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### Double gender marking in French: a linguistic practice of antisexism

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## Double gender marking in French: a linguistic practice of antisexism

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Linguistic antisexism is different from the institutional feminization of language. It involves practices of double gender marking which work to avoid the gender dichotomy. Working on a French written corpus, this paper will examine the forms of double gender marking, looking at typographic, morphosyntactical and rhetorical levels; then, it will analyse this gender-related practice as a use of language as a political tool. Those who use double gender are not driven by the desire to standardize linguistic practice, but rather to use practices for particular political purposes. The focus of this use is not to be prescriptive about language but rather to critique social realities. They do not do this work through institutions and the usual mechanisms of language planning, but rather deploy individual practices for ideological purposes. Although nonetheless, they still achieve a certain commonality of practice. Linguistic antisexism and double gender marking are phenomena of micro-language planning achieved by individuals.

**Keywords:** antisexism; language and gender; double gender marking

### Introduction: double gender marking as a linguistic intervention

The state of the art about feminization in language planning is currently quite developed in many languages. Indeed, there is an important descriptive literature about feminized language use, both synchronic (e.g. Cameron, 1998 for English; Breysse, 2002 and Sanchez, 2004, for French) and diachronic (e.g. Douay-Soublin, 1985 for French; Curzan, 2003 for English). There is also a very strong prescriptive aspect to feminization in language planning, both officially (for French, see Commission Générale de Terminologie et de Néologie, 1998) and unofficially (e.g. for UK English, Newbery, 1989; for French from France, Michard, 2004). The feminization of language, represented in such publications, involves the introduction of the feminine gender into texts alongside the masculine gender as a way of representing the presence of both women and men. Feminization, therefore, seeks to make women visible in texts in which they have previously been hidden by the normative use of the masculine to represent a mixed gender reality. In feminization, gender is maintained as a social and linguistics categorization and the emphasis is placed on the binary nature of the gender distinction.

In this paper, I will move out of this perspective on the feminization of language to observe a somewhat different phenomenon, antisexism, which is at the margin of

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feminization. By antisexism, I mean a series of stances against discrimination on the basis of sex (similar to antiracism, antispeciesism, etc.) and as a part of the struggle against power and domination. The focus of antisexism is to challenge the relevance of the gender dichotomy for the social world as a part struggle against practices of male domination and the exercise of power. The purpose of antisexist language is not to include both genders but to cancel out the relevance of gender. In many ways, the practices of antisexist language use resemble those of feminization, but the aims and motivations differ and these distinguish antisexist language from feminized language.

The word ‘antisexism’ does not usually appear as a technical term in the field of gender studies and is not particularly a continuation of a specific type of feminism, queer theory or post-feminism. However, antisexist thought has been affected by some of these theories, occasionally even by several of them at once. In the literature, antisexism does not appear as a theory, but as a label to notify a careful position about gender issues. There are often in feminist issues, and especially in antisexism, overlaps between scholarly and non-scholarly literature and for this reason it is important to emphasize the non-scholarly origin of antisexist literature – it is a set of language practices used by writers rather than a theoretