as part of hir, something that always resides just beneath the surface, like a ghost:

When Calliope surfaces, she does so like a childhood speech impediment. Suddenly there she is again, doing a hair flip, or checking her nails. It's a little like being possessed. Callie rises up inside me, wearing my skin like a loose robe [...] Calliope's hair tickles the back of my throat. (Eugenides 2002: 41-42)

*Middlesex* is haunted by all of its undecidable endings. Every text is haunted by undecidable endings, though the texts I look at here are extreme examples of undecidable texts where undecidability is overdetermined. How can translation capture this state of constant haunting?

#### 4.3 Translating haunted texts

Gomolka (2012: 80) suggests that one way of capturing Barbin's shifting gender identity in English could be 'achieved by betraying form for function and rephrasing h/her story in the third and not the first person'. That Barbin's story is written in the first person, however, is crucial to understanding how the text is a self-fashioning over time – what makes the 'self' in autobiography is a haunting of 'present' by 'past' selves and of 'past' by 'future' selves.

Any work, like any person, is haunted; for Derrida (2006: 166) 'to be' is to be haunted: 'Ego= ghost. Therefore "I am" would mean "I am haunted": I am haunted by myself who am (haunted by myself who am haunted by myself who am... and so forth). Wherever there is Ego, *es spukt*, "it spooks". ([...] "it specters")'. These spectres, which are always there, whether past, present or future cannot be pinned down: 'The subject that haunts is not identifiable, one cannot see, localize, fix any form, one cannot decide between hallucination and perception, there are only displacements; one feels oneself looked at by what one cannot see' (Derrida 2006: 169). They are the bodily equivalent of the textual trace that meaning cannot 'pin/pen down' (Derrida 2004: 22) in Derrida's conception of dissemination.

There is no core meaning to a body (because there is always a 'mob of specters' (Derrida 2006: 168)) as there is no core meaning to a text. The work or the person is open to interpretation. If we look at 'interpretation' in the Nietzschean sense, 'to interpret a text is not to give it a (more or less justified, more or less free) meaning, but on the contrary to appreciate what *plural* constitutes it' (Barthes 1970: 5). For Derrida, dissemination, above plurality, is that which extends the concept of text. The search for bodily and textual meaning is ever-present but ever-frustrated: the hunter is always the prey (Derrida 2006: 175). The hunter looks for the 'essence' of the body or the text which

is always deferred; and narrative, with its temporal extension, dramatises this particularity. The hunter is always looking and is always prey to deferral. There is no essence because bodies and texts are made of many layers of meanings and intertexts.

Both memoirs are intertextual. And this intertextuality reflects the multiplicity of the intersex bodies that are writing – their texts are multiple, they have no single source and neither are they the product of isolated ‘genius’ (just as the intersex body is not the product of one all-knowing doctor). Barbin is influenced by Rousseau’s *Confessions* and Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, ze references the story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus; Eugenides is influenced by Barbin, by stories of Greek mythology (see Graham 2009: 5) and by George Eliot and J. D. Salinger; Eugenides (2007b) himself claims that his ‘aim was to have this ghost literature haunt the book, there for alert, close readers [...] to notice, but not mandatory for understanding or enjoying the book’. George Eliot’s influence can be seen in the novel’s title; it ostensibly refers to the name of the street Cal/lie lives on in Grosse Pointe but also alludes to the idea of the ‘inter’ or the ‘in-between’. Eugenides (2007b) explains that ‘not only did the name suggest the androgynous nature of my hero, it [...] alluded to another long novel about a family and a town by an author I much admire, George Eliot. Her masterpiece, of course, is *Middlemarch*’. Cal/lie uses the street name to refer to the house ze lives in which is described as ‘futuristic and outdated at the same time’ (Eugenides 2002: 258). The place, like the book as a whole, is undecidable.

If we can find a device to represent these layers of text, the intertext of the memoirs themselves, then we can also represent the layers of body (the intertext of intersex). Here we can continue to see identity, like writing, as grafted. Not least because Cal explicitly describes Callie as haunting hir new identity as a man. Callie possesses Cal, and Derrida’s (2006: 165) point would be that they possess each other *permanently*: ‘Is not to possess a specter to be possessed by it, possessed period? To capture it, is that not to be captivated by it?’. According to Hsu (2011: 102), Cal’s ‘intersex normalization ultimately renders normal the distribution of narrative authority that consigns Callie’s subjectivity to an interior position in the text and to a historical past from which she [...] continues to ghost his frame narrative’. The analogy of a ghost is apt as Callie is a presence in the text; ‘she’ ghosts Cal but Cal also ghosts ‘her’, we are haunted by what we have yet to become and these hauntings proliferate, they do not disappear but linger on:

Once the ghost is produced by the incarnation of spirit (the automated idea or thought), when this *first* ghost effect has been operated, it is in turn negated, integrated, and incorporated by the very subject of the operation who, claiming the uniqueness of its *own* human body, then becomes [...] the absolute ghost, in fact the ghost of a ghost of the ghost of the Specter-spirit, simulacrum of simulacra without end. (Derrida 2006: 158-9)

We can return here to Derrida's position which sees 'first' texts and bodies as subsumed but not forgotten (Derrida 2004: 372) and the 'first' is only the start of a series of many, indeed it is not the 'start' because it is always a coming back, a return from something that has already begun, a spectre '*begins by coming back*' (Derrida 2006: 11).

We can use Derrida's ideas on the spectre to give Callie and Camille narrative authority – they are both seemingly written out by Cal's and Abel's narratives, but a reader attuned to undecidability can tell they are still there. Intersex bodies are perhaps haunted more than most, as Holmes (2008: 122) describes: 'this intertextual set of relations is [...] also within individuals who see themselves identified through their medical records, or in the absence of those, in the information they can find in medical textbooks and case studies'. Cal/lie reads dictionary entries, hir medical records and also medical textbooks to try and understand hir condition. Part of hir intertext is monstrosity – the dictionary entry Cal/lie looks up for 'hermaphrodite' says 'see synonyms at MONSTER' (Eugenides 2002: 430). Etymologically, 'monster' comes from the Old French *monstre* which was itself borrowed from the Latin *mōnstrum* meaning not just 'monster' but 'portent' or 'sign' and 'perhaps related to *monēre* to warn; see' (Chambers 2001: 675). The monster is that which is on display; evil is something so powerful that it makes a visible mark. What I investigate here through textual analysis is that what is visible (be that genitals or the way a person presents themselves to the outside world) does not constitute who a person is and I continue this line of interrogation in Chapter Three.

Eugenides is inspired by 'monsters' of Greek mythology: Hermaphroditus, the Minotaur and Tiresias (see Eugenides 2007a and Graham 2009). Graham (2009: 2) believes Eugenides's reliance on Greek mythology suggests that the intersex person is a

tragic monster and that ‘the novel invokes damaging images of transgender figures from the past [...] [which] risks implying that the distant past is the only possible source of queer models and that the tragedy with which they are associated is inevitable’ (Graham 2009: 7). But I argue that the images of these transgender figures are not damaging, they are not restricted to the past and neither do they suggest that the intersex figure in general, or Cal/lie in particular, is tragic. Indeed, when Barbin (2014: 41) references Ovid and the story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, even though ze does so for melodramatic effect, it is not to forecast a tragic ending (something ze does in myriad other ways) but to forecast the discovery of hir ‘condition’.

Cal/lie is cast as Tiresias in a school play: Tiresias ‘saw two snakes coupling, and killed the female. Promptly, he was turned into a woman, and so remained until at length, once more seeing a pair of coupling snakes, he killed the male, and regained his former sex’ (Rose 2005: 161). Graham (2009: 6) feels that the links between Cal/lie and Tiresias suggest that Cal/lie’s hybridity is a form of punishment. But Tiresias is not a tragic figure, as Pericles Lewis (2007: 30) states: ‘Tiresias was a central figure in modernist attempts to explore sexual identity, playing a notable role in Eliot’s *The Waste Land* (1922), Pound’s *Cantos* (1919-70), and the first surrealist play Guillaume Apollinaire’s *The Breasts of Tiresias* (1917)’. Eliot (2013: 51) notes that Tiresias, described as ‘old man with wrinkled dugs’ is ‘the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest [...]. What Tiresias sees, in fact, is the substance of the poem’ (Eliot 2013: 77).

Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando* can be seen as an updating of the Tiresias myth and according to Theodore Ziolkowski (2005: 92), Orlando ‘must have struck many sophisticated readers of the 1920s as Eliot’s unseen Tiresias come to life’. And this appropriation of the Tiresias myth was not just practised by modernists; Angela Carter’s 1982 *The Passion of New Eve* is also linked to Tiresias – when the central character, Evelyn, is surgically changed to Eve he/she notes that ‘this artificial changeling, the Tiresias of Southern California, took, in all, only two months to complete’ (Carter 1982: 71). If anything, Tiresias is used by writers as a positive figure of metamorphosis and omniscience. Tiresias can be a positive figure because he ‘offers to writers of the last century an image through which to locate poetic power in the categories of sexual difference in opposition to other forms of heterosexual or cultural privilege’ (Madden 2008: 20). Tiresias is a powerful figure of the in-between. Ed Madden (2008: 21-22) adds

a caveat to Tiresias's power stating that 'the Tiresian [...] may not ultimately function as a subversive figure, nor is it necessarily liberatory or progressive in its intents or effects, haunted as it is by images of loss, structures of sacrifice, and dynamics of displacement that must nuance our readings of the Tiresian and queer'. That the figure of Tiresias is both progressive and not progressive, haunted by the past and what has been lost but not forgotten makes it a highly appropriate figure through which to think about intersex identity.

Furthermore, 'the Tiresian figure foregrounds the importance of *voice* as a literary, symptomatic and sexological category. Indeed, by the turn of the twentieth century, voice becomes a critical register of Tiresian identities – either a gender-transitive identity, or an interior psychosexual identity that may belie the body's appearance' (Madden 2008: 22). As I have already discussed, voice is crucial both to these intersex texts and to their translations. In all of my texts the voice of the protagonists show that what we see with our eyes cannot be the only marker of gender identity; the voice is 'a site of performative and rhetorical – and thus cultural – power' (Madden 2008: 27). Barbin and Cal/lie only exist to us on the page, it is in their textual voices that we find their subversion of the gender binary and their rejection of an enforced sexual assignment. This rejection can be seen in the explicit haunting of their identities that emerges in Barbin's use of both masculine and feminine grammatical gender and in Cal/lie's use of the vivid present tense to entangle the (masculine?) character narrating and the (feminine?) character narrated.

Cal/lie is also made monstrous, according to Graham (2009: 5), because hir condition is caused by an incestuous relationship. Incest is always condemned by society as a whole – it is a place where nature and culture meet because it is a universal but cultural taboo: the prohibition of incest is a rule but it is 'alone among all the social rules [because it] possesses at the same time a universal character' (Lévi-Strauss 1969: 8-9). According to Claude Lévi-Strauss (1969: 45), incest is prohibited in the interests of the group: 'the first logical end of the incest prohibition is "to freeze" women within the family, so that their distribution, or the competition for them, is within the group, and under group and not private control'. Prohibiting incest also ensures the survival of the species, as inbreeding can cause deleterious effects on offspring (Arens 2010: 371), as can be seen in Cal/lie.

Cal/lie's grandparents' incestuous relationship 'introduces inescapable moral ambiguity into *Middlesex*' but, despite what Graham (2009: 5) thinks, this does not 'compromis[e] its potentially positive representation of intersexuality'. I argue this because 'the source of the impetus to engage in incest is a human cultural capacity, not a feature of our animal nature. [...] In effect, humans have the ability to create social rules and, at the same time, the individual ability to reflect on them and to choose alternatives, for a variety of anti-social and even social reasons' (Arens 2010: 373). Desdemona and Lefty subvert the rules, this subversion leads to Cal/lie's birth and eventually leads to hir own subversion of the gendered scripts society gives us. Lefty spends his time in America 'working on a modern Greek translation of the "restored" poems of Sappho' (Eugenides 2002: 12). It is fitting that one half of the cause of Cal/lie's intersexuality should be, not only a translator, but a translator of something both fragmented and queer.

Linking Cal/lie's intersexuality to both mythology and incest through intertextuality is not negative because it reflects the fact that all intertext is monstrous: 'Literary criticism and theory are themselves mutant, and any significantly "new" or "original" critical or theoretical work produces a mutation in the discipline' (Bennett and Royle 2004: 230). And people are always mutating; becoming and unbecoming. With this examination of monstrosity in *Middlesex* we can argue that Eugenides does court clichés of monstrosity, but he deploys these clichés to question the category of monstrosity itself. Inter-ness – or intertextuality – is revealed as a general, not a singular, condition – and so by implication, is intersexuality.

As we have now established that Barbin and Cal/lie are both bodily and textually made of layers, or hauntings, I will now turn to finding a way of revealing, in translation, that both bodies and texts are constantly becoming: 'neither complete nor incomplete, [they are] caught up, along with both writer and reader, in a state of perpetual movement and becoming' (Scott 2014a: 50). This echoes Winter's (2011: 41) claim that 'everyone is always becoming and unbecoming' in *Annabel*. I want to show that Barbin and Cal/lie are complicated by the ghosts of their past and future becomings: 'Never out of place in the identity that he is not, and not entirely at home in the identity that he is, Cal thus emerges as a profoundly uncanny subject who falls in between all chairs' (De Boever 2012: 53). After the discovery of hir condition the same sort of displacement happens to Barbin: ze is no longer a teacher but not a railway worker either (we see the same with

Erauso and d’Eon who are both divided between two categories, never properly belonging to either – nun/virginal woman and soldier). These uncanny becomings are revealed in their writings and so must be revealed in translation. We can use translation to embody that which is a stranger to us, ‘a stranger who is already found within (*das Heimliche-Unheimliche*), more intimate with one than with oneself [...] whose power is singular *and* anonymous (*es spukt*), an unnameable and neutral power, that is, undecidable, neither active nor passive’ (Derrida 2006: 217). The stranger is other to the self but both are undecidable and contradictory: ‘a person may identify himself with another and so become unsure of his true self; or he may substitute the other’s self for his own. The self may thus be duplicated, divided and interchanged’ (Freud 2003: 142).

Derrida develops Freud who first wrote about the notion of the *Heimliche-Unheimliche*: ‘*Heimlich* thus becomes increasingly ambivalent, until it finally merges with its antonym *Unheimlich*. The uncanny (*das Unheimliche*, “the unhomely”) is in some ways a species of the familiar (*das Heimliche*, “the homely”)’ (Freud 2003: 134). The *heimlich* becomes the *un-heimlich* because ‘this uncanny element is actually nothing new or strange, but something that was long familiar to the psyche and was estranged from it only through being repressed’ (Freud 2003: 148). This idea of repression relates to the idea that the uncanny is to do with what is meant to be hidden or secret but has come into view (Freud 2003: 132-133, 148). Past becomings that were thought to be forgotten re-emerge in the present and this causes an uncanny effect. These emerging becomings do not reveal a ‘truth’, however. As we have discussed, the truth is not contained in what we can see and, furthermore, that which is truly undecidable can never be ‘revealed’.

I argue that Barbin’s and Cal/lie’s texts are uncanny in the sense that their irrepressible past and future selves make them both familiar and unfamiliar to themselves, they make them undecidable. Freud (2003: 156) argues that ‘many things that would be bound to seem uncanny if they happened in real life are not so in the realm of fiction’. However, when an author chooses to embrace the uncanny, they can ‘multiply this effect far beyond what is feasible in normal experience’ (Freud 2003: 157). Freud (2003: 157) sees this as a trick – we are promised everyday reality but the author surpasses it and we enter the realm of the unreal. What Barbin and Eugenides do though, through literature, is show that the uncanny, the divided self, is a part of everyday reality.

These two intersex narratives are apt for exploring how to combine what appears to be contradictory, for as Butler (2006: 143) says, Barbin's 'confessions, as well as her desires, are subjection and defiance at once'. Translation itself is contradictory:

In their plurality, the words of translation organize themselves, they are not dispersed at random. They disorganize themselves as well through the very effect of the specter, because of the Cause that is called the original and that, like all ghosts, addresses same-ly disparate demands, which are more than contradictory. (Derrida 2006: 21)

The 'original' and the translation are concerned with the same text but in different ways; the translation always houses the source text as well as itself, and Derrida (2006: 25) asks: 'Is it possible to find a rule of cohabitation under such a roof, it being understood that this house will always be haunted rather than inhabited by the meaning of the original?'. The house of translation is, therefore, uncanny: 'in some modern languages the German phrase *ein unheimliches Haus* [an uncanny house] can be rendered only by the periphrasis "a haunted house"' (Freud 2003: 148). As we have already discussed, translation cannot replicate the 'meaning' of the original because the original has no one meaning; the source text haunts the target text so the target text is a form of renewal, a renewal that does not break with the past but carries it forward.

Wing (2004: 22) contends that 'the very openness to change that is figured in [intersex] narratives, even if repeatedly foreclosed in their denouements, signals an intense awareness of possibilities for cultural, historical renewal'. This cultural and historical renewal can best be done through translation which can prolong the (after)life of the source text. In Benjamin's (2012: 71) words: 'a translation participates in the "afterlife" (*Überleben*) of the source text, enacting an interpretation that is informed by a history of reception'. A translation of an intersex text is another spectre of the body and the text, a fleeting captivation of spectres past, present and future: the spectre 'is a paradoxical incorporation, the becoming-body, a certain phenomenal and carnal form of the spirit' (Derrida 2006: 5). The spectre is both spirit and flesh: 'For there to be a ghost, there must be a return to the body, but to a body that is more abstract than ever'

(Derrida 2006: 157). The body is the site of becoming but each time the body becomes something new it becomes more abstract. To reflect this abstraction and this process of becoming translation can be practised in the experimental mode.

## 5. Translation possibilities: Electronic literature and the hypertext

Now that we have established that translation prolongs the ghostly life of both the body and the source text, this section will outline how a translation can manifest the multiple ghosts that it not only represents but also creates. Both *Mes souvenirs* and *Middlesex* are difficult to translate because they are undecidable; but it is also precisely translation that can best represent these texts' undecidabilities because translation itself is multiple. The kind of text which best exemplifies plurality is electronic. Readers come to electronic literature with the expectations they have gained from print literature; the digital builds on these but also changes them: 'In this sense electronic literature is a "hopeful monster" (as geneticists call adaptive mutations) composed of parts taken from diverse traditions that may not always fit neatly together' (Hayles 2008: 4). Like intersex bodies and translation, electronic literature is 'hybrid' (Hayles 2008: 4). The ways and means of writing electronic literature change with alacrity in our technological world and the hypertext link is the distinguishing feature of early works; later works move on from the idea of the link (Hayles 2008: 7) but here I am interested in what the hypertext link, though perhaps now considered 'basic', can tell us about the hybridity of humans and texts.

While there are more complex forms of electronic literature it is also important to note that: 'Living at the forefront of a politics geared towards making (gender) trouble is exhausting [...] the point is not to live perpetually where it is troubling to deal with the body, but to get to a place where there can be some breathing room for difference' (Holmes 2008: 15-16). The same can be said for the text: as Venuti (2008: 255) says, we must stay away from the incomprehensible; if the text or the body become too incomprehensible, the reader (of both) will give up. This is potentially why readers of *Middlesex* categorise Cal as male, because an undecidable character with an undecidable ending is not an easy read. That is not to say, though, that we can discard Butler's (1994:

38) call for subversive challenges to the act of reading. An electronic translation based on the hypertext link provides a middle ground which takes up the challenge but gives the body and the text room to breathe.

With the hypertext link we can see the layers that make up the body and the text, the intertextuality that is found within that shows us that bodies and texts are unstable. The multiplicity of technology shows us the multiplicity of the body. The term 'hypertext' was first used by Ted Nelson in 1965 when he wrote: 'Let me introduce the word "hypertext" to mean a body of written or pictorial material interconnected in such a complex way that it could not conveniently be presented or represented on paper' (Nelson 1965). As we saw in Chapter One, Gérard Genette's (1997: 7) definition of the hypertext in literary theory refers to 'any text derived from a previous text, either through simple transformation [...] or through indirect transformation'. In Genette's vision, *Middlesex* is already a hypertext of various hypotexts: *Herculine Barbin dite Alexina B.*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and *Middlemarch* among others. This description of hypertextuality is closely related to intertextuality which is defined by Genette (1997: 2) as 'a relationship of copresence between two texts or among several texts: that is to say, eidetically and typically as the actual presence of one text within another'.

I argue that the digital hypertext is always intertextual, 'the hypertext we are talking about is a computer construct of links and data corresponding to files or parts of files that can be displayed in windows' (Vandendorpe 2009: 70). With the digital hypertext, the critic (and the translator-as-critic) can see the text as an entangled experiment, the spaces between the object and the experiment 'quiver with uncertainty' (Fitzgerald and Callard 2014). Multiple experiments can be produced, never solving the problem but always asking new questions; with the hypertext, 'the critic has to give up not only the idea of mastery but also that of a single text at all as the mastery and mastered object disappear [...] the critic [...] becomes more like the scientist, who admits that his or her conclusions take the form, inevitably, of mere samples' (Landow 1994: 35).

George P. Landow (2006: 4) goes so far as to suggest that 'from the vantage point of the current changes in information technology, Barthes's distinction between readerly and writerly texts appears to be essentially a distinction between text based on print technology and electronic hypertext'. The confusion that the hypertext affords can contribute to the 'writerly' text, forcing the reader to think about what the text they are

reading is trying to do. The reader is forced to interact with the material placed in front of him or her while believing in the illusion that they are in control of what they see (see Kitzmann 2006: 82). This control is an illusion because the hyperlink does not necessarily empower the reader; they 'can only follow the links that the author has already scripted' (Hayles 2008: 31). According to N. Katherine Hayles (2008: 31), the hypertext link should not be seen as 'electronic literature's distinguishing characteristic' because 'print texts [have] long also employed analogous technology in such apparatus as footnotes, endnotes, cross-reference and so on'. Furthermore, the hypertext in Genette's (1997: 286) print-based version of it, 'may introduce anachronies (analepses or prolepses) into an initially chronological narrative [...]. Conversely, the hypertext may reorder the anachronies of its hypertext'.

The concession that the trajectory of any story, print or electronic, is always ultimately in the writer's control does not necessarily preclude the hypertext's championing of the reader's activity above their passivity. While the reader is not free to 'invent' the story, what is illuminating about hypertext fiction is that it is a physical manifestation of the ways that print texts, and all texts, are non-linear. A print text is ostensibly linear and print narrative stages the relation between past and present with a beginning, a middle and an end. However, the beginning, middle and end of a print narrative are not necessarily chronological, as we have seen: Barbin's text begins at the end. The present is never without the past, something which is heightened in autobiography, both print and electronic. There is no 'before' the discovery and 'after' the discovery in Barbin's text or in hir identity. What is shown in the text is that hir identity is *always* caught up in a process of being and becoming both male and female. An electronic hypertext can visibly undo a chronological narrative: The narratives of *Middlesex* and *Herculine Barbin dite Alexina B.* could be unravelled in a hypertext translation. In each text, the passage where Barbin and Cal/lie are medically interpellated as intersex could come first. This would make manifest the idea that the authors always know about their intersex status, from the moment they began writing.

Furthermore, despite Hayles's point about electronic and print literature sharing paratexts, having 'multiple reading paths [...] also creates a text that exists far less independently of commentary, analogues, and traditions than does printed text. This kind of democratization [...] reduces the hierarchical separation between the so-called main

text and the annotation' (Landow 2006: 45). In the hypertext there is no binary system because there are multiple texts, none of which are in the 'centre'. In practice, this idea of multiple texts with no hierarchy whatsoever is difficult to implement – it is possible to have the main text and the annotation open in two different windows at once so that neither is 'main' but, if the first text includes a link to the annotation, until that link is clicked, the first text is 'on top'. Having said this, in a translation, the target text becomes what is 'on top', the source text is below, the traditional hierarchy of target and source is reversed and the idea of a haunting below the surface is emphasised. The translation becomes the 'tissue of innumerable quotations' that Barthes (1977: 146) describes and the notions of origins are dispersed. For example, a hypertext translation of *Middlesex* could emphasize Eugenides's sources by linking the myths of Tiresias, the Minotaur or Hermaphroditus to the translation.

The text itself is used as a tool, it is a means to always defer conclusions. Queering a text 'is an attempt to resist being made a slave to the discourses one is operating within at any one moment by peeling back the multitudinous layers of meaning contained within each and every pronouncement' (Giffney 2009: 1). And these multiple layers of meaning present in the hypertext, and every text, are not the product of one author but many. The hypertext embodies the idea of multiple producers and collaboration. Scott Rettberg (2011: 187) notes that 'printed books are almost always products of collaboration [...] in the less-considered sense of multiple people working together to produce an edited, designed, bound, printed and distributed artifact'. However, this collaboration is covered up so that everyone but the author is invisible (Rettberg 2011: 187). This is reminiscent of both Foucault's work in 'What is an Author' (1979), and Pierre Bourdieu's in *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993), where they proclaim the multiple personnel who participate in the production of a text which is then retroactively called original. This is an interesting parallel to the way that men and women, and intersex children who are surgically 'corrected', are socialised into gender but consider themselves to have been always such since birth.

The hypertext does not pretend to be the product of a single producer or even author (or translator) because hyperlinks are always intertextual: 'The idea of hypertext itself is based on harnessing collective knowledge' (Rettberg 2011: 188; see also Hayles 2008: 129). According to Landow (2006: 353), 'actual hypertext, hypertext as an

information technology in the form of the World Wide Web, can at least permit individual voices to be heard'. But the premise of the hypertext is to be something multivocal, these voices are never individual. What hypertext does for translation is suggest that every piece of writing is a collaboration, especially translation, because the translator works with the author – admittedly the translator sometimes works against the author, but there is a dialogue. Landow (2006: 356) himself says that 'the value of hypertext as a paradigm exists in its essential multivocality, decentering, and redefinition of edges, borders, identities'. Landow (2006: 356) sees this paradigm as 'a way of thinking about postcolonial issues', and as a way of improving postcolonial discourse because there is no 'centre'. In a similar vein the hypertext can also provide new ways of thinking generally about both trans issues and translation issues and more specifically about intersex issues. It can reflect the fact that 'Cal's process of becoming human is explicitly figured in *[Middlesex]* as messianic, as the coming of a new, redemptive kind of life around which an alternative political community will come into being' (De Boever 2012: 62). I argue that such an alternative political community finds its voice in hypertextual translation.

## 6. Conclusion

In this chapter I have looked at the study of intersex through a queer lens which brings an acceptance of sex as cultural to the fore. As Butler (2006: 46) says:

No longer believable as an interior 'truth' of dispositions and identity, sex will be shown to be a performatively enacted signification (and hence not 'to be'), one that, released from its naturalized interiority and surface, can occasion the parodic proliferation and subversive play of gendered meanings.

Intersex people demonstrate both the fragility of sex as a category (it is not binary) and also disrupt the presumed reciprocity of gender, sex and sexuality. The intersex person has an undecidable sex and, consequently, an undecidable sexuality – undecidability is not just a poststructuralist concept but is something that is experienced by human bodies.

I have analysed the translations of two undecidable texts involving two undecidable protagonists. Ibañez and Cholodenko do attempt to maintain some of the undecidability of their source texts but fall short of portraying Cal/lie as truly inter-sex. MacDougall, on the other hand, makes no attempt to portray Herculine as anything other than ultimately male. While any text or translation is undecidable when the reader is taken into account, these particular texts work hard to be undecidable. In order to emphasise this point and to shine a light on the undecidability of all sex and gender, translations of intersex texts can reveal textual and sexual plurality through a hypertextual translation, a translation that readily shows its influences and its possibilities.

In this chapter I have acknowledged that a self or identity is a textual ‘weave’ of past and present, of the self as becoming, the self in process. This idea is in marked contrast to the idea of a ‘true’ self or text – and also to the idea that identity is ever a simple decision, with before-and-after moments. What this raises for translation, then, is not only the question of how to translate pronouns and adjectives – but how to translate changeful, haunted narratives – how to translate narratively-narrated-selves, over time. The hypertext ‘fragments, disperses, or atomizes text’ (Landow 2006: 99) because ‘all hypertext webs, no matter how simple, how limited, inevitably take the form of textual collage, for they inevitably work by juxtaposing different texts and often appropriating them as well’ (Landow 2006: 192).

The novels of my final chapter involve textual collage in the form of fragmentation and erasure because their first-person narrators never reveal their gender. *Written on the Body* by Jeanette Winterson is narrated by an ‘I’ who we never fully know, and *Sphinx* by Anne Garréta not only conceals the gender of the first-person narrator but also the narrator’s third-person love interest in French. So far I have been looking at translation methods that use layers to reveal multiplicity. If I am now to move on to methods that can conceal within layers and fragment text, I can take my lead from both the hypertext and the palimpsest. The palimpsest begins life as an erased text, as a layer of text which is removed, and Genette talks of two types of hypertexts, ones which amplify their hypertexts and ones which reduce them: for some writers, every reading ‘brings ever more additions, in the margins, between the lines, on paste-ons and paper strips, even on the galley proofs and, after publication, on the interfoliated blank pages’, but for other

writers 'every fresh reading calls for more erasures' (Genette 1997: 276). Texts which contain erasure create undecidability and this is crucial in an agender performance.

As I discussed in section 5, certain types of hypertext fiction can be even more restrictive than the book, which can be opened at any page and read in any order (Hayles 2008: 31-32), but there are ways of utilising the hyperlink that do not place the reader in a repetitive loop. Software for hypertext fiction such as Storyspace has quickly been eclipsed (Hayles 2008: 6) and an easier way to produce hypertextual electronic literature is to use a blog: ‘Blogs are remarkable for combining aspects of both dialogue and dissemination. In a sense, they are as promiscuously sown as the seeds in the Parable of the Sower, Blogs are published on the internet and can be read by anybody – or nobody’ (Walker Rettberg 2014: 41). What a blog can do is gather together different translation attempts, and it can foster the sense of translation Scott (2014a: 3-4) advocates:

A form of ongoing daily intercourse with texts, as a form of dialogue with others and with self, of the experimental search for an adequate language.

A translation is a formal project, yes, but also a journal of reading, an album of try-outs, an intimate letter to its own readers, which multiplies drafts, sketches, casual snapshots.

I have created a blog called ‘translating herculine’ ([www.translatingherculine.wordpress.com](http://www.translatingherculine.wordpress.com)). This is my ‘album of try-outs’ in which I translate excerpts from Barbin’s text. A blog is an appropriate medium for translating a memoir because ‘we create a reflection of ourselves in a weblog. At the same time, we use our blogs to veil ourselves, not telling all but presenting only certain carefully selected aspects of ourselves to our readers’ (Walker Rettberg 2014: 127). I have translated carefully selected excerpts from the text chronologically but, by means of a contents page in which none of the posts are numbered, the reader is free to read the posts as they wish. This way, the reader may read of Barbin’s discovery of hir intersex status first – a status any reader already knows about when approaching the printed, linear versions anyway, since it cannot be avoided in the title of MacDougal’s translation. In many of my posts I try to link the translation to the relevant section of the source text (Tardieu’s

version) so that the source text is always haunting the translation, residing beneath its surface.

What also haunts the text are its intertexts, such as Ovid's *Metamorphoses*:

I admit that I was singularly bowled-over on reading Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Those who know of them will get the idea. This find was of a singularity which the rest of my story will unequivocally prove.<sup>43</sup>  
(Barbin 1874: 78, my translation)

In this blog post I can attach a link to an online version of *Metamorphoses* (Ovid 2000) so the reader can access the story of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis to which Barbin is alluding here. My electronic hypertext could also be used to show *Middlesex*'s intertexts and hypertexts, which are numerous. A translation of *Middlesex* could also benefit from the medium of the blog in order to open up the ending of the text; blogs 'are episodic and are published in the same time frame as that of their readers. They are generally not driven towards an ending, towards closure, as traditional narratives are' (Walker Rettberg 2014: 133). The most recent post on a blog always promises more, in a way that the final page of a book cannot. Furthermore, it is difficult to archive electronic literature because it is so fluid: 'whereas books printed on good quality paper can endure for centuries, electronic literature routinely becomes [...] unreadable after a decade or even less' (Hayles 2008: 39). My blog is transient because I, as its author, can delete or change what I choose and also because the links I use may become unreadable. What you read on the blog one day may be different the next and it is, therefore, unstable. And perhaps one day it will become a ghost itself, a ghostly representation of Barbin's ghost.

I can also use the blog to explore the idea that Barbin's authorial persona is always present as part of hir textual persona. I took my English translation of pages 109 to 112 of *Mes souvenirs* and removed the instances where you can clearly hear Barbin's authorial voice. I then added them over the text in French in my own handwriting as if ze were annotating hir work, adding these thoughts later as Abel in Paris. One could argue that the text without Barbin's later thoughts is an 'avant-texte' of the source text which

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<sup>43</sup> For my blog I use Barbin's 1874 text as my source for reasons of copyright. I use Foucault's 2014 transcription in my main analysis because this was the source MacDougall used.

'unfinishes the ST, multiplies its possibilities of becoming, by introducing into it the passage of time' (Scott 2014a: 51). I have then linked my English translation of these annotations using a hyperlink (see figure 5).

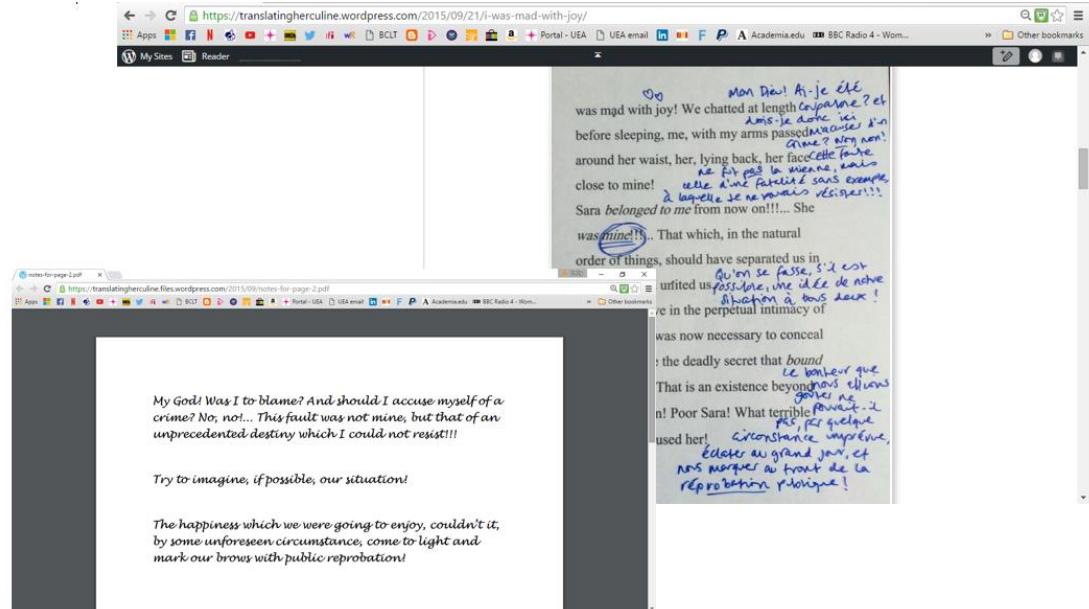


Figure 5: Blog post showing my translation of part of page 110 of *Mes souvenirs* (1874) which experiments with layers

The text is now made up of layers: the first layer is Barbin's narrative voice as if ze had written a diary at the time, the second layer is Barbin's later authorial voice and the third layer is my translator's voice. I add my voice through the use of my own handwriting – a 'mode of graphic self-representation [...] which [has] access to the unconscious, to reverie, to the impulses and spontaneities of the reading body, and the harnessing of the languages of text' (Scott 2014a: 2). In a 'straight' translation, these voices are merged. Through links I can show the reader my influences and my intertexts and exemplify the idea that 'the voice of an author or poet [or translator] is always phantasmagoric or ghostly and itself in turn always haunted' (Bennett and Royle 2004: 75).

The blog is also a good place to show how Barbin's text is framed by so many others, as I can link the medical examinations carried out both pre- and post-mortem on his body which are included by Tardieu (1874: 146) as a footnote and by Foucault (2014: 147-164) in his dossier (see figure 6).

Needless to say, this second examination gave the same result as the first, and that, after his report, the civil court of S... ordered that the civil status registers be rectified to show that I belonged to the masculine sex and at the same time a new name was substituted for the feminine one I'd been given at birth.

I was at B... when this decree was handed down. I was sent the details of the judgement that were later consigned in the [Annals of legal medicine](#).

On consulting this work I discovered that a similar case happened in 1813 involving a girl with the same name.

*Question of identity. Malformation of the genital organs. Hypospadias. Error about sex by Doctor Chesnet of La Rochelle (Annals of public hygiene and legal medicine, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, t. XIV, p. 206; July 1868) – I the undersigned, doctor of medicine, living at La Rochelle (Charente-Inférieure), exposes to whoever has the right, the following: A child born of the B... couple in Saint-Jean d'Angely on the 8<sup>th</sup> November 1838 was declared to the civil status records as a girl, and although registered under the names of Adélaïde-Herculine, her parents were in the habit of calling her Alexina, a name she continued to use until now. Placed in schools for young girls and later the normal school of Charente-Inférieure, Alexina obtained a teaching certificate two years ago.*

Figure 6: Blog post showing an extract of my translation of page 145-148 of *Mes souvenirs* (1874) with a link to the medical notes taken on Barbin

These paratexts are underneath the text and form the layers that create both the text and Barbin's body – both are infused with medical discourse.

Every blog post links my translations with different materials such as my translation drafts or a video clip of the film based on the memoir: *Mystère Alexina* (Féret 1985) [The Mystery of Alexina]. In the same way that my palimpsest is a performance of Erauso's text which has long been taken out of Erauso's hands, my blog is a performance of my reading of Barbin's text which has been added to by different voices ever since its publication. Barbin's body and text (as all bodies and all texts) are constantly moderated by others and my digital translation experiments with how to represent the many materials that make up Barbin's life, bringing that life to a new audience and shining a light on the textual and sexual plurality present in every text and every body.

## Chapter Three: Translating Agender

And so the whole neighbourhood learnt the news: Dominique, young France's baby, had been born with an unknown sex. A doubtful sex. Not clear. (Allez 2015: 96, my translation)

### 1. Introduction

Chapter Two was dedicated to analysing the translation of doubtful (or undecidable) sex because to be intersex is precisely to introduce doubt into the concept of binary sex. In the epigraph above taken from Cookie Allez's 2015 novel *Dominique*, Allez describes how France's neighbours believe that her baby, Dominique, has a doubtful sex. This is not actually the case. Dominique has a clear sex (to the extent that the medical establishment assigns everyone a 'clear' sex) but her parents, France and Gabriel, decide to bring her up with no sex. She therefore has no gender identification or expression – to both herself and the outside world, Dominique is agender. Dominique does not discover her sex until the age of seven and does not acknowledge it until the age of eleven but the reader must wait even longer – until the final page – to discover Dominique's sex, and even then her gender is still a mystery. In this chapter, undecidability is almost exclusively a question of gender; though confusions surrounding sex and gender mean that sex is inevitably included in many of the discussions that follow. Before we focus on the texts this chapter will examine – *Sphinx* by Anne Garréta (1986) and *Written on the Body* by Jeanette Winterson (1993) – it will be useful to reconsider the differences between the terms 'sex' and 'gender'.

Whilst it is true that theorists such as Judith Butler (2006: 10) consider there to be no distinction between the two terms because both are culturally produced, it is an important part of being 'trans' to have a gender identity that does not 'match' what is expected from whichever sex one is assigned at birth (Huston 2015). Of course, Butler's point is that there is no need for gender to match sex at all as the latter is simply a

category assigned by the medical establishment with the former acting as the policy by which sex is kept in check, but this does not prevent people from believing that gender naturally follows sex. In language, sex and gender are inextricable: 'sex-based systems are found in almost all areas where there is gender' (Corbett 2013b). Linguistic gender supposedly often matches sex:

To a linguist, the term *gender* retains its original meaning of 'kind', as in the related words *generic*, *genus*, and *genre*. [...] It just happens that in many European languages the genders correspond to the sexes, at least in pronouns. For this reason the linguistic term *gender* has been pressed into service by nonlinguists as a convenient label for sexual dimorphism. (Pinker 1994: 27-28)

Not all European languages have pronouns that correspond to the sexes, however: English and German have a neuter gender. English assigns gender on a semantic basis (what is male is masculine, female is feminine, inanimate is neuter) while German assigns it on both a semantic and a formal basis (nouns are also assigned a gender according to their form) (Corbett 2013c). Mark Twain (2010 [1880]: 380) picks up on this peculiarity of the German language: 'In German, a young lady has no sex, while a turnip has', a young lady in German is the neuter 'ein Mädchen' while a turnip is the feminine 'eine Rübe'. Here gender is assigned according to morphology and not semantically. French and Spanish also have formal gender assignment and it could be argued that this means that these speakers see the world as divided by binary gender more than, say, an English speaker.

What Twain seems to be suggesting in his diatribe against the 'senseless' German language is that 'grammatical gender [has] implications for our understanding of the world' (Sedlmeier, Tipandjan and Jänchen 2016: 318). Linguistic relativity has come under much scrutiny over the past eighty years: Peter Sedlmeier, Arun Tipandjan and Anastasia Jänchen (2016: 317) cite fourteen studies which argue for linguistic relativity and thirteen that challenge it. They conclude that, on the basis of the evidence, it is unlikely that language controls thought but it can influence it (Sedlmeier, Tipandjan and Jänchen 2016: 318). They then set out to discover if gender is viewed differently by speakers of

languages with three genders, the hypothesis being that a mapping between the gender of nouns and sex ‘is generally easier in two-gendered languages such as Italian than in languages with more than two genders, such as German’ (Sedlmeier, Tipandjan and Jänchen 2016: 320). Their results, however, show that ‘grammatical gender effects indeed persist even in three-gendered languages’ (Sedlmeier, Tipandjan and Jänchen 2016: 321).

Grammatical gender does influence the way we see the world, even in English: ‘Sera and Berge (1994) seem to have been the first to note that speakers of English, a nongendered language, tended to attribute male and female voices to inanimate objects in a way that was consistent with Spanish grammatical gender’ (Sedlmeier, Tipandjan and Jänchen 2016: 321). In 2000 Lera Boroditsky and Lauren A. Schmidt carried out an experiment using native English, Spanish and German speakers to determine whether Spanish grammatical gender was universal. They gave English speakers a list of fifty animal names and a list of eighty-five object names and asked them to classify each item as either masculine or feminine: ‘They found that English speakers’ judgments correlated substantially with Spanish but even higher with German grammatical gender for the animal list [...] but less strongly for the list of artifacts’ (Sedlmeier, Tipandjan and Jänchen 2016: 321). Boroditsky and Schmidt conclude that English has too much in common with Indo-European languages like Spanish and German to test the universality of grammatical gender (Sedlmeier, Tipandjan and Jänchen 2016: 322). What these studies show is that the division of the world into masculine and feminine binary gender is, in many ways, as much a problem for English speakers as it is for French or Spanish speakers.

Furthermore, even though English does not gender such objects as chairs and tables, English speakers can understand the fact that Spanish and German do. If they could not, translation between languages with different systems would not happen: the translator could not hope to translate at all if the source text was beyond his or her understanding, let alone the understanding of his or her readers. This is patently not the case as Jean Boase-Beier (2011: 35) states, ‘the impossibility of translation [does not] follow from [...] linguistic difference. What does follow is that the translator does not have a straightforward task’. All of my texts are queer, and translations with a queer agenda do not shy away from what is hard. Indeed, queer translations of these texts expose grammatical gender as a construct precisely because they show that source languages and target languages can treat it differently; for example, English can conceal

gender in the first person, while French or Spanish cannot, but in French and Spanish, possessive adjectives are epicene and in English they are not. Furthermore, French and Spanish have gender-invariable nouns which play a vital role in the texts I examine here.

*Sphinx* and *Written on the Body* use language and discourse transgressively to suggest a different kind of gender identity. Their characters' gender transgressions can only be shown through the written word; there is no physical means of 'looking', there is no truth in sight (as we saw with Barbin in Chapter Two, and as I shall discuss in more detail, there is perhaps never truth in sight alone); they only exist in the reader's mind's eye and it is language that creates this image. Fiction can conceal what is often forcibly revealed in lived experience as Em McAvan (2011: 437) notes:

Although many people [...] may live and identify as a third gender, an identification that has a certain declamatory force of its own, they nevertheless do not step outside the compulsory regimes that constitute the sexed body as an object of legal, social and political interest – to do so is a cultural impossibility.

It is fiction that creates the notion that things can be concealed; but just as there is no truth behind that which is undecidable, there is no truth behind fiction.

Critics have argued over how to label the narrators from *Sphinx* and *Written on the Body* since their publication but we can never know their sex (and have no pronouns to rely on). Most readers try to glean clues about their sexual identity from their gender presentation (including the discourses they use). We shall see in section 3.1 below that attention to critical discourse is particularly important in this chapter but it does not yield any firm answers. Garréta's and Winterson's narrators are variously labelled as male, female, gay, lesbian, straight and trans (see Harris 2000; Livia 2001; Rubinson 2001; Smith 2011). While labels are not always useful, I will argue that it could be enlightening to consider the genderless narrators of both texts, and the genderless love interest of *Sphinx*, as agender in order to consider how to translate these identities between languages which use grammatical gender to different extents.

Like those examined in chapters one and two, these trans protagonists also go through a process of becoming and unbecoming. Here these becomings bring up

questions of existence – the further these characters move from the gender binary (or even a mixing of the binary) the more ghostly they seem to become. This spectrality is not necessarily suggesting that one cannot exist without staking a claim, no matter how temporary, to a masculine or feminine gender presentation. The ghostly endings of these texts, which I shall discuss below, are a place of movement and undecidability, the start of an unbecoming before another re-becoming of ‘agender’ identity. This term comes under the ‘genderqueer’ or ‘nonbinary’ umbrella and I will examine these and the more specific terms they cover in section 2. I will then look at the texts more closely, examining the sexual undecidability of the three genderless characters and how they have been received by readers. I will also examine the techniques used by both authors to suggest textual undecidability, considering how these techniques involving genre, the texts’ endings, intertextuality and voice (techniques we have come across in both previous chapters) affect translation. In section 4 I will carry out a close analysis of the English translation of *Sphinx* and the French and Spanish translations of *Written on the Body*. I will argue that the sexual and textual undecidability of and in these novels, which has often been read out by critics, must be preserved in translation and that translation is a good place to explore problems of gender in language and ideas of the undecidable.

## 2. Non-binary identity

People who attempt to refuse the binary polarity of gender have existed for centuries (Herdt 1994: 11): Native American ‘berdaches’ were considered neither masculine nor feminine but neuter, the ‘hijras’ of India considered themselves (and still do) as neither men nor women, the Greco-Roman priests of Cybele and Attis, known as ‘galli’ dressed in neither a masculine nor feminine style and were considered ‘third gender’, and the personnel of temples and palaces in Mesopotamia had the gender identity of neither men nor women (Roscoe 1998: 3, 205-206; for more on hijras see Nanda 1994).<sup>44</sup> However,

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<sup>44</sup> As we saw in Chapter Two, concepts of gender have differed throughout time and space and so these communities’ transcendence of binary gender may not have been judged as transgressive by their contemporaries but it is still useful to consider that the concept of gender, especially as a binary, has always been questioned.

current concepts of ‘nonbinary’ or ‘genderqueer’ identity have received little theoretical attention and I hope to begin to redress the dearth of academic writing on the topic here. ‘Genderqueer’ is generally used as an umbrella term along with ‘nonbinary’, as Matt Huston (2015) notes: ‘Overlooked by much of the media are those who feel that they are not exclusively men or women [...] They use labels like *nonbinary*, *genderqueer*, or one of many related terms that generally describe a sense of gender that’s beyond, or somewhere in between the concepts of “man” and “woman”’.

When Maria Munir came out as nonbinary to Barak Obama in 2016 it became clear that even he was unsure of the definition of the term: ‘It’s almost perfect in a way that even the president of the United States isn’t fully informed on non-binary issues, because it really puts it home that so many people around the world need to be informed on this’ (Khomani 2016). Munir’s confession did not only show how little is known about ‘nonbinary’ as an identity but also allowed nonbinary issues to become a topic in the British press for several days. Three days after their ‘outing’ Munir wrote an article entitled ‘Why I came out as non-binary to Barak Obama’ in *The Telegraph*. This was Munir’s (2016) chance to educate readers: ‘According to the Non-binary Inclusion Project, there are an estimated 252,728 non-binary people in the UK, so clearly I’m not alone’.

Munir’s definition of nonbinary includes people who identify as both men and women as well as neither. Munir, and Huston, hit upon the contradiction I addressed in my introduction between trans identities: ‘genderqueer’ can also be used to describe identities which contradict each other. A person who identifies as genderqueer may wish to jettison the categories of masculine and feminine altogether or they may feel they are a mixture of the two.<sup>45</sup> For example, more specific terms that come under this umbrella include: ‘neutrois’ (‘a neutral gender that is neither male nor female’ (Huston 2015)); ‘bigender’ (‘a dual-gender identity, with two sides experienced and expressed either simultaneously or at different times’ (Huston 2015)); ‘agender’ (‘an absence of gender identification or expression’ (Huston 2015)); ‘genderfluid’ (‘shifting between different

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<sup>45</sup> While the term ‘genderqueer’ suggests that this identity is specifically concerned with gender and therefore with ideas of masculine and feminine, descriptions of genderqueer people sometimes refer to mixtures between feeling male and female and do not distinguish between concepts of sex and gender. The term ‘non-binary’ is sometimes used by people who feel themselves to be somewhere between male and female, a mixture of both or something entirely different (see Trans Media Watch, no date). I use it to indicate the latter: a complete rejection of binary gender.

gender identities or expressions' (Huston 2015)); 'androgynous/androgyn' ('having both traditionally masculine and feminine characteristics and/or identifying as between male and female' (Huston 2015)).

Finding the right term is important, even if labels can be restrictive. Rikki Wilchins (2002b: 57) takes issue with the term 'androgynous' because 'to be androgynous is not gender-neutral but male. Man is the default sex; womanhood must continually prove itself by artifice, adornment, and display'. The term, with its implications of the male-as-default, must be questioned because of what it suggests about the world as a patriarchy. Since Simone de Beauvoir (2009 [1949]) famously declared that woman is the 'second sex', the idea that what is gender-neutral is male, or that man is the universal, has been a constant problem for Francophone feminists; the man is always the unmarked universal in the French language (see Simon 1996: 19; Yaguello 2002: 79; de Lotbinière-Harwood 1991: 112). Taking this point much further, Monique Wittig (1985: 5) condemns the pronoun 'je' as being exclusively male: 'Gender is not confined within the third person. Sex, under the name of gender, permeates the whole body of language and forces every locuter, if she belongs to the oppressed sex, to proclaim it in her speech'. This is something I shall discuss in the coming sections with regard to attempting to write a genderless first-person text in French and attempting to translate such a text.

Such a variety of terms living together under one label is nothing new. 'Trans' as an umbrella term involves many dichotomous identities, including, usually, 'genderqueer' itself. This does not mean, however, that all people who identify as 'genderqueer' or who use one of its associated terms wish to belong to the trans community: 'Though most [of the gender neutral community] group themselves with the transgender community, they reject the narrative of a person born in the wrong, oppositely-gendered body. All five neutrois individuals I spoke to have no need for masculinity or femininity' (White 2012). Micah (no date), who writes the online blog entitled 'Genderqueer Me', writes that 'I identify as nonbinary. Over the past 7 years I've been transitioning – or rather trying to figure out what transitioning means to me as someone whose gender is neither female or male'. Marilyn Roxie (2011a) suggests that some genderqueer people do not wish to belong to the trans community because they feel that being trans involves crossing a border from one gender to another, which they do not do.

Most of what little information there is on genderqueer identity can be found online; as it is easier to present agender identity in writing than in life it is also easier to present an agender identity online – the visual is missing. The body is invisible and language becomes the site of identification. It is useful to look to these individual accounts as ‘there are virtually no studies on people who identify as agender’ (White 2012). This may well be because these terms have such a short history, according to Roxie (2011b): ‘while “genderqueer” came into popular use through the late 1990s and early 2000s in the United States, the term had its development in the mid-1990s and implemented [sic] far earlier concepts of non-binary identity and expression (e.g. androgyny)’. The word ‘neutrois’ is not included in the *Oxford English Dictionary* or the *Collins Dictionary*, though the word is under review for inclusion according to the latter’s website (Collins 2017). Identities like ‘neutrois’ and ‘agender’ are much less established than more well-known identities such as transgender, transsexual or even intersex but they are beginning to be noticed. Indeed, in June 2017 a baby born in Canada became the first to be ‘officially identified as agender’ (Jackman 2017a) and in the same month both Washington DC and Oregon allowed its citizens to identify as gender neutral by using an ‘X’ instead of an ‘M’ or ‘F’ on driving licences and ID cards (Jackman 2017b and 2017c).

In my first chapter I looked at translating identities which move between the poles of male and female. My second chapter considered how sex as a biological category can (and actually always does) rest in between the binary poles of male and female. Here I want to explore how those binaries can be removed entirely from the equation. An agender or neutrois narrator helps us to look at ways of expressing gender neutrality in languages with an abundance of grammatical gender used by narrators whose becoming constantly puts them at one remove further from a gendered identity. With these definitions in mind, I shall now look in closer detail at how *Sphinx* and *Written on the Body* have been received in order to glean whether these receptions influence their translators. Critics’ reviews are most revealing here and I will consider how they often, but not always, endeavour to assign the generally nonbinary, and specifically agender, characters a definitive gender.

### 3. Two undecidable agender texts

#### 3.1 Sexual undecidability

Reviewers and critics of *Sphinx* and *Written on the Body* generally fall into one of two camps: those who believe the agender characters are decidable and who choose genders for them, and those who believe they were always meant to be, and should remain, undecidable. This examination of the texts' receptions will help me to argue that the characters must be seen as being neither male nor female and neither masculine nor feminine and that it is vital that this undecidability be maintained in translation.

Garréta's *Sphinx* involves both a first-person narrator with no gender and a genderless love interest known only as A\*\*\*. Later on in this chapter I will carry out a close analysis of *Sphinx* and of Garréta's techniques for concealing gender, but here it will be useful to briefly examine some examples from the text where both *je* and A\*\*\* are clearly genderless before we go on to examine the text's reception by critics and academics. *Je* is a theology student who also works as a disc jockey in a nightclub called 'L'Apocryphe'. The club, whose name means 'dubious' or 'questionable', is described as 'ambiguous' (Garréta 1986: 23, my translation) and 'a topographical enigma' (Garréta 1986: 29, my translation). *Je* says 'J'entrais indifféremment dans les boîtes hétéros et les boîtes homos, mâles ou femelles' (Garréta 1986 : 29) [I entered indiscriminately into straight and gay clubs and clubs for men or women]. *Je* only uses, or is referred to with, invariable nouns and adjectives: 'mon enfant' (Garréta 1986: 15) [my child] and 'Il me faut pourtant être juste' (Garréta 1986: 105) [It is, however, necessary for me to be fair]. A\*\*\* is a black dancer from New York with a muscular body and a shaved head who is also only ever referred to using invariable adjectives such as 'frivole' (Garréta 1986: 54) [frivolous] and 'grave' (Garréta 1986: 54) [serious] and invariable nouns: 'ce bel animal-là' (Garréta 1986: 56) [that beautiful animal there]. French is a two-sex language and these invariable nouns and adjectives are not strictly neutral in that they are used for both the masculine and the feminine rather than neither, but in doing so they become the perfect recourse for gender-neutral narration.

In *Pronoun Envy* (2001), a study with which my work is in near-constant dialogue and to which my research is heavily indebted, Anna Livia carries out a study on the reception of *Sphinx*: 'gender assignment varies from reviewer to reviewer: *World*

*Literature Today* (spring 1987), for example, describes “the studious theologian and his vulgar beloved” and how “the narrator becomes enamoured of her” (Livia 2001: 52). The reviewer for *Le Républicain lorrain* (7 March 1986) decides that both the narrator and A\*\*\* are male while the reviewer for *Le Canard enchaîné* (March 1986) thinks that they are both female (Livia 2001: 52). According to Livia (2001: 31), Garréta sees her novel as proof that ‘gender roles are no longer important [...]. The text is, [Garréta] says, “a trap”, set to expose reader assumptions about gender roles, even when they are not supported by the usual grammatical structures’.

For Livia (2001: 36), ‘it is not possible to read with an attitude of gender neutrality; in order to imagine the characters, one needs to clothe them in the attributes of one sex or the other’. She even goes so far as to answer Foucault’s (2014: 9) question of ‘do we truly need a true sex?’ in the affirmative: ‘the narrator and A\*\*\* truly need a true sex because we need to know how to refer to them’ (Livia 2001: 37). It is ironic that while claiming that we cannot refer to them, Livia does refer to the narrator and A\*\*\*. The assumption that readers cannot imagine a genderless character rather does them a disservice – after all, ‘fiction does not ask us to believe things (in a philosophical sense) but to imagine them (in an artistic sense)’ (Wood 2008: 179). For many, the function of literature is to defamiliarise; as I shall discuss below in reference to her inclusion in the Oulipo, the aim of Garréta’s text is to cause the reader a degree of trouble – imagining a genderless character is purposefully hard but not impossible.

Garréta’s text reveals that language itself is a trap: language is creative and allows human beings to express themselves but ‘we are restricted by that creation, limited to its confines, and, it appears, we resist, fear and dread any modifications to the structures we have initially created, even though they are ‘arbitrary, approximate ones’ (Spender 1998: 142, see also Pinker 1994). Where there is freedom there is always constraint. Livia seems to suggest that linguistic gender is immutable, that we cannot think of people without pronouns: if a person is not a ‘he’ or a ‘she’ they have to be an ‘it’ but, while in English that might suggest something inanimate, it does not necessarily make a person non-human in other languages as we saw with ‘young lady’ in German which, grammatically, is not a feminine noun but a neuter one. What Garréta shows is that ‘it’ can be human and we *can* modify or question the structures we have already created in language.

Livia (2001: 37) is determined to find gender in *Sphinx* and she considers it to be a lesbian novel. This could be because she reads the first-person text as partly autobiographical, and believes *je* is Garréta and therefore a lesbian (this is certainly what happens to Jeanette Winterson in reviews of many of her first-person novels (see Winterson 2014: xiv)). Most reviewers of the novel seem sure it is a homosexual text, though they cannot agree if it is gay or lesbian. While the genders of A\*\*\* and *je* are always undecidable, we do know that one of A\*\*\*'s lovers is male: he is A\*\*\*'s 'dernier amant en date' (Garréta 1986: 71) [last(m) lover(m) to date]. As we shall see below with *Written on the Body*, many critics are eager to write the possibility of bisexuality out of these texts, which is what those who see both *je* and A\*\*\* as lesbians must do. Bisexuality indicates yet more undecidability, in sexuality as well as in sex.

Winterson's 'I' of *Written on the Body* is also often assumed to move between being masculine and feminine between one page and the next, especially as the narrator makes constant references which appear to be gendered: 'I shall call myself Alice and play croquet with the flamingos' (Winterson 1993: 10); 'But I'm not a Boy Scout and never was' (Winterson 1993: 58); 'I had Mercutio's swagger' (Winterson 1993: 81); 'I quivered like a schoolgirl' (Winterson 1993: 82) and 'why do I feel like a convent virgin?' (Winterson 1993: 94). These metaphors and similes demonstrate the narrator's identification; Winterson plays with these tropes, they confirm the narrator's identity as agender because they indicate that *ze* identifies as unstable. Identifying as something is performative and mobile, the use of the simile 'like' suggests that we can identify with anything. Identification is made up of a series of acts and processes, it is a dynamic becoming and our identity is a product of these identifications: for Freud, 'identification comes little by little to have the central importance which makes it, not simply one physical mechanism among others, but the operation itself whereby the human subject is constituted' (Laplanche and Pontalis 1988: 206). Winterson's narrator is constituted from multiple identifications:

A subject's identifications viewed as a whole are in no way a coherent relational system. Demands coexist within an agency like the super-ego, for instance, which are diverse, conflicting and disorderly. Similarly, the

ego-ideal is composed of identifications with cultural ideals that are not necessarily harmonious. (Laplanche and Pontalis 1988: 208)

Identifying with inharmonious characters such as Alice and Mercutio through metaphor or schoolgirls and convent virgins through simile is the narrator's performance of their undecidability.

Many critics take Winterson's use of gendered language like 'schoolgirl' or 'boy scout' to argue that the narrator is a woman or a man, and ignore whichever references do not fit their interpretation. For example, Andrea Harris (2000: 130) argues that Winterson 'depicts a nearly featureless narrator [...] and gives us no clear signals as to its gender such as gendered pronouns or a name. Despite this refusal to mark gender, at the same time the novel offers many hints that "it" is in fact a she'. She justifies this argument by saying that she cannot imagine the narrator's radical feminist girlfriend, Inge, as anything but a lesbian and that, as Winterson is a lesbian, her narrator must be one too (Harris 2000: 143, 144). By assuming the narrator is a lesbian, Harris ignores hir relationships with men – 'I had a boyfriend once' (Winterson 1993: 92) – just as Livia ignores A\*\*\*'s relationship with a man in order to make hir and *je* lesbians. They both read out bisexuality. In fact, Harris (2000: 145) notes that 'it is doubtful that Winterson finds concealment in and of itself subversive' before saying that 'it is important that we read Winterson's "concealment" of her narrator's gender and not just read through it by attempting to read the gender that is presumably concealed' (Harris 2000: 146). It is clear, from the use of scare quotes and the 'presumably', that Harris herself reads through the concealment of gender, seeing it as a trick to be uncovered.

Both Gregory Rubinson and Brian Finney have conducted studies on the reception of *Written on the Body*, much as Livia did with *Sphinx*. Rubinson (2001: 219) concludes that 'many reviewers [...] have assumed that the narrator is female, associating him/her with the author [...] but at least one critic jumps to the conclusion that the narrator is male'. Finney (2002: 25) also discovers that the reviews by *The Sunday Telegraph*, *The Independent*, *The Times* and *The Financial Times* all conclude that *Written on the Body* is a lesbian novel. Livia herself looks at Winterson's work and appears to side with those who see the narrator as oscillating between genders; she feels that 'the narrator of *Written on the Body* seems more hermaphroditic, alternating between the sexes. In this, Winterson's

project seems to echo Garréta's, promoting gender fluidity as social progress' (Livia 2001: 80). However, just as she negates the fluidity she first sees in *Sphinx* by deciding *je* is a lesbian, she negates the 'hermaphroditism' of 'I' by also seeing hir as a lesbian: 'Although Winterson never states that the relationship between Louise and the narrator is lesbian, this is powerfully suggested by the parallels between *Written on the Body* and [Wittig's] *The Lesbian Body*' (Livia 2001: 81). These reviewers actively ignore the undecidability of the text.

And it is an undecidability that can be seen through a close reading. Louise, the narrator's lover, says: 'I thought you were the most beautiful creature male or female I had ever seen' (Winterson 1993: 84) and, in another act of identification, on the following page ze is 'like Puck sprung from the mist' (Winterson 1993: 85). In Act II scene I of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Puck is referred to with the pronoun 'he' but the character is nonhuman: a 'sprite' and a 'hobgoblin' (Shakespeare 1958: 143). I argue that Puck is undecidable and agender. If identification is the assimilation of an attribute of the other whereby the identifier is transformed after the model the other provides (Laplanche and Pontalis 1988: 205) then here the narrator becomes undecidable:

Sometime a horse I'll be, sometime a hound,  
A hog, a headless bear, sometime a fire;  
And neigh, and bark, and grunt, and roar, and  
burn,  
Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire, at every turn. (Shakespeare 1958: 147)

By having her narrator identify with Puck, Winterson is suggesting that they are becoming and unbecoming, in a constant state of metamorphosis, unconfined to the human form.

For Rubinson (2001: 220), the narrator is, like Puck, always without a gender identity:

Any attempt to determine the narrator's sex is necessarily dependent on essentialized or stereotypical readings of gender, or both. The fact is, there is no information about the narrator's body that can lead us to determine

whether the narrator is male, female, transsexual, intersexed, or XXY. And that is exactly the point: it implies that such information is or should be irrelevant.

This reliance on stereotypes is borne out by the fact that in determining Je and A\*\*\* as lesbians Livia (2001: 32) feels that the reader must 'adopt a working hypothesis about the gender of the narrator and the beloved based on social or cultural clues in the absence of grammatical ones'.

Rubinson is not the only critic to believe that *Written on the Body* must be left as open as possible (see Leonardi 2013: 66; McAvan 2011: 434; Morrison 2006: 173 and Finney 2002: 23). On the other hand, Jennifer Smith (2011: 414) does not see the narrator as having no gender but as being transgender because he/she 'displays characteristics of both genders without stably aligning with one or the other' (Smith 2011: 415-6). For Smith (2011: 425), 'Winterson forces the reader to question the efficacy of the gender binary, once s/he realises that his/her attempts to fill in the gap of the narrator's "real" gender identity will be forever thwarted'. The reader must realise not only that attempts will forever be thwarted but that the point of the text is to discourage the reader from making these attempts. Though, of course, even attempts to see the narrators as neither masculine nor feminine (rather than both) still rely on the concept of the binary. Undecidability is still rooted in the binary gender system; everything is couched in this binary. By attempting to overthrow it we must still admit that it exists, and this is something I shall discuss further below.

While most of the reviews written for *Sphinx* chose a gender for Garréta's characters, the genderless nature of the text has also received much theoretical attention – though, as we shall see, genderless here seems to mean both man and woman, not neither. Despite the fact that Gill Rye (2000: 532) believes that 'the gender of both *je* and A\*\*\* remains uncertain', both she (2000: 534) and Laura Elkin believe that *je* and A\*\*\* move between being a man and a woman: 'just as the novel is genderless, it is also genderfull, as the narrator's and A\*\*\*'s sexes reconfigure and reform [...]; one minute you're sure A\*\*\* is a man, the next the narrator is definitively a woman, then the other way around' (Elkin 2015). I think we might argue that in these texts we have an *Aufhebung* of gender, where gender is both abolished and preserved: just as Elkin sees

*Sphinx* as ‘genderfull’, Livia (2001: 56) considers it the novel’s main achievement to ‘show how crucial gender is’.

This *Aufhebung* does not mean that the narrators are both masculine and feminine but that by erasing gender we are immediately and contradictorily emphasising the gender categories we live by because they are noticeably missing. Neither Garréta nor Winterson can deny that we live in a gendered world and, indeed, other characters in their novels are not genderless. But fiction gives us the space to see through the division of the world into male and female, to escape from ‘the [language] trap which we have made [that] is so pervasive that we cannot envisage the world constructed on any other lines’ (Spender 1998: 142). Giving the reader this space to construct the world differently appears to be a primary aim of texts which play with the erasure of gender; Allez does the same in *Dominique* making it explicit that gender (and gendered language) is a trap: ‘Dominique refused to let go of the Empire that hir ambivalence had given hir. Not just on paper, but in life. Without really realising, Dominique was panicking at the idea of suddenly being trapped in a gender’ (Allez 2015: 257, my translation). McAvan (2011: 438) sees the narrator of *Written on the Body* as being trans, but not in the same sense as Smith: she declares that ‘it is this undecidability that marks the narrator’s body out as transgendered in the poetic sense that Judith Halberstam suggests, an open possibility rather than a probability’. ‘An open possibility’ is an appropriate description not only of the nonbinary characters of the texts but also of the texts themselves.

### 3.2 Textual undecidability

While both texts relate the story of a love affair, neither can be described as a traditional romance, and in this section I will examine the generic undecidability of the texts which is compounded by abundant intertextuality, open endings and unreliable narrators. *Sphinx* is described as ‘a love story that resists scanning, resists attempts to shoehorn it into a traditional narrative’ (Elkin 2015). Even the title reflects the riddle of the text it represents: ‘like its namesake from Greek myth, *Sphinx* was that rare riddle that only makes you think harder after you know the answer’ (Becker 2015: iv). But, in fact, ‘sphinx’ also refers directly to the gender problem of the text because in Greek myth

the Sphinx has the body of a lion, the wings of a bird and the head of a woman while in Egyptian myth the Sphinx has the head of a man (see Livia 2001: 37). *Written on the Body*, whose title also suggests a certain amount of instability in the idea that the body can be read and re-read, written and re-written as if a blank page (see Carpenter 2007: 71), is considered by Ina Schabert (2010: 89) to be an ‘English re-creation of Garréta’s *Sphinx*’ and equally difficult to categorise; though this has not stopped critics from attempting to label Winterson’s texts in a similar vein to the way they attempt to label *Written on the Body*’s narrator. Winterson is variously seen as a lesbian writer (Harris 2000), a feminist writer, a lesbian-feminist writer, a queer writer, a modernist writer (Andermahr 2007: 4-6) and a postmodern writer (Lindenmeyer 1999: 49).

*Written on the Body* is particularly hard to categorise given Winterson’s switch to scientific discourse when the narrator discovers that Louise has leukaemia. In having the narrator scour medical textbooks for an answer, Winterson permeates scientific discourse with undecidability, precisely because there is no answer to be found. As Robinson (2001: 221) notes, this is ironic because ‘the history of science has been dominated by a search for absolute answers, whereas the tradition of literary and philosophical discourses about love is distinguished principally by the inability definitively to comprehend this human experience’. In *Middlesex*, as we saw in Chapter Two, Eugenides uses medical textbooks and notes to highlight how the medical establishment, in terms of sex and, consequently, gender, is built on sand. Winterson, like Eugenides, ‘directly confronts the limitations of science as a discourse about bodies, as a master narrative of salvation, and as a “naturalizer” of gender-biases’ (Robinson 2001: 219). Here Winterson is also questioning the power of medicine which fails to provide the narrator with a cure for Louise.

In confusing the genre of her text, Winterson is exaggerating the fact that all texts are a mixture of genres and discourses and that the confusion they provoke is impossible to avoid. Winterson’s text is multivocal, as Bakhtin (1981: 262) would argue all novels are: ‘The novel can be defined as a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized’. Winterson uses discourses taken from a diversity of languages: from the Bible, travelogues, anatomical texts, epistolary fiction and drama (Finney 2002: 23). In her text, Winterson alludes to *Alice in Wonderland* (1993: 10), *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (1993: 85), *Romeo and Juliet* (1993: 81), *The Tempest* (1993: 16), *Jane Eyre* (1993: 17), *Madame Bovary* (1993: 17), the

Bible (1993: 18, 91), *Anna Karenina* (1993: 75, 183), *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog* (1993: 162) and *Great Expectations* (1993: 163) as well as films (1993: 60, 79) and paintings (1993: 54).

All of these discourses are juxtaposed and bring their own contradictory and complementary world views and meanings to make the text undecidable: 'The dialogic relations of heteroglossia do ensure that meaning remains in process, unfinalizable' (Morris 1994: 74). By juxtaposing scientific discourse with a plethora of references to romance stories, Winterson is challenging the factual basis of science – science is as much a set of constructed stories as fiction and also challenging 'traditional' romance (Rubinson 2001: 225). According to Diane Elam (1992: 3), 'romance' as a genre is always postmodern, and is therefore a challenge to what is 'true', 'by virtue of its troubled relation to both history and novelistic realism'. In both previous chapters the undecidability of the genre of 'autobiography' led me to question the idea that any one text can belong only to one genre – as we have seen throughout, all texts are undecidable. Elam (1992: 7) argues that romance draws attention to this undecidability: 'Romance makes us, in a word, uncomfortable because we are never quite sure what romance may mean or how it may mean. Romance seems in excess of itself, stepping beyond the lines which have always limited its definition'. A text like *Written on the Body* makes us uncomfortable (as we saw above, the aim of novels like Winterson's or Garréta's is to defamiliarise, to cause the reader trouble) and romance, like autobiography I would argue, specifically draws the reader's attention to "reality" as a constructed referent rather than as a "natural" state of existence to which we all naturally, textually, refer' (Elam 1992: 8). The autobiographer can never relate the story of a true and unmediated 'reality' that is past. Indeed, autobiography questions the idea that what appears to be past is really 'past' at all and 'romance and postmodernism attempt to be flagrantly anachronistic, upsetting our ability to recognise the past, challenging the way we "know" history' (Elam 1992: 12). All of the writers I have examined so far, including the ones in this chapter, challenge the idea that the past is something that we wholly grasp as a sequential series of events, events which are definitively over and which we can objectively represent in writing.

Winterson's narrator is unreliable, and she wants the reader to know it: 'I can tell by now that you are wondering whether I can be trusted as a narrator' (Winterson 1993:

24). Winterson draws attention to the fact that no writer can adequately remember their own past, she 'create[s] doubt about what it is that we know and how it is we know it' (Elam 1992: 14). Making one's narrator unreliable is not a new technique, which Winterson (1993: 17) also points out: 'Have I got it wrong, this hesitant chronology? Perhaps I should call it *Emma Bovary's eyes* or *Jane Eyre's dress*'. This is firstly a reference to the fact that *Emma Bovary's* eyes change from brown to black (Flaubert 2001: 62) to blue (Flaubert 2001: 315) over the course of *Madame Bovary*. And secondly a reference to a review made of *Jane Eyre* by Elizabeth Rigby in 1848 (when Currer Bell was the only known author) which accused the narrator of being wrong about clothes that ladies wore ('no lady, we understand, when suddenly roused in the night, would think of hurrying on "a frock". They have garments more convenient for such occasions' (Rigby 1848: 93-94)). This supposedly revealed the author as either being a man or a woman who had 'long forfeited the society of her own sex' (Rigby 1848: 93-94).

Winterson's narrator picks up on things that 'ordinary' readers might not: as Julian Barnes (2012: 75) says, 'I must confess that in all the times I read *Madame Bovary*, I never noticed the heroine's rainbow eyes. Should I have? Would you?'. The point is that 'I' is a close reader (but that goes without saying because ze is a translator) as well as an unreliable narrator whose unreliability makes the reader question what is true and what is not and whether the 'truth' really matters. By admitting that ze cannot remember the past the narrator exposes all those who write about the past (including memoirists) as fiction writers: 'the object of postmodern romance is to question whether we really can know the past, whether we can ever adequately re-member the event' (Elam 1992: 14). We begin to doubt our own memories.

Historical knowledge is shown to always be narrative knowledge which 'no longer provides an authoritative way of understanding past events' (Elam 1992: 11). With these texts 'there is a loss of credulity in master narratives' (Elam 1992: 11) – the 'master' narrative of science, for example. Trans writing shines a light on discourses of power and knowledge as constraining – knowledge is not natural (Elam 1992: 142; Foucault 1978: 95-100). Winterson makes a point in her novels of questioning (masculine) master narratives. Francesca Maioli (2009: 154) accuses Winterson of being incapable of describing a female body via a genderless narrator because the narrator 'speaks like the male writers that s/he quotes'. Winterson quotes these male writers to bring into

question the androcentric literary canon, which, like language in general, has been constructed by male grammarians; this is a point she also makes in *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit* where her main intertext is the Bible (the chapters are named after books of the Old Testament (Winterson 2014)). The literary canon was made by men and it makes women mute and invisible; this invisibility helps ‘establish the primacy of the male and the authenticity of the male view of the world’ (Spender 1998: 226). In his 1994 work *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages*, Harold Bloom discusses twenty-six authors that he considers central to the Western canon, and of the twenty-six, only four are women: Jane Austen, Emily Dickinson, George Eliot and Virginia Woolf. Even when he considers those he has left out we see only a list of twenty-three men from Petrarch to D. H. Lawrence (Bloom 1994: 2). That Winterson’s narrator quotes mainly male writers does not mean the narrator is male; instead it shines a spotlight on literature as exclusive and mocks that exclusivity – this book is written by a woman, after all.

Winterson juxtaposes incongruous texts to confuse the genre of her novel, and Garréta does the same. Intertextuality in *Sphinx* has received much less theoretical attention and this may be because most readers cannot see past the ‘gimmick’ of concealed gender. Garréta references Greek and Egyptian mythology in her title and within the text she references the Myth of Sisyphus (1986: 28), Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1986: 55) [In Search of Lost Time], an English song entitled *Sphinx* (1986: 80), *La Chute* (1986: 109) [The Fall] by Albert Camus, *La ville inconnue* (1986: 87, 123) [the unknown town], an Edith Piaf song, the Bible (1986: 124), *Come in from the Rain* (1986: 139), a 1975 song, and Stéphane Mallarmé’s untitled sonnet which begins *Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd’hui* (1986: 156) [literally: the virgin, the hardy and the beautiful today]. All of these allusions add to the themes of loneliness, memory, fragmentation and peripateticism that pervade the novel; in *Sphinx* (the song) the singer wishes to be ‘a silent sphinx eternally./ I don’t want any past / only things which cannot last / Phony words of love / or painful truth, I’ve heard it all before’ (Ramadan 2015: 57). These ‘phony words of love’ mirror the idea that the narrator’s love for A\*\*\* really only exists in hir head; this is also echoed in the reference to Proust. When the narrator’s friends are warning hir off A\*\*\* they tell hir that ze is not ‘son genre’ (Garréta 1986: 55) [his/her type], ostensibly referring to the fact that A\*\*\* is black while *je* is white but also referencing the end of Proust’s ‘Un amour de Swann’: ‘Dire que j’ai gâché des années de

ma vie, que j'ai voulu mourir, que j'ai eu mon plus grand amour, pour une femme qui ne me plaisait pas, qui n'était pas mon genre!' (Proust 1919: 150). Lydia Davis (2003: 383) translates this as: 'To think that I wasted years of my life, that I wanted to die, that I felt my deepest love, for a woman who did not appeal to me, who was not my type!'. The allusion to Swann's realisation that he was more in love with his memories of Odette than Odette herself presages the breakdown of the narrator's relationship with A\*\*\*.

Piaf's song is about an unknown town with interminable streets in which the singer, who wants to sleep with her memories of love, is always getting lost. *Come in from the Rain*, while more traditionally romantic, is about being alone and far from home (Garréta 1986: 139) and *Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui* (translated by Blackmore and Blackmore (2006: 66) as 'This virginal long-living lovely day'), which I shall analyse in more detail later, is a sonnet which, like all of Mallarmé's poems, makes the reader 'grapple with [...] existential doubt, strangeness, and uncertainty; with rhythms of fragmentation and silence; dislocated syntax; the rapid formation, transmutation and evaporation of images; and thoughts that seem to escape being fixed into any one interpretation' (McCombie 2006: ix). The most widespread influence on Garréta, though, is the *roman noir* style, and her text 'sometimes seems to parody the hard-boiled mystery genre made famous by writers like Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett' (Livia 2001: 35). By telling what is purportedly a love story through the *roman noir* style Garréta makes her text anti-romantic (or questions what 'romance' really is), just as Winterson does with hers through scientific discourse.

Both Winterson and Garréta make their texts a challenge to read, and they both produce what Barthes (1974: 4) would term 'writerly' texts which are constantly aware that they are to be read and in being read by an active reader, re-written – 'readerly' texts, on the other hand, are 'products (and not productions)' (Barthes 1974: 5), read passively. This is evident in *Written on the Body* from the fact that the narrator is a translator. Ginette Carpenter (2007: 72) believes that 'the narrator has to learn to allow for the free play of signifiers, to resist the translator's urge to pin-down [sic] meaning'. For Antoine Berman (2012: 245), all translation is explication to some degree; he sees clarification as one of the deforming tendencies of translation: 'where the original has no problem moving in the *indefinite*, our literary language tends to impose the definite'. Clarification tries to make clear what is deliberately obfuscated, it is the sacrifice of

polysemy for monosemy (Berman 2012: 245). The translator traditionally represents someone who has to decide, to make a decision on a text – the translator chooses one strand to follow at the expense of others because both readers (and translators) select meanings from the multiple choices within every text. Winterson makes manifest the idea that all texts are multiple by ensuring that neither the narrator nor the reader can sacrifice polysemy. Her translator, and the translator in literature more generally, is not always someone who can decide, who is sure of him or herself: it can be a metaphor for one who is displaced, who does not belong, who has no sense of self, who is an image builder and who is both deceitful and manipulative (Strümper-Krobb 2003: 121). The translator of *Written on the Body* certainly grapples with these questions of belonging, identity and truth.

Winterson suggests that the body is a text to be read and written like a novel: ‘Written on the body is a secret code only visible in certain lights; the accumulations of a lifetime gather there. In places the palimpsest is so heavily worked that the letters feel like braille’ (Winterson 1993: 89). Both Winterson’s and Garréta’s texts are like palimpsests because they play with intertextuality, but the bodies in their texts are palimpsestuous too, constantly being read and re-read by the reader, constantly becoming and unbecoming. According to Harris (2000: 129), ‘the central trope of the novel – writing as bodily act, the body as written text – is another trope of the liminal’. This liminality evokes the becoming of the narrators, the transitional phase of the process of their becoming. Both texts rely on liminality and this can be seen most strongly in their endings which again direct the reader to an anti-romantic reading of the texts: there is no happily-ever-after and the endings are ‘ambiguous and occluded’ (Andermahr 2007: 85).

The endings of both texts are surreal and spectral. At the end of *Sphinx*, A\*\*\* has died and *je* is visiting A\*\*\*’s mother in New York when *ze* is attacked by two men; while the men harass *hir*, *ze* is haunted by lines from Mallarmé’s poem *Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd’hui*: ‘ces vers qui tournoient dans mon esprit m’obsèdent’ (Garréta 1986: 156) [these lines which turn in my mind obsess me]. Ramadan (2015: 119) translates ‘m’obsèdent’ with ‘I am haunted’. Further on from the only two lines *je* can remember, Mallarmé’s (2006: 66) poem talks of ‘ce lac dur oublié qui hante sous le givre’ [this hard lake forgets who haunts beneath the frost]. The trapped swan of the sonnet could be read as an analogy for the trapped poet, impotent and incapable of expression. The

homophony of ‘cygne’ [swan] and ‘signe’ [sign] further suggests that the sign is as trapped as the swan. However, according to Elizabeth McCombie, this reading is too simplistic because the poem teems with paradoxical allusions:

The swan’s attitude towards his captivity can be read in two conflicting ways. Does he struggle against his winter entrapment but then become resigned to his failure to sing? Or is he magnificent and defiant in a splendid prison that allows him to achieve purity far from the practical world? (2006: xxv)

That this sonnet is so paradoxical shows how a huge variety of expressive possibilities can be found within culturally-inherited formal constraints; the constraints of rhythm and rhyme encourage the poet to be inventive and flexible. The idea that constraints bring new perspectives or encourage creative thinking is something Garréta exploits.

At the end of Mallarmé’s sonnet the swan is ‘dismissed to futile things’ (Blackmore and Blackmore 2006: 69). McCombie (2006: xxv) considers that because of the simultaneous yet competing readings of the sonnet we cannot know if these futile things are ‘empty and lifeless or a happy release’. The same confusion can be seen at the end of Garréta’s text. According to Ramadan (2015: 120), the narrator is ‘carried far away at the whim of those two lines in search of that symmetrical fragment which has disappeared into oblivion, the whole thus robbed of its meaning and harmony’. But I would argue that ‘the whole’, which is presumably the sonnet in its entirety which *je* cannot remember, never has unequivocal meaning or harmony because of its competing meanings (see also Bowie 1978: 12). *Je* is therefore on a quest for something which can never bring closure, can never be fully grasped, in the same way that the rest of the poem eludes *hir*. The fact that *je* cannot remember it is fitting, for the poem itself meditates on ‘the role of memory and the intrusion of the past into the present, to a re-interpretation of the present in the light of that past and of an immediate as well as hypothetical and eternal future’ (Stafford 2000: 38).

The intrusion of the past into the present comes with the constant haunting of the body by spectres and ‘postmodern romance re-members the past, re-situates its temporality, in order to make the past impossible to forget’ (Elam 1992: 14). Indeed,

postmodernism questions the entire concept of ‘the continuous, chronological ordering of historical periodicity’ (Elam 1992: 11) – what is past cannot be forgotten and ‘although a concept of “now” is necessary to determine a distinction between what follows and what has come before (what is post and what is pre) at the same moment such a “now” is always vanishing’ (Elam 1992: 11). What is ‘now’ vanishes in the process of becoming and unbecoming.

*Je*’s future is both hypothetical and eternal – on page 157 *ze* is thrown into the frozen canal: ‘Tandis que j’agonise et que de mon dos ruisselle et s’évade le sang à flots, je me sens m’envoler. Eblouissement d’un instant dans la chute d’une ténèbre où je sombre et m’abîme’ (Garréta 1986: 157) [while I am dying and while from my back flows and escapes blood in waves, I feel myself fly away. A moment’s bedazzlement in the fall of a darkness where I sink and lose myself]. Is *je* dead? The reader cannot know and therefore *hir* future becomes hypothetical because it is whatever the reader wants it to be and eternal because this dénouement involves no definitive answers. Translation as a continuation of the source text’s life, as an ‘unfinished’ of the source text is the perfect medium to ensure that readers, like *je*, never find closure.

The ending to Winterson’s text is also surreal and open to possibilities. ‘I’ describes seeing Louise, but we can never know if this is the real Louise or a ghost: ‘From the kitchen door Louise’s face. Paler, thinner, but her hair still mane-wide and the colour of blood [...] Am I stark mad? She’s warm’ (Winterson 1993: 190). Louise is both deathly white and vibrantly red. Just as Garréta’s narrator flies away, Winterson’s narrator and Louise are endowed with supernatural powers, able to sling the sun under their arms: the narrator ‘stretch[es] out [hir] hand and reach[es] the corners of the world’ (Winterson 1993: 190). This final paragraph is almost feverish or dream-like, and the last line – ‘I don’t know if this is a happy ending but here we are let loose in open fields’ (Winterson 1993: 190) – brings to mind the Elysian fields (also known as Elysium or the Elysian plain) which are first mentioned by Homer (2003: 55) in *The Odyssey* as a place where men go after death and where ‘living is made easy for mankind; where no snow falls, no strong winds blow and there is never any rain’.

Winterson’s text is open-ended, and Finney (2002: 29) compares it to Eliot’s *The Waste Land* because ‘the end of the book appears to promise the possibility of renewal after death/loss’, but Finney (2002: 29) goes on to dismiss this comparison because ‘the

ending resists any such redemptive interpretation. Just how are we to take the finale in which Louise reappears (whether in person or in the narrator's fantasy the critics cannot decide)?'. Here we could also ask if the ending is a happy release or if it is empty and meaningless – has Louise come back to 'I', is 'I' dreaming, is 'I' seeing Louise's ghost or is 'I' perhaps also a ghost? 'I' is talking with Louise's ghost, even if Louise is not dead; this conversation is as much with the narrator himself and his own spectres as it is with Louise: 'even if it is in oneself in the other, in the other in oneself: they are always *there*, specters, even if they do not exist, even if they are no longer, even if they are not yet' (Derrida 2006: 221).

The dénouement of both texts is elusive and this is important because, as we saw in Chapter Two, the ending of a text is most often where the reader looks for answers to his or her questions (see Bennett and Royle 2004). One could argue that the ending of *Dominique* is where the reader finally learns of the character's gender, where the 'trick' is finally revealed. As I used textual evidence to argue against the ending as a place of revelation where everything is neatly tied-up in *Middlesex*, I do the same here. Throughout *Dominique* there are hints that we will discover the 'truth': 'Gabriel et France inviteraient Dominique à un entretien très sérieux afin de lui révéler son appartenance formelle à l'un des deux sexes' (Allez 2015: 224) [Gabriel and France would invite Dominique to a very serious interview in order to reveal to him/her his/her formal membership of one of the two sexes]. At the age of seven Dominique discovers his sex, though he continues to pretend he does not know what it is. At the age of eleven Dominique agrees to acknowledge it when he goes to school but the reader is still in the dark. On the very last page we are told Dominique's sex in the reproduction of a police report detailing the fact that Dominique has gone missing. Dominique's sex is revealed by an official document showing that sex always matters and we cannot do without it when being interpellated by institutions of power such as the police. Despite this, because Dominique has continued to be 'un être irréductible à un H ou à un F' (Allez 2015: 258) [a being irreducible to an M or an F] and because he runs away wearing a 'tee-shirt blanc où l'on peut lire NO FUTURE' (Allez 2015: 259) [a white t-shirt on which can be read NO FUTURE], the revelation of Dominique's sex is a moment of anti-climax. It does not matter what Dominique's sex is, it clearly means nothing to Dominique himself.

### 3.2.1 The (in)visible undecidable

For Luce Irigaray (1993: 174), sexual difference is always implicated in sight: vision is privileged in Western culture, it appears to 'represent the sense which is the most capable of completing' and what is female, maternal and intrauterine is 'irreducible darkness' (Irigaray 1993: 171). The anatomy that represents sight is male. The revelation of sex in film is often visually presented using the sexual organ itself and a comparison with two films here shows that the more shocking tactic of visual exposure can still be anti-climactic but that questions of sex and sight centre around the penis. The 1997 film *Boogie Nights* does not reveal the sex of a character we did not know before, but it, too, involves the idea of using anatomical sex to reveal something which at the very moment of revelation loses all importance. Seven minutes into the film, Jack Horner, director of pornographic films, says to his future leading man, Dirk Diggler: 'I gotta feeling beneath those jeans there's something wonderful just waiting to get out' (Anderson 1997). From this moment on the size of Dirk's penis is constantly implied (mainly through other characters' reactions) but never shown; not, that is, until the final scene. But this exposure is, as it were, superfluous information.

Another film in which the revelation of a penis is designed to shock is *The Crying Game* (Jordan 1992). The scene in which Dil is revealed to possess a penis when up until now she has appeared to be female causes Dil's potential lover Fergus to be physically sick, but by the end of the film Dil's transvestism is accepted: 'Thus for all the immediate and calculated shock of the sight of Dil's penis, it is an anatomical fact that the narrative, in concert with Fergus, increasingly appears unquestioningly just to accept' (Grist 2003: 9). The revelation of the penis points to visibility as truth because the penis is seen as the only sexual organ that matters, in part *because* it is visible – it is the 'only visible and morphologically designatable organ' (Irigaray 1985: 26). Women are invisible: "woman as woman" is castrated' (Kofman 1988: 191).

This 'truth' is invented and relied upon by phallocentrism, it is therefore only one truth among others. We do not doubt Dirk's masculinity before we see his penis, and Dil's penis does not make us doubt her femininity. As Sarah Kofman (1988: 191) notes "woman" is neither castrated nor not castrated, any more than man retains control (*détient*) over the penis'. In these films we see truth as disclosure, as a (literal) unveiling:

‘the idea of truth presented here as an unveiling leads to a self-castration. *Aletheia*, placed in a comprehensible firmament, is barely perceptible, and woman/truth remains inaccessible’ (Kofman 1988: 193). An act of unveiling is also a covering up; the model who disrobes for a photograph is ‘an allegory of truth itself in its movement of veiling and unveiling: the origin of light, the visibility of the visible, that is, the black night, that which, letting things appear in the light [*la clarté*], by definition hides itself from view’ (Derrida 2010: 172). Following Heidegger, Derrida names the photographic model ‘*Aletheia*’; for Heidegger (2010: 210), *Aletheia* is ‘truth in the sense of discoveredness (unconcealment)’ where the truth is revealed through sight: ‘to let things *be seen* in their unconcealment (discoveredness), taking them out of their concealment’ (Heidegger 2010: 210, my emphasis). But there is no hidden truth, no state of unconcealment, to something that is undecidable: Kofman (1988: 197) uses the Greek figure of ‘*Baubô*’, following Nietzsche, to indicate that ‘behind the veil, there is another veil, behind a layer of paint, another layer. It signifies also that appearance should cause neither pessimism nor scepticism, but rather the affirming laugh of a living being who knows that despite death life can come back indefinitely’. The films show that what is unveiled is not the truest truth – they suggest that there can be more than one truth just as the revelation of Dominique’s sex is only one version of the ‘truth’, a truth Dominique chooses not to follow.

Looking is emphasised in film where the ‘voyeur’ becomes invisible in the darkness of the cinema (Mulvey 1999: 843). In the cinema, ‘the other demands identification of the ego with the object on the screen through the spectator’s fascination with and recognition of his like’ (Mulvey 1999: 837). In literature, however, we can identify with someone who is nothing like we are and perhaps this is because there is no visual element outside of the reader’s head to confirm or deny what we imagine. We can undo the privilege of sight through literature because literature allows trans-gender identification. Everyone who reads a text like *Jane Eyre* has a ‘female’ ‘I’ in their heads, replacing their own ‘I’, including an anonymous critic of the time in 1849: ‘But as we read on we forgot both commendations and criticism, identified ourselves with Jane in all her troubles, and finally married Mr Rochester about four in the morning’ (in Allott 1974: 152). As we saw in the above section, Winterson’s narrator is unreliable and according to Smith (2011: 427), ‘this questioning of his/her own reliability as a narrator as well as the relationship between truth, reality, and memory works to deconstruct the trust in the

medium of narration and actually dismantles the binary between reader and text and reader and narrator'.

Jennifer Hansen (2005: 367) suggests that 'what happens when we cannot make this character into an object with clear boundaries is that we are invited to occupy the space of the protagonist ourselves'. All writing invites the reader to do this, even if the narrator is clearly gendered, and therefore, all reading is trans as I noted above. Female writers write male protagonists and male writers write female protagonists, the writer occupies the position of the character they are writing, regardless of their gender.

According to Francis Steegmuller (1968: 283), by the time he was halfway through *Madame Bovary*, Flaubert was modelling Emma Bovary on himself: "I am Madame Bovary" – "Madame Bovary, c'est moi!" (see also Steegmuller 2001: 320). Ali Smith (2007: 97) has her character Anthea (modelled on Ianthe) point out in *Girl meets Boy* that 'the story of Iphis was being made up by a man. Well, I say man, but Ovid's very fluid, as writers go, much more than most. He knows, more than most, that the imagination doesn't have a gender'.

Writing and reading a character is not writing and reading a gendered experience – as we have seen with Puck, we can read characters who are neither female nor male nor even human. And reading is an important means of identification because in reading we always form our identities:

Whenever I read, I mentally pronounce an *I*, and yet the *I* which I pronounce is not myself [...] as soon as something is presented as *thought*, there has to be a thinking subject with whom, at least for the time being, I identify, forgetting myself, alienated from myself. [...] Another *I* [...] has replaced my own, and [...] will continue to do so as long as I read. (Poulet 1970: 60)

With Garréta's and Winterson's texts, the power of the genderless narrator is that I, the reader, can see myself as undecidable. As Rye (2000: 537) describes, 'uncertainties and ambiguities unsettle, but they also have the effect of encouraging the reader to speculate and to create meaning for the text – and for him/herself. Our own sexual identities may be called into question'. If the reader of the source texts embraces

undecidability in all its manifestations, these texts can help us to question dominant ideology. As a rewriting of the source text and a continuation of its life, a translation is uniquely placed to work on the issues that the said source text brings to light and to bring those issues to a new audience in a new time and place. It now remains to be seen whether the translators of these texts have embraced this unsettling undecidability or if they have written it out.

#### 4. Translating agender identity

##### 4.1 Translating *Sphinx*

In this section I will look in close detail at the 2015 English translation of *Sphinx* by Emma Ramadan and also discuss what it is about the source text which makes its translation so challenging. According to Gerald Prince (2014: 24-5), ‘it may be easier to feature a grammatically genderless narrator in English than in French, where many more adjectives have to be explicitly marked masculine or feminine’. However, Prince (2014: 25) also argues that ‘what constitutes a tour de force in French may require less linguistic virtuosity in English and may thus prove less striking and less efficient in suggesting, say, that love transcends sexual and gender difference’. Emma Ramadan (2015: 124) might not agree that her translation required ‘less linguistic virtuosity’; rather, perhaps, a different kind of linguistic virtuosity: ‘I broke Garréta’s code by creating a new one’. English does not gender past participles or adjectives but it does gender possessive adjectives, something French does not do – both English and French are capable of (and resist) epicene narration but in different ways (see Schabert 2010: 75).

I will now examine some specific examples from *Sphinx* which demonstrate how Garréta conceals gender in French and consider Ramadan’s translation solutions. Ramadan, it would appear, is not of the same opinion as Livia who states above that *Sphinx* catches Garréta in a trap: ‘Garréta both reveals and undermines sex-based oppression, demonstrating that gender difference is not an important or necessary determinant of our [...] identities but is rather something constructed purely in the realm of the social’ (Ramadan 2015: 123). Garréta avoids using past participles by writing the text using the imperfect and past historic tenses. The ‘imperfect tense implies an action

that was repeated many times in the past or done regularly. And so the narrator, *je*, is always taking up habits' and the use of the past historic, or *passé simple*, is very unusual: 'It has no real equivalent in English, as it comes off as much higher in register and more unusual than our commonly used simple past tense' (Ramadan 2015: 125).

In order to incorporate the use of the *passé simple* into her text, Garréta makes *je* the kind of pretentious, bourgeois character who might just use it in a memoir (Ramadan 2015: 126). Ramadan (2015: 126) has tackled the lack of such a formal tense in English by 'accommodating elevated or unusual vocabulary when possible in order to keep the tone and register the same in English as in French'. This elevated vocabulary is often achieved by keeping the closest English word to the French: for example, 'parure' (Garréta 1986: 19) [finery, jewellery] in French remains 'parure' in English (Ramadan 2015: 7), or 'congénères' (Garréta 1986: 56) [fellow creature, peer, contemporary] becomes 'congeners' (Ramadan 2015: 37). Or by using another foreign word often used in English: 'le contraste de clair et d'obscur' (Garréta 1986: 44) [the contrast of the light and the dark] becomes 'the chiaroscuro' (Ramadan 2015: 26), 'mélancolie' (Garréta 1986: 16) [melancholy] becomes 'ennui' (Ramadan 2015: 5).

The main way Garréta avoids gender is to only ever use invariable adjectives and nouns to refer to both *je* and A\*\*\*, and this is not a problem in English: for example, 'mon amour, mon enfant' (Garréta 1986: 15) becomes 'my love, my child' (Ramadan 2015: 4). In the French text where *je* is referred to as 'mon oiseau' (Garréta 1986: 14), Ramadan (2015: 3) avoids 'my bird' which is gendered in English, as 'bird' is a slang term for a woman, and translates with 'my pet'. Avoiding gendered nouns may prove more difficult in other languages such as Spanish where, for example, 'child' is gendered (niño/niña) but, as far as I am aware, *Sphinx* has only been translated into English.

For a French writer wishing to achieve epicene narration, the use of gendered nouns in French is an obstacle; this is not a problem for translation into English. What makes French epicene narration easy, epicene possessive adjectives, presents an obstacle for English translation. It is not strictly true, however, that possessive adjectives are epicene. They do not have no gender – 'sa jambe' [his/her leg], for example, is not genderless because we do not know whether the leg belongs to someone male or female, it is a feminine noun and reminds us that French genders inanimate objects. The gendering of inanimate nouns is important in a text like *L'Enfant de sable* because, as we

saw in Chapter One, Tahar Ben Jelloun (1985: 23) deliberately plays with gendered nouns, contrasting, for example, ‘le puits et la tombe’ [the well and the tomb]. Garréta’s text does not play with the gendering of inanimate objects, but what it does do is highlight how prevalent the gender binary is.

According to Schabert (2010: 89), to deal with possessive adjectives, ‘the translator would certainly have to resort to creative solutions such as the you-narrative which Angela Carter used for epicene references to a third person’. In *The Passion of New Eve*, Carter uses the second-person when Eve is musing about Evelyn’s infatuation with Tristessa (Eve is Evelyn after forced sex-reassignment surgery and Tristessa is Eve(lyn)’s non-operative male-to-female transsexual love interest): ‘This world had never been sufficient for you; to go beyond the boundaries of flesh had been your occupation and so you had become nothing’ (Carter 1982: 110). Ramadan never refers to A\*\*\* using ‘you’ and she actively avoids epicene pronouns: ‘someone might write a novel in English now using one of the many gender-neutral pronouns we can use these days [...]. But that approach just seemed very out of place for this book, because these aren’t people who are choosing not to discuss gender, they’re just people whose genders we happen not to know’ (Ramadan in Hayes 2016). This attitude suggests that she sees the gender concealment as a trick, indeed, she cannot avoid gendering A\*\*\*:

I thought A\*\*\* was a woman. And when I was translating, I was trying really hard not to insert any ‘hers’ [...] when I got the final proof, I suddenly found a “her” still in the text that nobody had caught. Like *five people* had read the text at this point and not one had caught it because they all thought A\*\*\* was a woman. (Ramadan in Hayes 2016 )

Despite this, her translation is devoid of gender markers and she explains in her translator’s note that she tackled the problem of possessive adjectives four different ways: ‘using a demonstrative, dropping the article altogether, pluralizing, or repeating A\*\*\*’s name [...] in other places, I rewrote certain passages to avoid personal pronouns, or applied [sic] adjectives directly to the subject rather than to something possessed by that subject’ (Ramadan 2015: 124).

I will now discuss Ramadan's solutions in more detail in order to question how agender characters can be represented both in 'original' writing and in translation. By discussing Ramadan's translation techniques it will become clear that translation is the perfect medium through which to think through problems of gender in language and consider how gender might be kept out of a new translation concerned not just with gender as an aesthetic problem but as a political one, too, one that goes beyond pronouns. In this example, Garréta (1986: 98) has both used A\*\*\*'s name and shortened the passage:

Je lui reprochai sa froideur, son manque de compassion à  
*I him/her reproached his/her coldness his/her lack of compassion in*  
l'égard de mes états d'âme. Je l'accusai en vrac  
*the-regard to my states of-soul I him/her-accused higgledy-piggledy*  
d'indifférence et de narcissisme coupable, d'égoïsme aussi.  
*of-indifference and of narcissism guilty of-selfishness also*

I haphazardly reproached A\*\*\* for being too cold and uncaring, for being shamefully narcissistic too. (Ramadan 2015: 72)

Here, Ramadan has avoided the gender of the 'lui' in 'lui reprochai' and of the 'le' which has been contracted in 'l'accusai' by merging the two into 'I haphazardly reproached A\*\*\*'. In the source text, A\*\*\* is constantly referred to by hir body parts and Livia (2001: 47) considers that the 'fragmentation of A\*\*\*'s identity into parts of the body – necessarily shared with every other human being, since to describe specifically male or female attributes would be to reveal gender information – presents yet another obstacle to reader empathy'. When Ramadan drops the article this rather objectifies A\*\*\*: 'ses mains pendaient, poignets lâches, abandonnés, son regard perdu' (Garréta 1986: 81) becomes 'hands dangling, wrists slack, gaze abandoned and lost' (Ramadan 2015: 58). The use of a demonstrative to get around things like 'ses bras' (1986: 12) which would normally be translated as 'his/her arms' depending on the sex of the person being described also rather cuts A\*\*\* out. Ramadan (2015: 1) uses 'those arms', she also uses the indefinite article in this example: 'l'empreinte résiduelle, à peine sensible, de son

épaule' (Garréta 1986: 59) becomes 'the residual imprint, barely there, of a shoulder' (Ramadan 2015: 40). This use of 'a shoulder', which could belong to anyone, removes A\*\*\* from the text in translation even more so than in the source text.

I argue that A\*\*\* is meant to be an elusive, spectral figure and his fragmentation merely mirrors the self-fragmentation the narrator undergoes throughout the text. Ramadan (2015: 127) also believes that A\*\*\* is deliberately absent: 'A\*\*\*'s character barely exists in the novel; A\*\*\* almost never speaks in his or her own words and doesn't have a developed personality [...] Garréta doesn't gloss over this, but rather makes it the focal point of the novel'. Throughout the text *je* is in love with the image of A\*\*\* and not A\*\*\* himself to the extent that *je* pushes the real A\*\*\* away in order to enjoy the imagined A\*\*\* better, 'a devastating vampirization that happens in relationships no matter the genders of those involved' (Ramadan 2015: 127). *Je* sucks the blood from his relationship with A\*\*\* in an unconscious act of self-sabotage and A\*\*\* becomes more and more spectral until his death.

Livia (2001: 44) also sees the constant repetition of A\*\*\*'s name instead of the use of a subject pronoun as preventing the reader from identifying with A\*\*\* and as creating a 'loose and disconnected' text. However, I would argue that a fragmented, disjointed text is exactly what Garréta was hoping to create; Livia is imposing an aesthetic critique on a text which is using aesthetics to make a political critique – does it matter that the text is disconnected if the reader is given a glimpse of a world without gender? It could be argued that Garréta's text is only an aesthetic achievement and not a political one because the power of the text is only wielded over a linguistic domain (see Ruby 2016), but we have already established the power of literature to make its readers think about the world around them. As we can see from Ramadan's list of strategies above, she keeps the repetition of A\*\*\*'s name in her translation.<sup>46</sup> On page 43 of Ramadan's translation 'A\*\*\*' or 'A\*\*\*'s' is repeated eleven times over twenty-eight lines.

It is helpful here to see what Cookie Allez has done with *Dominique* in order to ascertain whether another French text (written in a language which normally shuns repetition (see Berman 2012: 244)) is prepared to repeat a first name and have politics trump style. Allez constantly repeats 'Dominique', 'Do' or 'Sweetie' to refer to the child.

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<sup>46</sup> Ramadan also keeps the asterisks and is not tempted to use a unisex name in English such as Alex. Elkin (2015) admits that she was tempted to fill in this name when reading.

This can be seen in the following extract where Dominique's mother, France attempts to get her to choose a gender:

Et toi, *Sweetie*, reprit France, surprise par le silence de son mari, tu sais qui tu es ? Garçon ou fille ? Non ! Do ne savait pas. Et n'aimait pas cette question. Du reste, Do s'en fichait complètement. C'était pas son problème. On verrait plus tard, quand on serait grand [...] Do ferait tout pour devenir un être différent des autres. (Allez 2015 : 232)

[And you, *Sweetie*, France carried on, surprised by her husband's silence, do you know who you are? Boy or girl? No! Do didn't know. And didn't like that question. As for the rest, Do didn't care at all. It wasn't his/her problem. We'll see later on, when we're grown up [...] Do would do anything to be different from everyone else]

Allez (2015: 232) does, however, introduce an epicene pronoun into her text by having Dominique's parents use the Swedish 'hen': 'Do ira à l'école quand hen aura l'âge d'entrer en sixième?' [Do will go to school when hen is eleven?]. However, the use of the epicene pronoun is very short-lived: 'they still had to struggle, as they had for the past three years, to ban gendered adjectives from their vocabulary, and so this *hen* didn't bring them much' (Allez 2015: 146, my translation).

Garréta uses invariable adjectives to hide gender, and Allez (2015 : 149) does the same: 'Avant que lui soit révélé – assez prochainement sans doute – son sexe de naissance, Dominique ne sera jamais gentil ou gentille: Dominique sera sage, docile, calme, agréable ou tendre'. In order to highlight that these adjectives have been specifically chosen because they are invariable in French, the gendered font I explored in Chapter One could be used in English:

Before Dominique discovered hir birth sex – which would undoubtedly be quite soon – ze would never be kind or kind: Dominique would be wiſe, sweet, calm, agreeable or tender.

Figure 7: an excerpt from *Dominique* (Allez 2015: 149, my translation) translated with my gendered font

*Dominique* is a text that is reflexively about translation: this translation is intralingual where Gabriel and France must translate gendered French into ungendered French but also interlingual in that other languages and gender systems provide a contrast. When Dominique is born, hir English grandmother thinks ze is a boy because ze is referred to as ‘le bébé’ [the baby]; indeed, Allez (2015: 55) makes a point out of the fact that all the words one can use to refer to a new-born baby in French are masculine.

There is also a part of Garréta’s text which is gendered simply because of the fact that the masculine is taken as the universal in French: at one point *je* describes hirself as ‘travelo en intellection, gigolo en énamorations’ (Garréta 1986: 116). ‘Travelo’ [transvestite] and ‘gigolo’ take the masculine gender but do not reveal *je* to be male. According to Rye (2000: 533), ‘in this text where gender and gender attributes are always uncertain, because of the figurative use of the terms and also because no feminine equivalents for them exist, they cannot be accepted as unquestionably masculine signifiers’. Ramadan (2015: 87) translates this phrase as ‘drag queen of intellection, gigolo of enamoration’. In English we have two terms which, I would argue, are unquestionably masculine signifiers.

In *Dominique*, Dominique’s father Gabriel notes that ‘it would be necessary to reform the entire French syntax to reach the extreme simplicity of the British system where nothing agrees because nothing has gender! Except the subject one is speaking of: *il ou elle*, he or she...’ (Allez 2015: 147, my translation). My discussion of Ramadan’s translation of a genderless text into English serves to prove that things are not as simple as Gabriel assumes in English. While it is true that nothing agrees grammatically – except loanwords from French like blond(e) or fiancé(e) – it is not true that nothing has gender as we can see above with terms like ‘drag queen’ or ‘drag king’, ‘prostitute’ or ‘gigolo’.

This is something which will become even more apparent when we look at how genderless narrators have been received in English-language texts.

#### 4.2 Translating *Written on the Body*

*Written on the Body* is not the first English-language text to feature a genderless narrator and it is useful to consider how early translations of Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* into French dealt with a briefly genderless Anglophone protagonist to see if translators of *Written on the Body* had a precedent to follow. Although *Orlando* switches from a male protagonist to a female protagonist during the text, for a short while *Orlando*'s sex is indeterminate (see Schabert 2010: 82). Between pages 86 and 87, Woolf (2004 [1928]: 87) only uses the name 'Orlando' to refer to her protagonist: 'We are, therefore, now left entirely alone in the room with the sleeping Orlando and the trumpeters. The trumpeters, ranging themselves side by side in order, blow one terrific blast: — "THE TRUTH"! at which Orlando woke'. After this, Woolf (2004 [1928]: 87) continues to use masculine pronouns even though 'he was a woman'. Woolf (2004 [1928]: 87) then uses the epicene pronoun 'they' to refer to both the masculine and the feminine *Orlando* at once: 'Orlando had become a woman — there is no denying it. But in every other respect, Orlando remained precisely as he had been. The change of sex, though it altered their future, did nothing whatever to alter their identity'. *Orlando*'s name, for example, does not change to *Orlanda*. Woolf uses 'their' three times before starting to use feminine pronouns.

In an early translation of *Orlando* into French, Charles Mauron 'ignores this transitional episode, retaining the masculine form even where the original resorts to the epicene plural, and switching abruptly to the feminine' (Schabert 2010: 83). A later translation by Cathérine Pappo-Musard proves that this episode can be translated through the use of possessive adjectives: 'Le changement de sexe altérait certes son avenir mais, en aucun cas, son identité' (Pappo-Musard 1993: 136) [the change of sex certainly altered his/her future but, in no way, his/her identity]. In the French, *Orlando* remains without a precise gender for longer than in the original; between *Orlando*'s waking and the use of the epicene 'they', Woolf uses 'he' to refer to *Orlando* five times, Pappo-Musard removes at least three of these references to masculine gender (see

Schabert 2010: 83). For Schabert (2010: 83), French is better suited in this instance to epicene narration. This section is crucial in the text because for the briefest of moments, Orlando is truly undecidable; Mauron's translation makes no attempt to translate this undecidability, despite the fact that French is clearly equipped to deal with it.

I will now examine specific examples from *Written on the Body* where the narrator's gender is undecidable and consider how the French translator, Suzanne Mayoux, and the Spanish translator, Encarna Castejón, have dealt with these moments of undecidability. According to Schabert (2010: 90), 'Mayoux had a much harder task [than Winterson] to recreate the sexually indeterminate narrator-protagonist'. She rewrites passages to avoid using gendered past participles, for example 'Louise and I were held by a single loop of love' (Winterson 1993: 88), becomes 'c'était une simple boucle d'amour qui nous liait' (Mayoux 1993: 111) [it was a simple loop of love that linked us] in order to avoid writing 'nous étions lié(e)s...' [we were linked...] which requires a gender marker on the past participle.

Both Mayoux and Castejón transpose verbs for nouns to avoid gender: for example, when 'I' says 'By morning I was bad tempered and exhausted' (Winterson 1993: 31), Castejón (1994: 38) writes 'me caía de cansancio' [I was falling over with tiredness] instead of using 'cansado/a' [tired]; and Mayoux (1993: 38) writes 'ma fatigue se voyait' [my fatigue was visible] instead of using 'fatigué(e)' [tired]. On page 52 the narrator says 'I'm not married' (Winterson 1993). Castejón (1994: 63) renders this as 'no tengo un certificado de matrimonio' [I don't have a marriage certificate] and Mayoux (1993: 65) has 'Je n'ai pas commis l'erreur de me marier' [I have not committed the mistake of marrying]. Mayoux's narrator gives an explicit value judgement on marriage where Winterson's narrator (who, admittedly, clearly lambasts marriage elsewhere in the text) does not. Just as Garréta's avoidance of gendered language creates a certain kind of character, so Mayoux's translation gives Winterson's narrator a different character (Schabert 2010: 91) because circumlocution is necessary to avoid gendering. Where Winterson's narrator was direct, Mayoux's is literary and verbose: 'I want to be sure' (Winterson 1993: 84) becomes 'je veux avoir des certitudes' (Mayoux 1993: 106) [I want to have certainties] or 'Am I stark mad?' (Winterson 1993: 190) becomes 'Ai-je sombré dans la folie?' (Mayoux 1993: 241) [have I sunk into madness?]. Mayoux's narrator becomes much like Garréta's narrator: old-fashioned, self-important and pedantic

(Schabert 2010). This suggests that trying to achieve a genderless narrator in French always creates a specific kind of character who uses a specific kind of discourse and here we return to the problem of discourse as gendered.

Schabert (2010: 91) believes the narrator's new character is why, despite Mayoux's removal of grammatical gender from the text, 'reviewers of the French version insisted on reading the narrator as male'. This interpretation cannot have been helped by the back cover of the translation which declares that: 'Au travers des élans du corps et du coeur de deux amants, il dresse une minutieuse cartographie du désir' (1993) [through the impetus of the body and the heart of the two lovers(m), [the book] raises a meticulous cartography of desire]. The 'deux amants' can only refer to two men or a man and a woman as 'amant' is in the masculine; as Louise is clearly a woman, the latter is the only option. Camille Fort has also considered why the narrator is most often seen as a man in French and, like Schabert, thinks the problem is with the narrator's discourse. Fort argues that the grammatical neutrality of the text suggests masculinity because what is neutral is masculine, but that Winterson gets around this by suggesting femininity through rhythm and lexical values: 'a fluid and fluctuating discourse where traits culturally associated with the masculine word – assertion, brevity, the constative mode – alternate with parts taken from writing which evokes the feminine: syntactic disconnection, longer sentences, importance of silence' (Fort 2008: 57, my translation). Fort (2008: 58) considers that Mayoux can only make her text grammatically neutral and cannot also reproduce the lexical values and rhythm of the text.

Fort's (2008: 56) criticism arises because she believes that the narrator is meant to oscillate between being a man and a woman and is not meant to be neither. Indeed, she thinks 'neither' is not possible because in French, the neutral represents the masculine. In this view, Mayoux fails *because* her narrator is neutral, and is therefore really male (see also Maioli 2009: 144). Even if Mayoux had reproduced the lexical values and rhythm of the text, it would not necessarily have suggested an oscillating narrator because even in dialogue sociolinguists are moving away from 'seeking "gender differences" in the form of talk between X and Y in context Z to an acceptance of notions of multiple identities, subject positioning, performance, orientation and notions of power as diffuse and fluctuating' (Sunderland 2004: 217) (see also Coates 2004 and Holmes 1998). We cannot

count on discourse analysis to tell us if the narrator is masculine or feminine (and even if it suggested they were masculine, it really cannot tell us if they are male).

Mayoux's text, however, is not entirely neutral in the grammatical sense. As with the translators of *Middlesex*, neither Mayoux nor Castejón is consistent in keeping their text free of grammatical gender. There are plenty of examples where they both keep out gender as we have seen above but alongside attempts to be gender neutral come instances where gender creeps in. For example, the narrator has conversations with a friend about *hir* penchant for married women. This friend has no gender in Winterson's (1993: 32) text yet in French they are female ('amie') (Mayoux 1993: 38) and in Spanish they are male ('amigo') (Castejón 1994: 39). While this does not gender the narrator, there are genderless options: for example, 'pote' [pal, mate, buddy] in French, while informal, is invariable and similarly 'colega' [friend, mate, buddy] is invariable in Spanish. When Louise and the narrator are together gender marking still has to be avoided on adjectives and past participles, as noted above with the mistake on the French back cover. In *Written on the Body*, the narrator goes to Louise's house and they 'went down the hall together' (Winterson 1993: 30). In the Spanish this becomes: 'entramos juntas' (Castejón 1994: 36) [we entered together(f)]. Here, 'together' is in the feminine plural and can only refer to two women.

In French, 'I felt like a thief with a bagful of stolen glances' (Winterson 1993: 49), becomes 'je me sentais comme un cambrioleur, avec mon balluchon d'images volées' (Mayoux 1993: 62). 'Cambrioleur' is not invariable but is the masculine form of thief, for which there is a feminine alternative, 'cambrioleuse'. Though a slightly different word, the invariable 'escroc' [crook] could have been used. Similarly, in the Spanish, Castejón (1994: 60) uses 'ladrón' [thief] which does have a feminine equivalent 'ladrona'. Again, a word with different connotations, 'mangante' [petty thief/swindler] is invariable and could have been used to preserve the neutrality. Whilst I disagree with Fort above, where she argues that Mayoux does not, but should, represent the narrator's femininity discursively, I do agree that both Mayoux and Castejón rely on grammatical masculinity to represent universality.

The masculine is used to represent neutrality but, as we have seen, the feminine appears in these translations where it should not (even Ramadan wanted A\*\*\* to be feminine) suggesting that the idea that these are lesbian texts (especially *Written on the*

*Body*) is pervasive. The Italian translator also makes Winterson's narrator feminine. Vanessa Leonardi gives this example: 'I told him we'd been to bed together' (Winterson 1993: 82) translated as 'Gli ho detto che sono stata a letto con te' (Marrone 1993: 85) [I told him that I had been(f) to bed with you]. Leonardi (2013: 73) notes that this is an odd slip which is in no way influenced by the source text in a translation which endeavours to avoid gender markers and could have been easily avoided.

Oriana Palusci, on the other hand, who has also analysed Giovanna Marrone's Italian translation of *Written on the Body*, feels the same way about the Italian translation as Camille Fort does about the French translation. She believes that the narrator is meant to be both male and female and that 'the Italian translation analysed fail[s] to reproduce the appropriate gender markedness of the source text' (Palusci 2013: 30). She also makes it very clear that whether 'I' is male or female is not the question readers should ask. Her point is that to make the text genderfull rather than genderless, is to dare the reader to see both masculine and feminine gender markers and yet believe that these attributes can be held by the same person. I do not deny that it is important to expose the 'profound mental frames in the construction and in the perception of gendered bodies' (Palusci 2013: 22), but I also think that this text has more to offer about gender/less identities, even more in translation than in the original English.

## 5. Erased and constrained texts

The English *Sphinx*, the French *Écrit sur le corps* and the Spanish *Escrito en el cuerpo* may have more to say about genderless identities and texts in translation than their originals do because translating these texts comes with extra constraints. Every translation is constrained – the translator is tied (though of course not slavishly) to the source text – and these texts offer an extra element of constraint in the genderless narrator in the same way that a poem comes with an extra constraint if it rhymes and novels that use dialects may be harder to translate than those that do not. The latter involves translating a discourse, not just individual words, and we come up against the same problem here because, as we have seen, it is widely believed that discourse is gendered; language divides the world into male and female and there is an assumption that men and women

are different in everything, including the way they speak (Cameron 2007: 14-17).<sup>47</sup> Fort feels that in translating *Written on the Body* into French, Mayoux 'worked under the yoke of an almost oulipian constraint: erase or circumvent every grammatical element, every suffix, flexional ending or article capable of assigning a sexual identity to the narrative moment' (Fort 2008: 55, my translation). But it is not just grammatical elements that we have to be careful of, all sorts of other aspects of the signifying system must be attended to as well.

Language is a structure in which 'a finite number of discrete elements (in this case, words) are sampled, combined, and permuted to create larger structures (in this case, sentences) with properties that are quite distinct from those of their elements' (Pinker 1994: 84). Pinker (1994: 84) exemplifies this by saying that 'the meaning of *man bites dog* is different from the meaning of any of the three words inside it, and different from the meaning of the same words combined in the reverse order'. This means that any translation cannot simply be concerned with how to translate possessive adjectives or how to refer to A\*\*\* without repeating hir name. In this section I will return to ideas of both the palimpsest and the hypertext by looking at Tom Phillips's *A Humument* (1980) and Jonathan Safran Foer's *Tree of Codes* (2010). Both texts deconstruct their 'originals', highlight the materiality of the book and suggest ways to experiment with erasure, undecidability, loss, haunting and deception in translation. I will finally consider how embracing the creativity inherent in working under constraints can suggest new ways of translating trans texts by exploring the ideas and work of some of the members of the Oulipo, of which Garréta is a member.

Tom Phillips's *A Humument* shows how self-imposed constraints help authors find creativity, how the book can be emphasised as a material object and also the limits of translation. This artist's book is an intralingual translation as Phillips has taken a forgotten English text and, though leaving it in English, 'treated' it in order to make a completely new text. Phillips (1980) came to treat W.H. Mallock's Victorian novel *A Human Document* through the rule that he would work on the 'first (coherent) book that [he] could find for threepence'. His first technique was to score out unwanted words with pen and ink, then he used acrylic paint, typing and 'collaged fragments from other parts of the book (since a

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<sup>47</sup> Though of course, the way they speak is also affected by ethnicity, social class and age (Cameron 2001: 119).

rule had grown up that no extraneous material should be imported into the work)' (Phillips 1980). He sees the work as 'a curious unwriting collaboration between two ill-suited people seventy-five years apart' (Phillips 1980). That this is 'unwriting' instead of 'rewriting' may point to how much of Mallock's text is erased. Because of its unwriting project, it is what Barthes (1986: 165) might term a perverse palimpsest: what is written and what is unwritten remain superimposed, one text effaces another 'but only, one might say, in order to show that effacement: a veritable philosophy of time'.

*A Human Document* is a story about an upper-class philosopher who falls in love with the already-married but possibly soon-to-be widowed Irma, and Mallock's narrator claims to have pieced the story together from old diary entries and notes. Phillips, therefore, effectively returns *A Human Document* to the fragmented state in which it supposedly started (see Maynard 2003: 84); Phillips leaves only clusters of original text visible and these clusters are connected by 'rivers' of white lines running between words (see figure 8).

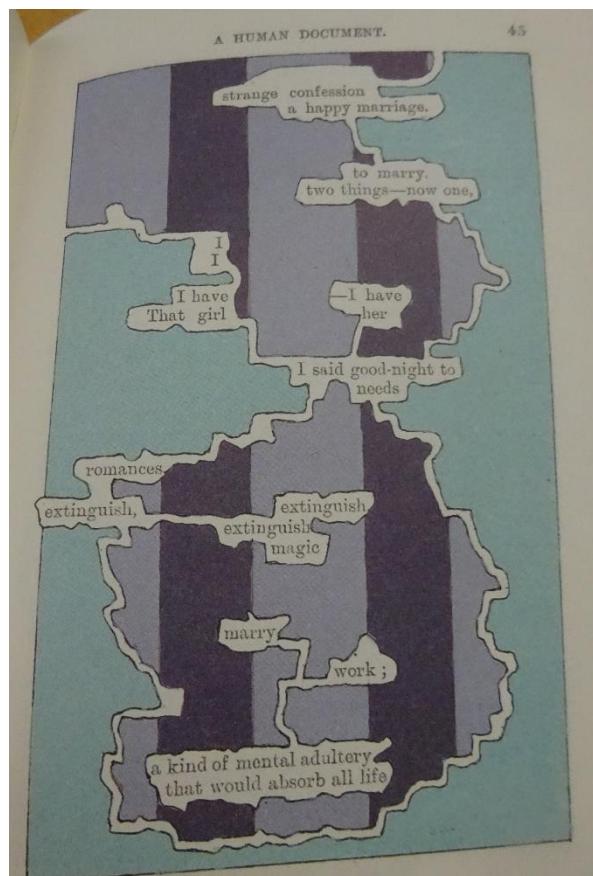


Figure 8: page 45 of *A Humument* (Phillips 1980)

Like *Written on the Body* and *Sphinx*, *A Humument* is both a mixture of many discourses, genres and media (Maynard 2003: 89) and a demonstration of how texts can point to other texts and writers that have come before and those that are still to come (Phillips references books which are long after Mallock's time (Pfahl 2015: 409)). In doing this, Phillips 'reconfigure[s] the romantic artist's emphasis on originality' (Maynard 2003: 96) through fragmentation and creativity. Winterson's (1993: 10, 155) text is concerned with originality and declares multiple times that 'it's the clichés that cause the trouble'. This declaration could be neatly linked to the stereotypical ways men and women are meant to speak or more broadly to the stereotypical ways they are meant to 'be' in the world – there the clichés really do cause trouble.

With the decrease in the power of the author comes the increase in the power of the reader; Hayles (2002: 81) sees *A Humument* as a form of print hypertext because one can follow Phillips's rivers in many different ways and the reader must actively participate in the construction of the story. The text is to be read for a new code but perhaps not in the assiduous way that many critics have read Shakespeare over the years desperate to see the trace of supposed 'true' author Francis Bacon hidden within a cipher. These searches do not reveal the author but allow the reader to cling on to the idea of authorship, the idea that who the author is really matters. Alas, 'years, decades, whole working careers have been devoted to the ever-fruitless quest for Francis Bacon's ciphers and hidden messages in the writings of Shakespeare, yet the Shakespeare decoders have made no real contribution to solving the Authorship question' (Michell 1996: 134). Looking for authority in the author is no longer the point of close reading; finding out who Shakespeare really was and whether he left clues to his identity in his plays is not what reading Shakespeare is about. The text is the thing. But many readers do not have the confidence to abandon the author, as Julian Barnes (2012: 12), following Flaubert, asks: 'Why does the writing make us chase the writer? Why can't we leave well alone? Why aren't the books enough?'.

Phillips's text is what Hayles (2002: 26) might also term a 'technotext': texts that 'bring into view the machinery that gives their verbal constructions physical reality'. *A Humument* is invasive; the Art Libraries Society of the United Kingdom and Ireland considers an artist's book to be an object 'in which an artist has had a major input beyond

illustration or authorship: where the final appearance of the book owes much to the artist's interference/participation' (Bettley 2001: 164-5). It is a creative defacement only less violent than the 'malicious damage' involving pasting pictures on book jackets and rewriting blurbs done to library books by Joe Orton and Kenneth Halliwell in 1959 (Hoare 2013) because Phillips paid for the book. Phillips interferes in Mallock's text beyond the idea of being just the author/editor or the illustrator. In this text, as in *Sphinx* and *Written on the Body*, what is absent is brought into view precisely because it is absent; Phillips draws attention to 'the book' as an artefact not only by removing the plot, characters and description but also by covering over paragraph breaks, chapter breaks and linearity (see figure 9).<sup>48</sup>

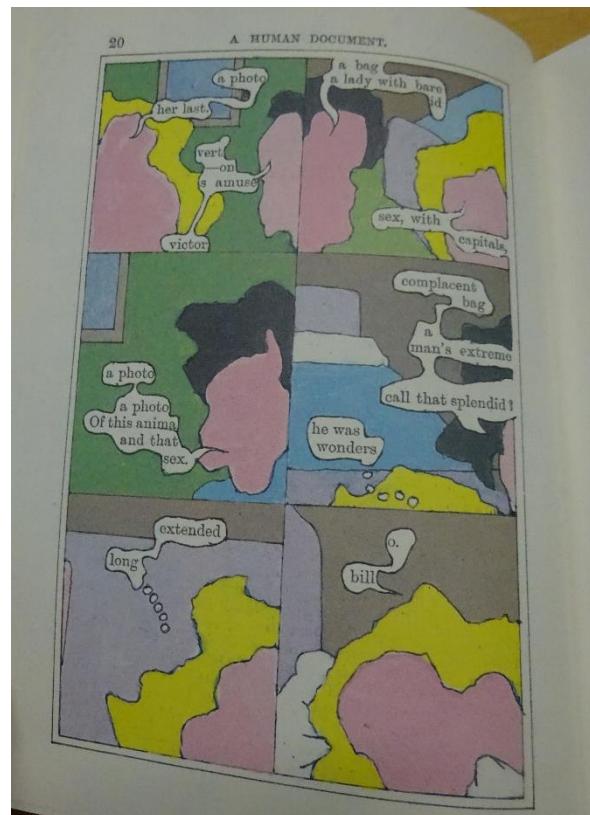


Figure 9: page 20 of *A Humument* (Phillips 1980)

<sup>48</sup> That Phillips reveals by concealing goes against received ideas on *A Humument* as most critics feel that he draws attention to the materiality of the book by making things like textblocks, running titles and page borders visible (see Maynard 2003, Hayles 2002 and Pfahl 2015). Brillenburg Wurth (2011: 5) does consider, however, that *A Humument* 'shows how the meaning, the physical state of a text, is determined by what it reveals and conceals at the same time'.

The way that novels are organised, set out, presented and read is shown to be unnatural, an agreed-upon construction. Both Garréta and Winterson reorient their reader's attention to the body as a frame for the construction of meaning and subjectivity, they draw attention to the sexed body precisely by removing it from their texts. Both sex and gender are constructions because they can be erased (and yet the body still exists), just as plot or conventional page-layout are constructions because they too can be erased (and yet the book still exists).

*A Humument* may have inspired John Eric Broaddus's artist's book *Above the Trees: A Short Novel* (1985) which treats Edward J. Bohan's 1982 novel *The Descension* in very similar ways though it goes further than Phillips's work by including extraneous material and cutting the page with a scalpel to create shapes (Bettely 2001: 173). This idea of cutting is carried even further by Jonathan Safran Foer who also references trees in the title of his work, perhaps suggesting that by focusing on the paper that makes up a book we return to the origin of the page – the tree – and this reminds us that books are constructions, they do not spring straight from the author's imagination but are physically cut, bound and packaged for the reader.

According to Kiene Brillenburg Wurth (2011: 5), Safran Foer's *Tree of Codes* 'is one of the many heirs to Phillips's technique of book-altering, of treating found novels'. Like *A Humument*, *Tree of Codes* is a performance of a book, a sculpture to be read but also to be looked at. Foer creates a paper sculpture out of an English translation of Bruno Schulz's *The Street of Crocodiles* by cutting out whole sentences with a knife. If you read the words of Foer's text out loud, ignoring the gaps, you get a similar 'nonsense' to that produced by the Dadaist Tristan Tzara in the opening scene of Tom Stoppard's *Travesties* (1975). But this is a joke made at Tzara's expense because his nonsense 'reveals an implicit order' (Demastes 2013: 72). Tzara cuts his writing word by word, puts the pieces in a hat and then reads what he picks out: 'Eel ate enormous appletzara / key dairy chef's hat he'll learn oomparah' (Stoppard 1975: 2). It is a homophonic translation for the following French lines: 'Il est un homme, s'appelle Tzara / Qui des richesses a-t-il nonpareil' (Demastes 2013: 71) [he is a man called Tzara who has unparalleled talent]. Sense can come from apparent nonsense – indeed the opening of the play is entirely based around this idea: 'Joyce, Lenin, and Tzara are all babbling incomprehensible gibberish' but in actual fact 'Joyce is dictating abstruse lines from his masterpiece *Ulysses*

to his assistant, and Lenin is dictating in Russian to his secretary' (Demastes 2013: 71). In two of these examples translation is the key to making sense. New meanings can be found in all texts that are out of the author's control by readers and translators. The cut-out technique means that a finite series of words can be put in an almost infinite order, something Queneau takes advantage of in his *Cent Mille Milliards de Poèmes* [One Hundred Million Million Poems]. Instead of cutting words he cuts lines: each line of each sonnet is cut into a strip which can be moved to show a different line underneath, and according to Queneau (1961) himself, it would take 190,258,751 years of reading all day every day to read every combination.

Foer's cutting is at once a record of a 'deep reading' (Brillenburg Wurth 2011: 4) by Foer himself (which suggests that all adaptations, including translations, are records of a reading) and also a way of making the reader slow down, 'the whites and holes halting our reading: we become aware of those blank spaces in between the words – spaces once full and inhabited and now wrecked, as if constantly reminding us of an irreparable loss' (Brillenburg Wurth 2011: 3). Here the cutting does not emphasise the power of the redactor to keep things hidden from the reader as in the redaction of government papers. What is lost is lost forever (unless you find a whole version of the original translation, of course) but this is not sanitisation or censure meant to put the reader in a position of ignorance; what is removed is less important than the fact that it has been removed.

Brillenburg Wurth (2011: 5) believes that the power of erasure is to circumvent the fact that some words fail: 'to erase words so that every unequivocal sense – depriving reality of its suppleness and mutability – evaporates with it'. By erasing words is Foer erasing the possible meanings that words, and therefore whole sentences, may have, or is he emphasising *différance*? In *A Humument*, Phillips's erasures are mostly illegible but some are still legible because they are crossed through rather than covered up (Phillips 1980: 99, 153). This brings to mind Derrida's 'sous rature': following Heidegger he crosses through words allowing them to remain legible (Derrida 2016: 24); in doing this he suggests a simultaneous presence and absence. Though, for Derrida, the presence never really existed: 'all that exists for Derrida is the absence of a presence that never was [...]. Put simply, erasure for Derrida does not mark a lost presence but the potential impossibility of presence' (Strywick 2001); the impossibility of the presence of meaning, of

Truth. In Heidegger's unconcealment model of truth, presence, or 'Dasein', 'is equiprimordially in truth and untruth' (Heidegger 2010: 214).

When a translator translates a proposition they are translating an articulation made up of elements in a structure, they cannot translate the elements alone and they make a choice between similar yet competing propositions with similar yet competing meanings, but every sign carries the trace of other signs, unchosen, invisible, out of reach, never present: 'since the trace is not a presence but the simulacrum of a presence that dislocates itself, displaces itself, refers itself, it properly has no site – erasure belongs to its structure' (Derrida 1982: 24). Derrida points to the undecidability of words, the undecidability of meaning and truth because meaning and truth are always deferred; the text has no authority, the original is merely a trace, meaning has no primacy and the critic has no control (see Spivak 2016: xxxvi-c).

For Foer (2010: 138), the erasure of *The Street of Crocodiles* 'would somehow be a continuation of its creation'. It is what Foer (2010: 138) long wanted to create: 'a die-cut book by erasure, a book whose meaning was exhumed from another book', he felt he was making 'a gravestone rubbing of *The Street of Crocodiles*' (Foer 2010: 139). The language used to describe this creation centres around the ideas of death, loss, resurrection, the idea of one text representing the ghost of another. The idea of 'exhumation' works well with *A Humument*, more than phonologically, it is an exhumation of Mallock's text. Given that both *Sphinx* and *Written on the Body* are meditations on loss and a descent into unreality due to this loss, *Tree of Codes* would appear to be a good place to look for translation ideas.

Foer's adaptation of *The Street of Crocodiles* is an intralingual translation of a translation and not an 'original' text. In his author's afterword, however, Safran Foer does not once acknowledge the fact that what he cut was a translation. He talks of how Schulz's sentences 'feel elemental, unbreakdownable' (Foer 2010: 138), of how he felt that '*The Street of Crocodiles* must have, itself, been the product of exhumation [...] the sentences feel too unlikely to have been created on purpose' (Foer 2010: 139). What Foer cuts is, of course, the product of an exhumation – an exhumation done by the translator, Celina Wieniewska, of Schulz's 'original' text.

These 'translations' are not generally considered translations (*Tree of Codes* is an 'adaptation' (Brillenburg Wurth 2011: 3) and *A Humument* is 'an artist's book' (Hayles

2002: 6), ‘a text’ and a ‘book’ (Pfahl 2015: 413), though Maynard (2003: 82) does call it ‘a radical translation’) but they demonstrate that the line between original writing and translation is very thin, they both ‘depend on previous texts and are the origin of unending future texts’ (Santaemilia 2013: 11-12). Translation reveals the constraints under which writing always happens – ‘translation is a paradigm, an exemplar for writing itself’ (Mathews in Tufail 1999: 127). A translator works under the constraint of the source text (Duncan 2011: 8); translation itself is therefore an Oulipian activity because it is writing under constraint, and Oulipian works often point to the ‘presence of the translator as writing subject, and the impossibility of a pure, unmediated relationship between a translation and its original’ (Duncan 2011: 12). Anne Garréta has been a member of the Oulipo since 2000 and, though written fourteen years previously, *Sphinx* is listed in *The Oulipo Compendium* (2005) as an Oulipian text: a ‘love story in a classical mode except for the absence of any grammatical marks of gender as far as both narrator and main protagonist are concerned’ (Mathews and Brotchie 2005: 153). Garréta (2009, my translation) believes that ‘to be Oulipian is to be queer and, to be queer, that is to participate in the possible’. *Sphinx* experiments with what is possible – that is what makes it a queer project and also an Oulipian project. Queer ‘is in the business of deliberate proliferation’ and translation is a breeding ground for this proliferation: ‘queer and its translation insist on the importance of seepage and contamination, hybridity, in-betweenness and indeterminacy’ (Epstein and Gillett 2017: 4). Palimpsestuous, hypertextual translation is a celebration of in-betweenness and indeterminacy.

The Oulipo (OUvroir de Littérature POTentielle [workshop of potential literature]) takes its name from the potentiality of literature, and Garréta sees potentiality in the freedom from everyday rules (such as grammatical gender) which offers a form of play or invention, a way to preserve new ways of reading signs and bodies and a way to mobilise acts differently (Garréta 2009). While Garréta attempts to free herself from the rules of grammatical gender in her work (or at least rules pertaining to the gendering of animate objects if not inanimate ones), following the rule of removing grammatical gender is a *sine qua non* of her text. Being rule-bound is a condition of Oulipian writing but it is not their sole *raison d'être*, as Jacques Roubaud (2004: 100) explains: the aims of the Oulipo are often erroneously thought to be to discover constraints and then produce texts using said constraints, but in actual fact ‘writing under constraint’ is not the primary aim of the

Oulipo; it is merely one of the strategies employed to attain its goal [...]: Potentiality'. Potentiality is contrasted with actuality; here this means keeping gender fluid until disclosure becomes necessary (which it always does outside of literature) but even this disclosure, as we have seen, is one truth among many.

Constraint brings freedom, the freedom of potentiality and multiplicity, and there is a dialectic of freedom and constraint in every Oulipian work, as there is, I would argue, in every translation. Raymond Queneau, one of the founding members of the Oulipo (Brotchie 1995: ix), attended Kojève's lecture series on Hegel (see Tufail 1999: 122) and is influenced by him as I am here, by the concepts of freedom in constraint and the *Aufhebung*. For Queneau, to experiment with a text in an Oulipian manner is to give more balance to the collaboration between writer and reader by giving the reader more to do than simply read the words on the page (see Shorley 1985: 2). By presenting the reader with a text that has been worked on using a constraint, Queneau 'effectively prevents his reader from ever taking for granted the nature of his activity, namely running his eyes along the lines of print and turning the pages which make up the artefact known as the book' (Shorley 1985: 2). Reading is exposed as a deliberate and careful act: it is not casual or passive, not 'readerly' in Barthes's (1974: 4) sense. Winterson often strives for this exposition in her works as well: 'Winterson is archly aware of the fact that her books only take on existence when read; that is, that reading re/creates the text' (Carpenter 2007: 69).

As we saw above, *Tree of Codes* was influenced by *A Humument* and one of the consequences of working under a constraint is how the same constraint can offer its own potentialities: 'It bears the seeds of *variations* and *extensions* that subsequent work on that constraint will ferret out' (Roubaud 2004: 109). A single text written or translated using a constraint holds within it the promise of other attempts and experiments. Scott (2012b: xi) advocates a translational practice that moves from 'the single towards the multiple (the endless variations and modulations of ongoing, living response)' and that multiple response to a (not-so-)single source text is what I have tried to achieve so far and will also look at here.

Constraints are often described in terms of loss and violence, for some perhaps a negative loss of creativity or literary quality; they are treated as 'aberrations, as pathological monstrosities of language and of writing' (Perec in Tufail 1999: 125). Here

the monstrously constrained work is seen as the antithesis of the ‘unconstrained’ work (as if there were such a thing) just as the monstrously intersexual body is seen as the antithesis of the normally-sexed body (and, as we saw in Chapter Two, this does not exist either). For others, constraints are a representation of the loss, or the absence, that is present in all writing and the violence that is done to all language by writers. While writing poetry under the constraint of rhyme or verse form is considered creative, writing under other kinds of constraints is sometimes considered uncreative writing because the writer merely sets the constraint to work: uncreative writers ‘are more likely to determine pre-established rules and parameters – to set up a system and step back as it runs its course – than to heavily edit or masterfully polish’ (Dworkin 2011: xliv).

This stepping back, however, can lead to more creativity, more authorial input and not less. Craig Dworkin (2011: xvii) uses the analogy of Echo who is forever condemned to repeat the last thing she hears to explain this: ‘continuing to communicate in her restricted state with far more personal purpose than her earlier gossiping, turning constraint to her advantage, appropriating others’ language to her own ends, “making do” as a verbal *bricoleuse*’. Echo is a builder using elements of the language structure (here single words) as her tools and this is what translators do – they echo the source text for their own ends. In terms of creative uncreative writing, perhaps less is more. Like Echo who repeats what has come before, Jorge Luis Borges’s character Pierre Ménard repeats and re-creates *Don Quijote* in an ‘interminably heroic production – [an] oeuvre nonpareil’ (Borges 1998: 90). Of course, the oeuvre does have its *pareil* in Cervantes’s text, but though it is a word-for-word replica it is not a copy (Bush 2006: 216). Ménard uses the words in a different time and place and they are invested with different meanings because of it.

One of the best known Oulipian texts is Georges Perec’s *La Disparition* (Duncan 2011: 6) which involves a lipogram of the letter ‘e’. The text, therefore, evidently involves a loss, but this loss creates gains elsewhere: ‘Invention, newness are extracted from this violence done to language, to oneself, to mutilated memory’ (Neefs 2007: 62). According to Jacques Neefs (2007: 72), the fragmentation of *La Disparition*, due to the lack of the letter ‘e’, creates a text which works like memory, or like a dream. The same could be said for *Sphinx* and *Written on the Body*: the loss of gender creates surreal, fragmented, and therefore, undecidable, texts. But can translators, in striving to keep the constraint, also

keep the haunting, elusive, fragmented quality of the texts? Dennis Duncan (2011: 7) looks at translations of *La Disparition* in his PhD thesis and what he finds interesting is not the inevitable fact that the French and English versions are different but the degree to which they are different. *La Disparition* is almost the poster-child for literary translation itself because it makes patently clear what makes translation so difficult: ‘some formal property of the original which roots the text deeply in the humus of its home language has to be replicated within a wholly different but equally arbitrary structure of letters and sounds’ (Duncan 2011: 8). The formal yet arbitrary structures of language that we are most concerned with here are gender codes which are more prevalent in French and Spanish than in English.

Gilbert Adair’s translation of *La Disparition*, *A Void*, is doubly constrained because he has to not only remove the letter ‘e’ but represent the source text’s story, characters and style: as he has chosen to honour the former, it is not surprising that the latter often falters. In an example used by Duncan, we can see that Adair’s translation gives the reader extra information about the narrator which is not in the original:

Anton Voyl n’arrivait pas à dormir. Il alluma. (Perec 1969: 17)

*Anton Voyl not-arrived not to to-sleep he put-the-light-on*

Incurably insomniac, Anton Vowl turns on a light. (Adair 1995: 3)

In English, the protagonist becomes an insomniac rather than someone who cannot get to sleep on one particular night. These changes are all brought about, of course, to avoid the word ‘sleep’ containing the letter ‘e’. While Neefs (2007: 60) feels that ‘the rules, whether they be given, received, adapted, stolen or specially worked out, cannot be the centre of attention of the text or the work of art’, Duncan (2011: 6) believes it is inevitable ‘that these translations should be abnormally lax when it comes to translating the exact sense of Perec’s original’. Above, Livia disparages Garréta’s work for not following novelistic conventions (it is fragmented and disjointed with characters we cannot sympathise with) but whether it is ‘well written’ with an exciting plot and well-rounded characters is not

the point and the same could be said for *La Disparition*.<sup>49</sup> It is right for Perec's translators to replicate the constraint he placed on his text – 'the book *is* the constraint: it would be inconceivable without it' (Tufail 1999: 125) – even if this means giving the target audience a text which is very different in every other respect. Mayoux certainly presents the reader with a different narrator to Winterson's in order to erase gender, but even if she had focused less on removing gender and more on giving the French reader a narrator of similar character, it would still be a totally different narrator from Winterson's.

Translation between different languages will always produce different texts, with or without added constraints, and sometimes it is necessary for translators to break the original author's code by creating a new one as Ramadan (2015: 124) does, since this is the only way potentiality can be released. Ramadan makes use of the constraints of Garréta's text to play with the concepts of translation and writing just as Garréta made use of the constraints of grammatical gender to play with the cultural concepts of binary sex and gender. We can never do without the constraints of sex or gender and we can never do without the constraints of writing but it is these very constraints which give us the freedom to see sex, gender and writing in a different light.

## 6. Conclusion

In my previous two chapters I have explored how translation can deal with two particular kinds of undecidability, one based on oscillation and one based on (inter-)sex. Here I have considered the undecidability caused by rejecting the gender binary. To be gender neutral is often considered to be an impossibility: 'There is no such thing as gender-neutral, in language or in reality' (de Lotbinière-Harwood 1991: 100). In the vein of those who cannot read our narrators as genderless, de Lotbinière-Harwood (1991: 100) believes that the 'translating subject's position is necessarily a gendered position'. It is true that to attempt to remove oneself from the gender spectrum involves effort, an effort which is

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<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, what 'well written' means is debateable – both texts are well written because they remove gender and the letter 'e' (they are clever and yet still readable) and many books which are lauded as classics of literary fiction involve characters who are hard to understand or plots that are difficult to follow – James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (2015 [1939]), for example.

often thwarted in real life by such establishments as hospitals, schools, workplaces and publishers. Where one can be gender neutral is within the pages of a book and we have seen in this chapter that it *is* possible for translation to echo the gender neutrality of the source text (and it is possible for the translator to leave their own gender out of the equation) even if the target language treats gender differently from the source language. Indeed, I argue that because translation requires such close reading at the level of the text and because it brings up questions of linguistic gender, it is more illuminating to look at translations of agender texts than it is to look at 'original' texts. Translation shows us something important about sex, gender and forms of transness: the translations of these particular agender texts allow us to consider agender lives more fruitfully; but they also expose the gender masquerade (that we all have one and that it is always only one of two choices) and the masquerade of original writing (that writers are in control of their texts and originate all the words and ideas they use).

Both Winterson and Garréta have written highly intertextual novels, showing that all texts are influenced by other texts. Once we see that 'original' writing is as much a copy as translation is we can start to question the whole concept of 'the original'. Translation does not come after the source text but predates the original which is not the beginning: 'without the derivative there is no original' (Butler 2016a: x); the original text relies on the translation to give it continued life (Benjamin 2012). Translation 'guarantee[s] the *survival* of the body of the original (*survival* in the double sense that Benjamin gives it in "The Task of the Translator", *fortleben* and *überleben*; prolonged life, continuous life, *living on*, but also life after death)' (Derrida 2001b: 199). The death of the original is not final, it continues to ghost. Derrida takes this Hegelian idea to think about the trace: a 'double movement of occultation (or erasure) and retroactive constitution' (Derrida 2001b: 199). And 'the trace is the means through which what is prior is marked [...] it is at once lost and found in the course of that marking' (Derrida 2001b: 199).

Translation is the trace of the original and it marks the original *as* original but 'origins are instituted, and in such a way that involves both an erasure and a deferral of the origin itself' (Butler 2016a: xxii). The 'origin' of translation and of the transgender body is erased and deferred but forever lingers on as a ghost. Translation is the record of a reading, but of multiple readings by both the author and the translator, readings of the process that haunt the 'final' product, these hauntings coming from the past but not

properly belonging only to the past. The spectre is always there looking at us, and we can feel its look, it is always already present (Derrida 2006: 7). Translation acknowledges this look and returns the gaze; it can exemplify the presence of texts and bodies that came before. It is the perfect medium through which to explore ideas of textual and sexual undecidability.

## Chapter Three: After-word

Taking my lead from Jeanette Winterson who claims that ‘all my work is experimental in that it plays with form, refuses a traditional narrative line, and includes the reader as a player’ (in Palusci 2013: 19), I wanted any translation method for *Sphinx* and *Written on the Body* to be experimental, to encourage the reader to be a player in the text and to maintain the undecidability of both the texts and their protagonists.

Given Neefs’s (2007: 72) consideration that the removal of the letter ‘e’ makes *La Disparition* read like a dream or a memory, a lipogram is a good translation method for *Sphinx*: I decided to remove the letter ‘i’ from my translation. Throughout this chapter we have come up against issues of the masculine standing for the universal, or the neutral or vice versa. This deletion of ‘i’ from my translation is not meant to suggest that agender identity is not worthy of proper representation but is meant to verbalise the idea that ‘there is no “I” who stands *behind* discourse and extends its volition or will *through* discourse’ (Butler 1997b: 12). The concept of subjectivity is a discursive construct; no subject has total authority over what they say (see Belsey 2001: 45) and the removal of ‘i’ mirrors this. It is meant to expose the fact that ‘language casts sheaves of reality upon the social body, stamping it and violently shaping it’ (Wittig 1985: 4). Butler (2016a: xxiv) warns that danger does not lie in discovering ‘that we are the passive dupes of an all-powerful writing; on the contrary, it is the resistance to reading that is the greatest risk, for it leaves us clutching forms of knowledge and language that are the sign of our unknowingness. Better to tarry attentively with the unknowable’. Better to acknowledge and work against our ignorance, no matter how futile, than to wallow in it. And the best tool to fight the power of language and of writing is translation.

This deletion of the ‘i’ in a translation of *Written on the Body* may also go some way to preventing readers from assuming the narrator is Winterson herself, as she says when readers assume she is Jeanette in *Oranges are not the Only Fruit*: ‘I suppose I have, in a way, gone on using my own name in everything I have written because I prefer to write in the first person. I am I and I am Not-I’ (Winterson 2014: xiv) (this ‘Not-I’ brings to mind Fichte’s (1970: 35) ‘not-self’ that contrasts with the self in *Science of Knowledge*).

The fact that 'I' is something complicated and multiple is also attested to by Derrida, for the 'I' that addresses the reader is:

An 'I' that, functioning as a pure passageway for operations of substitution, is not some singular and irreplaceable existence, some subject or 'life', but only, moving between life and death, reality and fiction, etc., a mere function or phantom. A term and a germ, a term that disseminates itself, a germ that carries its own term within it. (Derrida 2004: 357)

The 'I' of the narrator only represents one moment of their existence, an existence that is haunted and constantly mobile, becoming and unbecoming.

## 1. Translation try-outs

### 1.1 Removing 'i'

These thoughts sadden me even now, all these years later. How many exactly, not sure. Ten or a few more perhaps. And why force myself to endure only through memory? My soul wants a body. But the soul already heavy from too much knowledge, the body exhausted from thoughtfulness and lack of power, so caught up by a fevered boredom that naught, or almost naught, can occupy me anymore. Suppose that memory serves: back then, to me, the world was a theatre where corpses danced at a macabre ball of urges. Contempt and outcry couldn't keep me, however, from my craze for the waltz and her decay to a dance of love. Languorous darkness floats at the mercy of syncopated rhythms, short beats; the road to hell sparkled with deaf lanterns; the bottom of the abyss drew ever closer. On the smooth walls of the tornado that moved me forward, deformed forms of overjoyed cadavers presented themselves to me;

tortured flesh, they gave off a hoarse death rattle.<sup>50</sup> (Garréta 1986: 11, my translation)

The constraint I placed on myself to remove the letter 'i' required much thought. It meant that I could not use the present continuous, something the narrator uses frequently in French in order to avoid past participles. Without it sentences become fragmented – *Je* becomes a lazy writer, unconcerned with full sentences. 'A\*\*\* dansait: j'ai passé des soirées à guetter son apparition sur la scène de L'Eden' (Garréta 1986: 12) [A\*\*\* danced: I passed nights watching hir appearance on the stage of the Eden], becomes: 'A\*\*\* danced: me at dusk, on hold for per appearance on the stage of *the Eden*'.<sup>51</sup> Descriptions become like snapshots. In Garréta's text the narrator is someone of habitual actions because of the prevalence of the imperfect tense; in my translation *ze* is less obsessive and more instinctive, less measured and more flighty.

The present tense replaces the 'ing' of continuous action: 'un souterrain travail commença à s'opérer, creusement, percée de mine dans mon esprit' (Garréta 1986: 12) [an underground work started to operate, digging, opening a mine in my spirit]. I translate this digging as an action without a subject: 'an underground work started to operate: gouge, gouge at my soul'. The present tense also replaces the past historic: 'Après l'avoir dépassé, je me retournai pour vérifier sans doute le détail de sa mise' (Garréta 1986: 13) [After having passed her, I turned back to check beyond doubt the detail of her appearance]: 'Pass her. Turn back. Check beyond doubt the features of her appearance'. Sentences become short; it is as if the narrator is giving hirself instructions, living in the moment of the recollection and this, in its own way, suggests an obsession with the past.

## 1.2 The cut-out technique

In order to consider the text as an artwork I look to *Tree of Codes* and use Foer's cut-out technique to remove the letter 'i' from Ramadan's translation; here language becomes a sculptural material. Foer's *Tree of Codes*, as an imposing physical object, makes you, as the reader: 'aware of your fingers and hands in the process of reading: of a reading as a

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<sup>50</sup> See appendix III for a longer translation.

<sup>51</sup> I cannot use 'hir' or 'their', 'per' is another epicene pronoun (see Chak 2015).

physical intervention in the text. You experience this text, which is about fragmentation, and about the idea of a fragmented reality in the text it scatters to pieces' (Brillenburg Wurth 2011: 6).

I cut out words including the letter 'i' à la Foer to mirror the erasure of gender in the text with the physical erasure of the text itself (see figure 10).

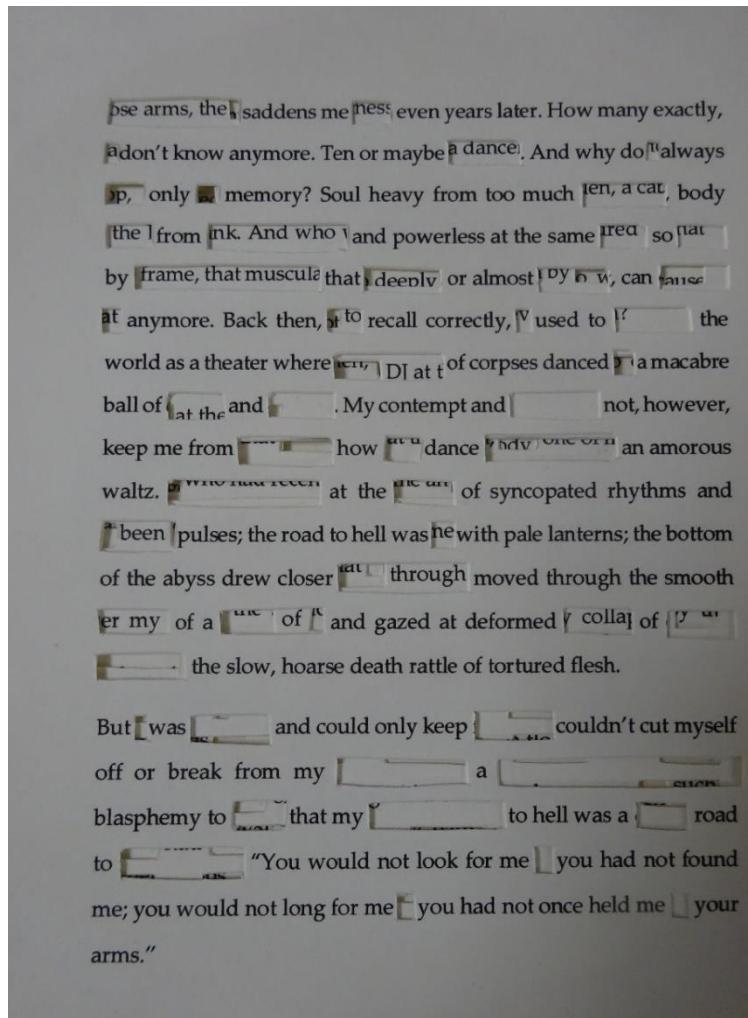


Figure 10: Page one of my cut-up of Ramadan's translation (Ramadan 2015: 1)

The use of such a radical technique serves not only to make the text unfamiliar and to show how language deceives as it controls but also to show that all translation is mediated. Brillenburg-Wurth (2011: 4) calls Foer's adaptation of *The Street of Crocodiles* a verbal-visual commentary of the text. This translation is a verbal-visual commentary on Garréta's text via Ramadan's translation, demonstrating that translation (that writing) is

never a completed act, that the text can always be worked upon by the reader. Translation is the written exemplification of loss but the loss does not occur in the act of translation because that would imply that the original was whole and therefore untranslatable (Butler 2016a: x). Translation is a work of mourning and of ruin: 'ruin is perhaps its vocation and a destiny that it accepts from the very outset' (Derrida 2001b: 181). By cutting away sections of the text we dramatise and celebrate the incompleteness of translation, its inevitable ruin and its status as something different from its source.

## Conclusion: An Open Ending

‘And it was always the stories that needed the telling that gave us the rope we could cross any river with. They balanced us high above any crevasse. They made us be natural acrobats. They made us be brave. They met us well. They changed us. It was in their nature to.’ (Smith 2007: 160)

### 1. Significance

Translation is often seen as a ‘carrying across’ (Bellos 2012: 26). The translator acts as the one who carries a text from one culture and one language into another – crossing a river like Ali Smith’s reader in the epigraph above. What is problematic about the ‘carrying across’ metaphor, though, is its suggestion that transfer only goes in one direction. As we have seen, drawing on Benjamin’s concept of the ‘afterlife’, the source text is as much changed by the translation as the translation is by the source text. Maria Tymoczko (2007: 7) also notes that ‘Western conceptualizations of translation can be associated with the metaphor of the translator as standing “between” in the transfer process. The metaphor of between suggests that the translator is neutral, above history and ideology’. However, throughout this thesis, I have read the position of being ‘in-between’ as a position of power. The trans person is in-between bodies, trans writing is in-between genres and the translator is in-between texts.

While Tymoczko criticises the metaphor of being ‘in-between’ as suggesting a neutrality – where the translator is, impossibly, neither on the side of the source nor of the target – Smith’s acrobat balancing in-between a crevasse looks at the metaphor from a different angle. Smith suggests that to be in-between is not about being unbiased but about how difficult it is to be in the middle; there is something important in the process of balancing, not just in reaching the other side. The crossing is a space of undecidability: ‘this disruptive, subversive space of indeterminacy between source and target languages, the space of *l'intraduisible*, is a queer space, one that challenges any normative idea of straightforward, untroubled translatability’ (Spurlin 2014: 207).

In his 1680 preface to his translation of Ovid's *Epistles*, John Dryden (1992: 103) likened attempting to metaphrase or imitate a source text to 'dancing on ropes with fettered legs: a man may shun a fall by using caution; but the gracefulness of motion is not to be expected; and when we have said the best of it, 'tis but a foolish task'. If translation that imitates cannot be smooth or elegant then the translator would do better to throw caution to the wind and remove the fetters that chain him or her to the source. This may not result in a graceful motion, however, or reduce the risk of a fall. But I would argue that a gracefulness of motion is not the end goal of queer translation. Translators only undertake such difficult crossings for stories that need telling. Trans stories need telling and they need translating and queer translation looks to make the crossing just as perilous for the reader as it was for the translator.

As I noted in my introduction and in Chapter Two where I listed the titles of new intersex novels, more trans texts are being written than ever before and there has recently been an explosion of visibility around the question of being trans. In May 2014, *TIME magazine* announced that we had reached the 'transgender tipping point' (Steinmetz 2014): "We are in a place now", [Laverne] Cox tells *TIME*, "where more and more trans people want to come forward and say, 'This is who I am'. And more trans people are willing to tell their stories. More of us are living visibly and pursuing our dreams visibly" (in Steinmetz 2014). In May 2016, Jacqueline Rose (2016) wrote in the *London Review of Books* that 'today, trans people – men, women, neither, both – are taking the public stage more than ever before'. However, both Rose and Steinmetz know that there is still a long way to go. For Rose (2016), 'it is a paradox of the transsexual bid for emancipation that the more visible trans people become, the more they seem to excite, as well as a greater acceptance, a peculiarly murderous hatred'. She writes, as I do, 'from the position of a so-called "cis" woman' (Rose 2016), and while some may argue that cis people are not best placed to write about trans issues, what Rose makes clear is that to write about trans issues is to reveal that being 'cis' is not unproblematic, it is not without issues, too; it is 'a category which I believe, as I hope is by this point clear, to be vulnerable to exposure and undoing' (Rose 2016). Steinmetz (2014) also sees a problem in the logic of 'cis' = binary = normal:

As the trans movement has gained momentum, opponents have been drawn in to fight [...]. But perhaps the biggest obstacle is that trans people live in a world largely built on a fixed and binary definition of gender. In many places, they are unwelcome in the men's bathroom and the women's. The effect is a constant reminder that they don't belong.

This topic is more significant than ever now as President Trump looks to undo much of the work started by Obama (see Somashekhar and Balingit 2017). In February 2017 the Trump administration revoked Obama's guidelines on transgender bathrooms (*Telegraph* 2017) and in July Trump announced a ban on transgender individuals serving in the US military (*Washington Post* 2017). Trans people are still discriminated against all over the world: 'Health care, education, the prison system, the justice system, borders and immigration, cultural mores: in every part of society trans people are suffering' (Lester 2017: 212). This thesis begins to tackle these injustices by coming at this particular topic from the question of literature and translation, thinking about how trans people are and can be seen through what is arguably a very private yet powerful undertaking: reading.

In their book *Trans Like Me*, C. N. Lester (2017: 213) asks: 'what of the millions of personal battles, individual lives poised always between danger and freedom? Each daily struggle to be safe, to be known, to survive, and to ensure safety and survival in the future?'. I have considered how to make individual voices heard in translation, whether that be the voice of the trans author or the trans protagonist, but also how to acknowledge that these voices, these struggles, are never just 'individual'. It is translation itself that helps to suggest multivocality because the translator's voice always includes the author's voice and both of these voices are marked by the voices of those who influence them.

While trans issues are becoming a prevalent area of discussion in fiction and politics, they are also becoming more topical in scholarship, indeed, they are even more topical than I might have hoped when I began my research three years ago as I shall demonstrate in section three. In this thesis I have placed translation and transgender identity together; I am not the first to do this and as this topic continuously gathers momentum I will certainly not be the last. I believe that my study is a significant addition

to this burgeoning field of research because it puts varied and perhaps sometimes unlikely theories and theorists into dialogue in order to draw out the ways that connections between translation and trans identity can inform the translation of trans identity. It goes further than this, however, in its transdisciplinary outlook to also think about how literature, translation, feminism, philosophy, postmodernism and transgender identity can inform the (re)reading, (re)writing and (re)translation of trans identity. It is therefore a contribution not only to translation theory but also to transgender theory because it gives transgender research a disciplinary ally, one that is concerned with many of the same issues and one that can bring new insights to the field.

My own work follows on from research on translating gender, or more specifically on translating women, where feminist translators have suggested that the source text is not sacrosanct, that it can and should be 'hijacked' (von Flotow 1997: 82) if it does not fit with the translator's agenda. The power of the translator is emphasised. My research considers how trans people can be shown to 'belong' in literature and across literatures and therefore in the world, and translators open up the world to new readers; as Edith Grossman (2010: 14) puts it, translation matters because it:

Expands our ability to explore through literature the thoughts and feelings of people from another society or another time. It permits us [...] for a brief time to live outside our own skins, our own preconceptions and misconceptions. It expands and deepens our world, our consciousness, in countless, indescribable ways.

In the particular instance of trans source texts, translation shows (and my translations aim to show) that in a world divided into 'cis' and 'trans' there is actually more that unites us than divides us.

## 2. Findings

As set out in the introduction, this thesis began with one question:

- What does considering how to translate shifting gender identity reveal about the act of translation and/or about gender and how we present our gender identity (or identities) to the world?

A close reading of six texts whose protagonists have shifting gender identity confirmed my premise that undecidability is an inherent characteristic of texts written by or about trans people: these are all undecidable texts with undecidable protagonists. It is important that no precise conclusions be drawn about the genre of these texts or the characters they present. This means that what the translator chooses to do with the text comes with high stakes.

I noted in my introduction that some of these texts, though widely researched, have been undervalued as texts which help us to think through what it means, and has meant, to be trans and, by extension, what it means, and has meant, to be human (as we have seen, this is not a fixed definition throughout time). This thesis has aimed to give value to these texts, not just as texts which tell us about being trans or being human, but also as texts whose translations show us that while translating transness requires particular care, translating a trans experience is translating a human experience just as reading a trans text is reading a human experience.

Undecidability is heightened in trans texts and my main research question asked:

- How can translation deal with sexual and textual undecidability?

The textual and the sexual cannot be separated from one another here – undecidability is produced by the particular blend of form and content, writer and text. This is why my research does not simply consider how to translate grammatical gender (or a lack of it), though, of course, this is something I do look at. As I have suggested in reference to *Sphinx*, it is not enough to argue that these characters' gender transgressions are a linguistic gimmick. In order to represent these gender transgressions in translation my thesis brings to bear an eclectic critical approach – this not only reflects the nature of translation studies as a field which must look outside itself in order to expand, but also reflects my transdisciplinary methodology. My research is informed by postmodernism, literary theory, translation theory, transgender theory and queer theory: it is multi-

faceted like the texts it discusses. In turn, my translation practice mimics the discourses I am analysing – it is fragmented and hybrid; it involves close reading, undoing the source text and creating several new becomings which will inevitably themselves ‘unbecome’ eventually. I use experimental translation methods to queer both writing and gender.

My first chapter presented the idea that translation is an active intrusion on the source text – the source text is not a museum exhibit, never to be touched or questioned, even when it is literally kept in archives, available only to a select few. Indeed, the source’s unavailability (d’Eon’s French text has never been published, for example) makes its translation even more important. In this chapter I discussed the idea that translation and transgender identity are formed of grafts, built up of layers of previous identities or drafts. This was especially apt for Erauso’s text which is itself split into four versions, two of which I used to form the layers of a palimpsestuous translation which also included a layer of my own translation. It is possible, however, to create a palimpsestuous translation with source texts whose ‘original’ versions seem to be (but are anything but) singular by using layers of translator’s drafts or by picking out intertexts from the source. All of the writers I translate (and all writers *tout court*) draw heavily on previous texts in their writings.

In Chapter Two I developed this concept of layering further by looking at translation and transgender identity as characterised by various hauntings or spectres. Intersex bodies are haunted by medical decisions, by past conceptualisations of gender and what ‘male’ and ‘female’ should look like. Both Barbin and Cal/lie are forever haunted by the sex that they thought they were while struggling to fit into the sex that they have been reassigned. In order to think about the idea of being constantly in-between two sex assignments, both forced upon our characters by the medical establishment, I looked to the hypertext as something which can display multiplicity and plurivocality. Barbin and Cal/lie are caught between their past and future selves but ‘becoming does not tolerate the separation or the distinction of before and after, or of past and future. It pertains to the essence of becoming to move and to pull in both directions at once’ (Deleuze 1990: 3). Websites and other media such as videos haunt the main blog posts. While the hypertext is not perfect (it does not live up to much of the hype that first surrounded it), it serves its purpose as a translation method that can keep the source text visible.

Chapter Three continued this line of thought by considering the question of how translation brings out the potentiality or the future possibilities of any text or body. I moved on from the idea of layers that I started with in Chapter One and focused more fully on how the concept of hauntings that I developed in Chapter Two is prescient for the translation of my texts in particular and trans writing in general. The hauntings are now of future possibilities as well as past embodiments. I analysed how the in-between and the hybrid can be represented through a queer type of translation, translation that is ludic and experimental. This brought the thesis full circle, from the palimpsest to the perverse palimpsest, back to the idea of the source text as a living body of words; it is not just that it is possible to change the source text but that it is preferable to do so – it wants to be worked on because this ensures its afterlife. I have shown that all texts and all bodies, ‘trans’ or not, ‘translations’ or not, are unstable and undecidable. Texts erased using a cut-out technique can reflect an erased gender identity where, as in what is truly undecidable, concealment is without hidden truth.

### 3. The future

With more time certain areas of the thesis could be developed. For example, the discussion on early-modern conceptualisations of gender could warrant a new thesis alone. There is no agreement on whether society in Erauso or d’Eon’s time would have followed Aristotle or Hippocrates, whether gender was seen on a spectrum or as a binary. This is an area of my thesis that lends itself to fruitful future development. There is much discussion on whether the author is dead or not (see Barthes 1977; Burke 1998) and whether their context really matters (see Felski 2011). Looking in detail at past conceptualisations of gender and the ways these can (and whether they should) affect modern-day translations can bring new light to this discussion.

My work could form part of a much wider potential research agenda on translating transness and could serve as a building block for further work in this area. It could, for example, join the work of Mirko Casagrande (2013: 114) who argues that the manipulation of a text in translation is similar to the manipulation of a body in medical discourse when the translator embarks on ‘a gender attribution process’, this is ‘a form of

epistemic and hermeneutic violence against the transgender text/body'. As I mentioned in section one, scholarship in the areas of trans fiction and translating transness has moved on in the three years since I began my research. Edited collections and special journal issues are being dedicated to the translation of queer and transgender identity but, as of 2017, to the best of my knowledge, no monographs have been published on the topic of translating transgender works of literature. Academic enquiry into this area has moved at an alarming pace recently and other theorists are already looking at case studies of translated trans texts (Baer 2016; Gabriel 2016) and writing about their own translation practice in connection to trans texts as I do (Concilio 2016; Larkosh 2016; Heinrich and Dowd 2016).<sup>52</sup> Indeed, many theorists work on the same texts as I do but do not consider their translations (exceptions include Casagranda (2013) who looks at *Middlesex* and the connections between translation and intersex bodies; Gomolka (2012) who looks at Barbin and Perez-Villanueva (2014) who briefly discusses the Steptos's translation of Erauso) or they look at their translations but do not consider them to be specifically trans (for Leonardi (2013) the narrator of *Written on the Body* is ambiguous; for Oberman (2017) it is a queer text).

I chose to focus on three types of trans identity and three languages, and more work could now be done that is not limited by categories or by languages. What many trans memoirs appear to have in common is an interference from an editor, or as we shall see below, a co-writer, and this is an angle that could be taken further to think about how the translator is also an intruder on the source text: Lili Elbe's Danish memoir *Man into Woman* is an example of a memoir that has been heavily edited in a similar vein to Barbin's (see Gailey and Brown 2016); indeed, as with the English translation of Barbin where Foucault takes centre stage, Elbe is not credited on the front cover as the author (Hoyer 2004): it is a portrait of Lili Elbe, not *by* her.

There are also trans autobiographies, biographies and works of fiction appearing in languages from beyond Western Europe suggesting that trans issues are starting to be accepted in many societies. *Last Words from Montmartre*, an experimental Chinese text by Taiwanese author Qui Maojin with a narrator whose 'name and gender [...] seem to shift over the course of the book' (Heinrich and Dowd 2016: 569), was published as early

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<sup>52</sup> Whilst I consider what I do to be queer translation, I do not include work on translation analysis or practice for homosexual texts in this review of recent literature.

as 1996 and translated into English in 2014. This publication did not pave the way for more of its kind, however. What is billed as 'the first memoir by a trans man from China' (Ming and Frazey 2017) had to be written in English, not Chinese: *Life Beyond my Body: A Transgender Journey to Manhood in China* (2016) was written by Lei Ming with a ghost-writer, Lura Frazey. Similarly, the 2010 Arabic memoir of Randa, *Mouzakarat Randa al-Trans* [The Memoirs of Randa the Trans], was co-written in Lebanon by journalist Hazem Sagheih (*Independent* 2010) because Randa had to flee Algeria in order to find acceptance (Whitaker 2016). This memoir is, again, an exception because trans people are still invisible in the Middle East: while transwoman Abu Hanna won the Miss Trans Israel pageant in 2016 (Hadid 2016), 'most [trans people] remain anonymous and if they come to public attention it's usually through conflict with the law' (Whitaker 2016). This is despite the fact that 'the study of gender, sex, and sexuality in Islamic societies has been growing in calibre and intensity' (Almarri 2016: 578).

It is still very early days for the public dissemination of trans texts in many parts of the world with people from transphobic countries or cultures having to cross geographical and/or linguistic borders to get their voices heard, but the publication of these texts seems to be representative of what is slowly becoming a global trend. In Japan the Manga series *Wandering Son* by Shimura Takako which ran from 2002 to 2013 featured multiple trans characters and has been translated into English by Matt Thorn, the first volume being published in translation in 2011. In 2016 *Major i Helena: Priča o vojniku koji se nije predao* [Major and Helena: The Story of a Soldier who has not Surrendered], a biography by Maja Bekčić Petrović, came out in Serbian. In India there has been a small but significant advent of autobiographical texts written by hijras and transwomen: in 2010 *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story* by A. Revathi was published in Tamil and translated into English by V. Geetha. In 2015 Laxmi Narayan Tripathi wrote *Me Hijra, Me Laxmi* in Marathi, it has already been translated into English; again in 2016 'Malayalee transgender [woman] Sheetal Shyam was approached to write her story soon after Kerala became the first Indian state to adopt a transgender policy' (Gupta 2017) and a memoir written by India's first transgender head teacher Manabi Bandopadhyay was released in February 2017 (Gupta 2017).

As I discussed in the introduction, I have analysed transgender, intersex and agender texts for the sake of a coherent structure. My focus was on languages that either

showed masculine and feminine grammatical gender and that allowed their users to switch linguistically or that did not show masculine and feminine grammatical gender and allowed their users to hide linguistically. There is no reason why future research, resulting from my work, into the translation of trans fiction and non-fiction must look to books whose protagonists also switch or hide linguistically. It is possible to be undecidable in more subtle ways. As we saw in Chapter Three, there is a period in Woolf's *Orlando* (2004 [1928]: 87) where Orlando is briefly truly linguistically undecidable with the use of 'they'. But even in the parts of the narration where Orlando is gendered through third person pronouns, 'she' is still undecidable: 'For it was this mixture in her of man and woman, one being uppermost and then the other, that often gave her conduct an unexpected turn' (Woolf 2004 [1928]: 121). Indeed Woolf (2004 [1928]: 122) goes on to say: 'Whether, then, Orlando was most man or woman, it is difficult to say and cannot now be decided'. My aim has been to show that translating transness reaches beyond the matter of grammatical gender.

My translation methods are extreme: they play games with the source text in an attempt to suggest that the source text is not a perfect, unadulterable body of words that must remain the same under different clothes but is a living body that is open to change. These methods may not be widely accepted by publishers and, as I have said, I do not intend for them to be used as a guide for how to translate trans literature; my methods are not intended as prescriptive instructions. By thinking about my own translation practice I engage with the source texts extremely closely and by opening up a discussion using experimental translation I pave the way for translations which can find a compromise between being radical and being publishable. There is no easy 'one size fits all' solution as I have demonstrated with my three different translation techniques for three different types of identity. My structure might be taken to suggest that it could be appropriate to translate all intersex texts using the hypertext or all transgender texts using the palimpsest, but this would be a rather simplistic outlook not least because there is no one way to tackle 'trans' texts, as Lester (2017: 210) puts it: 'Trans is not a singular quality that can be divorced from the pluralistic lives of the people referred to by that term'. Everybody's conception of their own gender identity is different; no two people who identify as 'transgender' or 'agender' or even 'cisgender' will feel the same about their bodies. My aim is to encourage both the translator and the publisher to

acknowledge that a trans text is more undecidable than most, that this undecidability is something the target text reader deserves to be aware of.

Catalina de Erauso, François-Timoléon de Choisy or Herculine Barbin all have texts which are complicated, and while they all wrote for an audience, none of them wrote for publication, let alone translation. This does not mean, however, that we can be lax with their texts. I have suggested that they have not been translated in a manner which makes the most of their transgressive voices. I hope this thesis will galvanise retranslations: translations which help us to see that being trans is being human, that translation is creative writing and that trans people, translators and translations occupy a position in-between, a between that shows that people and texts are constantly evolving and becoming – they are never perfect, never too precious to be changed.

Translation is an apt medium through which to think about the past, present and future ghosts of the text and the body that are always captured within the source text; ‘captured’ as one moment in time that is mercurial, that has changed as soon as the reader looks away. Translation is a record of multiple readings and these readings haunt the translation which is itself mercurial; it represents becomings, ghosts, while simultaneously and endlessly creating more. Through writing, trans people and translators expose and celebrate the fact that texts and bodies are anything but ‘finished’; they both articulate a state of becoming, of undecidability.

### Appendix I – selected pages from the manuscript *Vida i sucesos de la Monja Alférez* (1784) held at the Madrid Royal Academy of History

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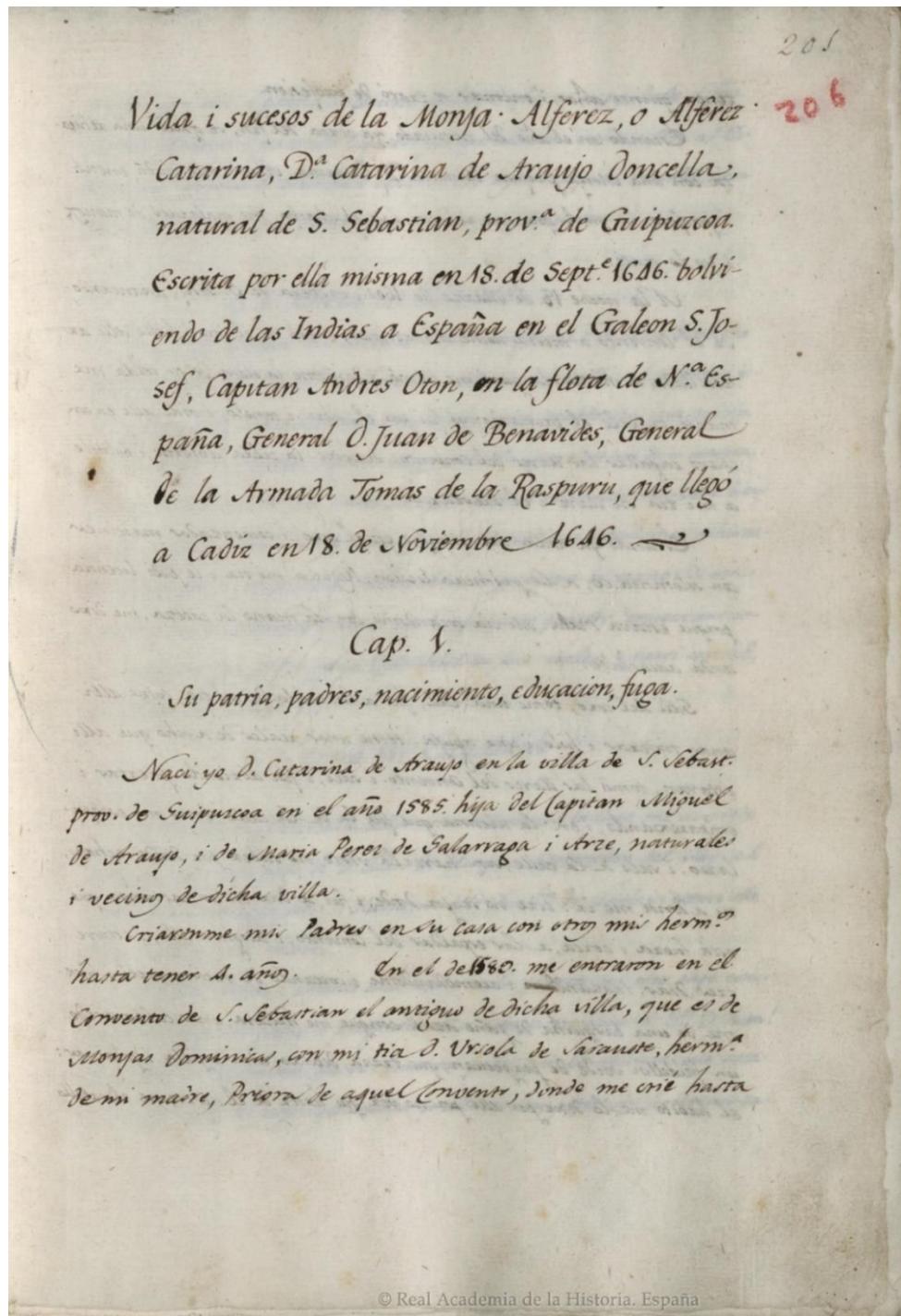


Figure 11: Title and beginning of chapter I of the Madrid Manuscript, page 206 recto

tenía quince años, y entonces se trató de profesión.

Estando en el año del noviciado, ya cerca del fin, se opuso una religiosa con una Monja profesa llamada D. Catalina Alziz, que vivía entonces i profesa, la qual, me era robusta, i ya muchacha, me maltrató de manos i ya se sentí.

La noche 18. de Marzo de 1600., víspera de S. Toret, levantando  
se el convento a media noche a maitines, entré en el coro i hablé allí an-  
tidiéndola a mi tía, la qual me llamó, i dandome la llave de su celda me  
mandó traerle el breviario: yo fui por él, abri, i tomélo, i vido allí en un  
claro colgadas las llaves del convento: dexome la celda abierta, i bolvile  
a mi tía su llave i el breviario.

«Cuando ya todos los Monjas en el ayo, i comenzados mañaner con solemnidad, a la primera lección, llegue a mi tía i le pedí licencia porque estaba mala. Mi tía tocandome con la mano la cadera, me dijo  
anda auestate.

Sali del ayo, tomé una lata, fui a la celda de mi tía, tomé allí  
anav ricosas i pilas, i una aguja: tomé unos reales de a ayo que allí  
estaban, tomé las llaves del convento i salí, i fui abriendo puertas i  
emparejando, i en la ultima que fue la de la calle devo mi eragu-  
larío, i salí a la calle, sin haberla visto, ni saber por donde echar,  
ni a donde me ia: tire no se pa donde, i fui a dar en un cartanero que  
está fiera i cerca, a las espaldas del convento, i acogíme allí, i estuve  
tres días, trazando i acuñando i cortando de rovia, corté i nice-  
me de una bosquínha de pano azul conque me hallava, unos calzoncillos  
un faldellín verde de perpetuan, que traía debaxo, una aguja i polainas:  
el habito me lo devo por allí pa no ver que hacen de él. Extremé el cabello

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Figure 12: Page 206 verso

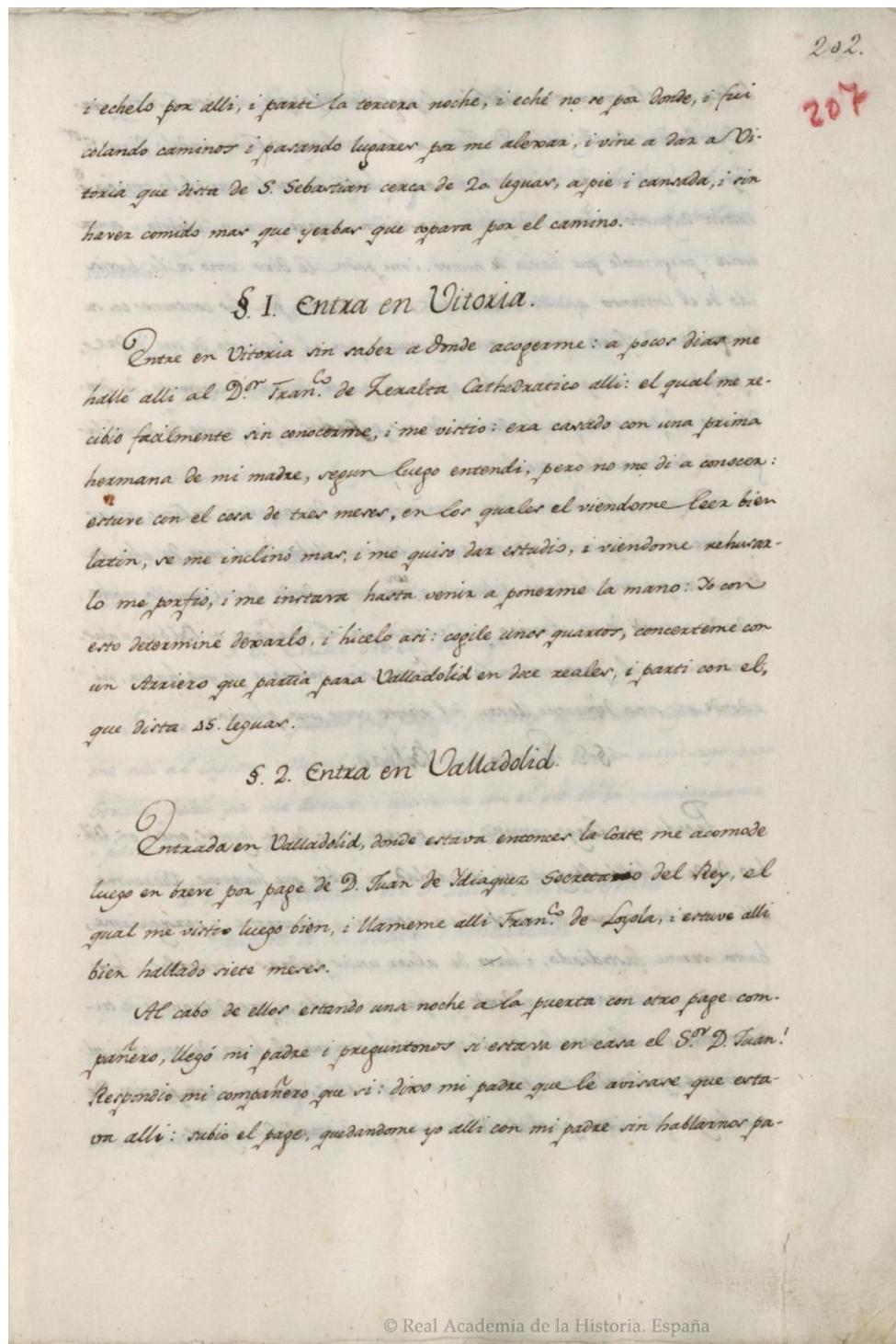


Figure 13: Page 207 recto

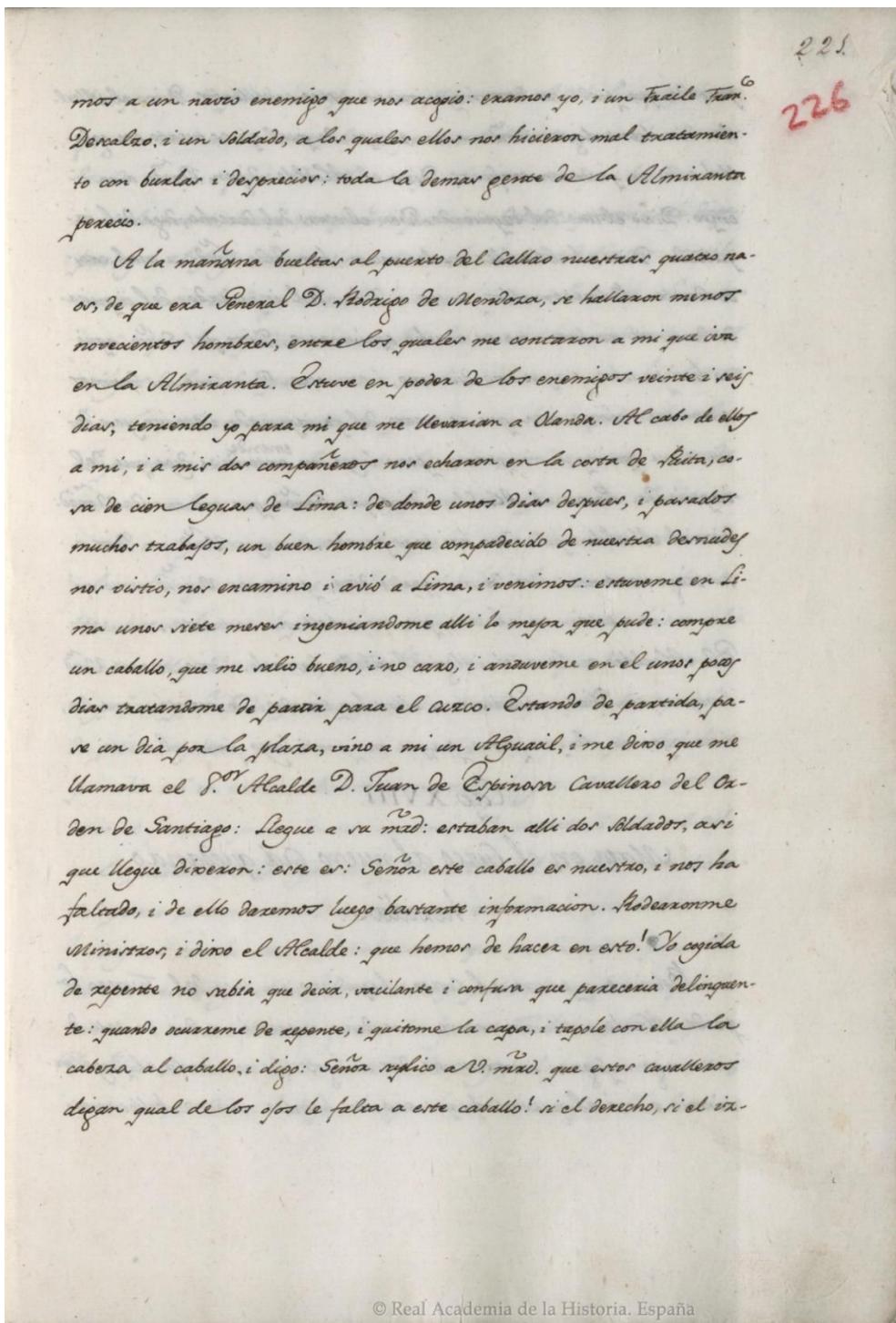


Figure 14: The end of chapter XVII, page 226 recto

quierdo, que puede ser oso, i equivocarse estos caballeros. Dijo el Alcalde: dice bien: dijeron Vm̄d. a un tiempo: de qual oso es tuerto ese caballo? ellos se quedaron confusos. Dijo el Alcalde: dijeron Vm̄d. a un tiempo: Dijo el uno: del izquierdo. Dijo el otro: del derecho, dijeron del izquierdo. Dijo el Alcalde: mala razon han dado Vm̄d., i mal concordante. Sabieron ellos juntos a decir: del izquierdo: del izquierdo decimos ambos, i no es mucho equivocarse. Dice yo: Señor aquí no hai prueba, porque uno dice uno, i otro otro. Dijo uno: no decimos sino una misma cosa, que es tuerto del ojo izquierdo, i yo iba yo a decir, i me equivocue sin querer; pero luego me ~~emendé~~, i dije que del izquierdo. Puso el Alcalde, i dice yo: Señor que me manda Vm̄d.: Dijo el Alcalde: que si no hai mas prueba, se vaya Vm̄d. con Dios a su viage: entonces tire de mi caballo, i dice: puer sea Vm̄d. como ni uno ni otro estén en el carro, que mi caballo no es tuerto, sino sano. El Alcalde se levantó, i llegó al caballo, i montó, i dijo: monte Vm̄d. i vayare con Dios, i sabiendo a ellos los juzgará. Yo monté, i me fui, i no supe en lo que pasó, porque me puse luego para el carro.

### Cap. XVIII.

Mata en el Cuzco al nuevo Cid quedando  
herida.

Sabíome a parar al Cuzco: hice pedir en casa del Tercero Lopez de Alcedo, i allí me estuve unos días: entré en un día en casa de un amigo a jugar: teníamos dos amigos: fue corriendo el fuego: arriñore a mi el nuevo Cid, que era un hombre moreno, belloro, mui

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Figure 15: The beginning of chapter XVIII, page 226 verso

Appendix II – selected pages from Seville M-1 and Seville M-2 held in the Institución Colombina of the Cathedral of Seville: ACS, Fondo Capitular, Sec. IX, sign.: 11.313, Monja alférez, M-1 (h. 1-3) y M-2 (h. 1-3)

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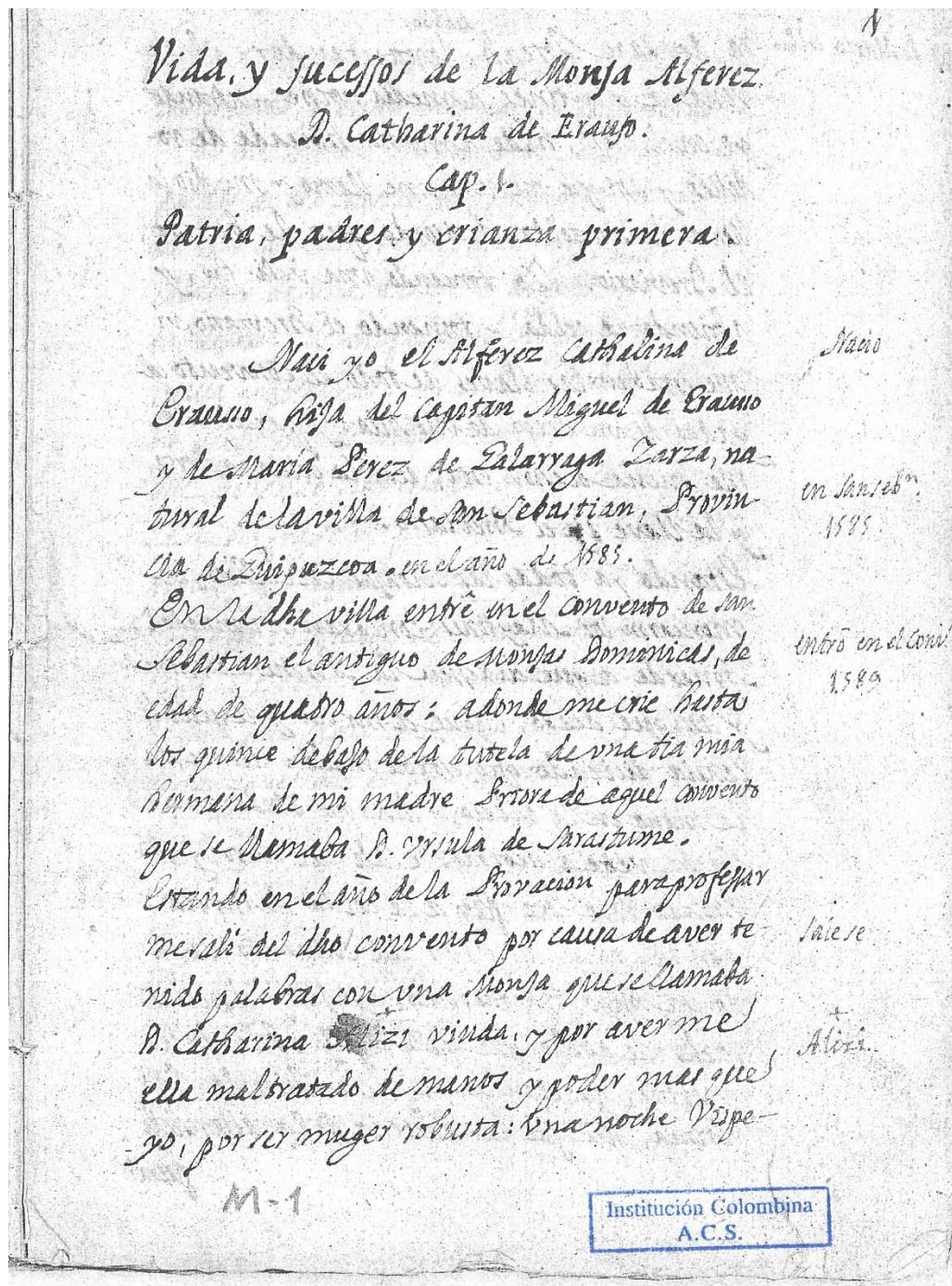


Figure 16: The beginning of chapter I of M-1, page 1 recto

18 de Marzo de 1600. ra de san Andrei, levantandose el con-  
vento a Maytines a media noche, entrando  
yo en el choro, halle a mi tra sienda de ro-  
diles, y asi que me vido, me llamo y me dio la  
Mesa de su zelda, diciendo que le llevare  
el Breviario. Yo tomando una vela p<sup>y</sup>, y  
abiendo la celda, y tomando el Breviario, vi  
que estaban las llaves de todo el convento al-  
gadas de un baul de madera: y pareciendo  
me buena ocasion esta, deje la celda abierta  
y la llevé <sup>en</sup> el Breviario.

Estando ya todas las Monjas en el choro, co-  
menzaron los Maytines con gran solemnidad.  
Aguir de a que dixieren la Primera Lison  
y asi que asusto, Regre a mi tra y le pedí la  
cencia diciendo que estaba mala: di me con  
la mano en la cabeza, y dixo me trula mu-  
chacha, vete a acostar. Salí del choro, y to-  
mando vme lauz p<sup>y</sup> a la celda de mi tra,  
abri la, tome las llaves del convento, sacan-  
do con migo tierras, hilo, aguja y algunos  
reales de aodio que halle: p<sup>y</sup> abriendo las  
puertas, que eran doce, y en abriendo la  
última, que fue la Porteria de la calle, Salí  
fuera

Figure 17: Page 1 verso

Pasa, deando abiertas, y solo suntuas, todas  
 las puertas, y en la vloima mi escapulario.  
 Fui me a vna montaña que está a las es-  
 paldas de los cuestas del convento, donde estuve  
 tres dias con mis noches, huiendo me de vestir  
 calzones de vna sarquima de <sup>pan azul</sup> que lleva-  
 ba delante, y de un faldellin <sup>verde</sup> de perpetuan, size  
 ropilla y polaynas: el Habitó lo deixé allí por  
 no servir me de nada. corté me el cabello  
 que aviendo sido criada en regalo en poder  
 de misia ya se ve qual seria, eché lo todo es-  
 parcido por aquel monte, y parti me la ter-  
 cer noche la vuelta de Vitoria, no aviendo co-  
 mido en todo este tiempo mas que un poco  
 de pan que saque y algunas yerbas, y bebido  
 de las aguas que en este tiempo me llevaron  
 que siendo aun invierno, no fueron pocas.

Llegué a Vitoria a pie y cansada. Sa-  
 go me acosté con el Dr. Fran<sup>c</sup>o de <sup>Alonso</sup> Sá-  
 chedónico de aquella ciudad, el qual me vi  
 situ luego, y como me vió leer tan bien Latín  
 me quiso dar estudio: yo visto que azotaba  
 mucho, no quise estar en su casa, ni estudiar.

*Rega a Vitoria*

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 A.C.S.

Figure 18: Page 2 recto

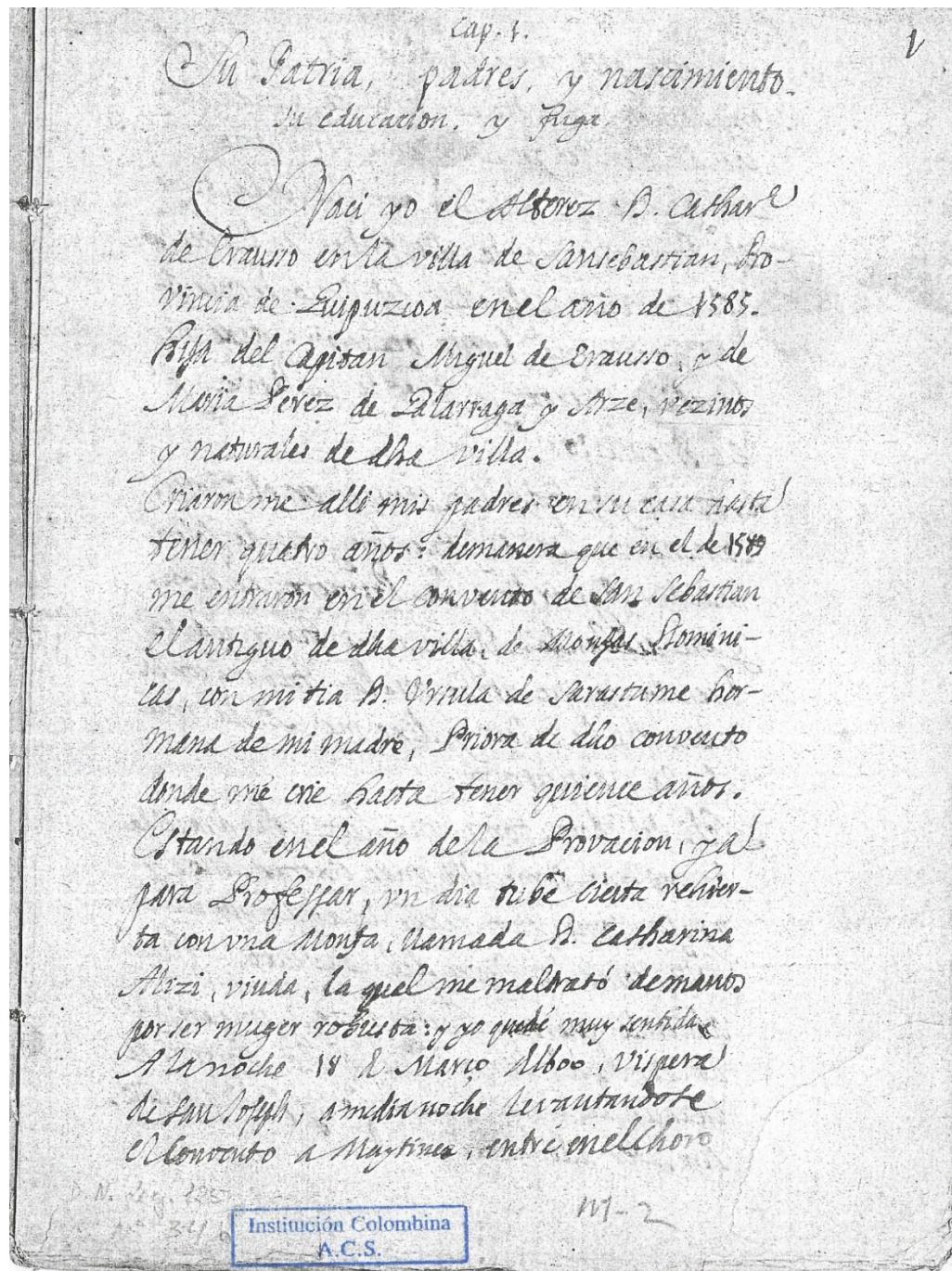


Figure 19: The beginning of chapter I of M-2, page 1 recto

q salí allí arrastrado a mi tía: legal  
me llevó y medio la nave de su celda, di-  
ciendo que le llevase el Breviario.

Lo puse con una vela, abri la celda, tomé  
el Breviario: vide allí todas las llaves  
del convento colgadas del brazo de una si-  
lla: pareció me buena ocasión: dejé me  
la celda abierta y llevé le Breviario y  
el Breviario.

Estando ya todas las monjas en el choro.  
Comenzaron los martines con grande solemnidad.  
Aguardé a la Primera Lección,  
y en alabando. Regre a mi tía y pedí le  
licencia porque estaba mala: tocó me con la  
mano en la cabeza y dixo me: Toda mu-  
cha, suesta te.

Salí del choro, tomé una luz, puse a la celda  
de mi tía: tomé allí unas tijeras, hilo  
y aguja, tomé vnos reales de a ocho que allí  
había, tomé las llaves del convento, y puse  
abriendo puertas hasta doce, y emprende-  
ndo las: en la última, que fue la Portonía de  
la calle, deixé mi exequulario, y salí a la calle.  
sin saber adonde ir

Figure 20: Page 1 verso

Entremi en un certañar questa una y  
a las espaldas del Convento, y allí estuve tres  
días, haciendo me de vestir: corté de una ba-  
squiña de paño azul que llevaba, viños cal-  
cones: de un faldellín verde de perpetuan  
que trahía debaxo una ropilla y galaynes:  
El Babito lo deixé por allí por no sorbirme  
Acnada: corté me el cabello que arra arra-  
do con regalo y espaciolo por allí: y parti  
me la tercer noche la vuelta de Vitoria

Sap. 2.

Está en Vitoria, en Valladolid, Vilbao,

Utrera, Sansebastián, Passage, Santander,  
Sevilla: buelve, y se embarca.

No aviendo comido en estos tres días  
mas que un poco de pan que saqué del conve-  
nto y algunas yerbas y bebido de la mucha  
agua que entoncense llevó, llega Vitoria al  
pie, y arruado.

Almude me allí luego con el Dr. Fr. de  
Cerata catedrático de aquella ciudad. El  
qual me vistió luego, sin conocerme: era  
casado con prima hermana de mi madre.

en Vitoria

Institución Colombina  
A.C.S.

Figure 21: Page 2 recto

### Appendix III – my translation of *Sphinx* (Garréta 1986: 11-14) without the letter ‘i’

These thoughts sadden me even now, all these years later. How many exactly, not sure. Ten or a few more perhaps. And why force myself to endure only through memory? My soul wants a body. But soul already heavy from too much knowledge, body exhausted from thoughtfulness and lack of power, so caught up by a fevered boredom that naught, or almost naught, can occupy me anymore. Suppose that memory serves: back then, to me, the world was a theatre where corpses danced at a macabre ball of urges. Contempt and outcry couldn’t keep me, however, from my craze for the waltz and her decay to a dance of love.

Languorous darkness floats at the mercy of syncopated rhythms, short beats; the road to hell sparkled with deaf lanterns; the bottom of the abyss drew ever closer. On the smooth walls of the tornado that moved me forward, deformed forms of overjoyed cadavers presented themselves to me; tortured flesh, they gave off a hoarse death rattle. But my fall was constant, my fate of enchanted escape couldn’t be abandoned. A betrayal to deny grace there where grace couldn’t be, not to me at least? Heresy to hold that the sober journey to hell be the nonstop road to atonement? “You would not look for me had you not already found me; you would not long for me had you not once held me between your arms.”

Per arms, sweet fervour, carnal scenes, one after the other rouse my memory. A\*\*\* danced: me at dusk, on hold for per appearance on the stage of the Eden, tasteful cabaret on the Left Bank. And who would not have fallen for that svelte frame, for that musculature almost sculpted by one of the greats, for that soft touch that naught from the past can ever emulate? For most of the week my job was DJ at the Apocryphe, popular club, back then.

Can’t remember the moment my eyes saw A\*\*\*. My lethargy, a sort of abandonment of the world, a world that offers me no outbursts of joy, no collapses of despondency, that has always left me every freedom for the most absurd rootlessness and jaunts. The start with A\*\*\* must’ve been at the sad and ghastly study of a ballet of forms, confused on the stage of a cabaret where we’d suffused our setbacks. When the blurred tableau went on, only just heeded by me, my eye must have been caught: after

the shock of a fragment seen, an underground work started to operate: gouge, gouge at my soul. What made the place pleasurable? Couldn't say. A body, only one nameless to me, had offered the place an allurement that lasted to the extent that the cause was unknown, the root unfound.

Not long after that foray to the Eden, one of my mates from back then, Ty, who became a burlesque dancer after she was an acrobat, dragged me on her round of cabarets. She eventually accorded me a favour: to be the shadow of a body whose own was stolen by that beam of yellow on the stage. We'd arranged to meet around ten, one of the huge cafés of the Place at the foot of Montmartre. Autumn. On the way to my rendez-vous, the wrong way among a fast flow of men – what was the rush?

Watchful men, careful step. An amazon, harnessed by garters and leather straps, crossed my path. Her body was bound by black leather fastened by metal buckles. On the edge of the pavement where she started her peacock ballet, she seemed a combatant, or, better, some harnessed beast. Pass her. Turn back. Check beyond doubt the features of her appearance. All along the boulevard, regularly spaced, one sees these shops, half sex shop, half sexy underwear shop, that offer the ensemble of such a get-up. Just further on, stop. Before the half-obsured front of one of these shops. Do women wear those blood-red basques shown between a purple suspender belt and a sheer lace thong?

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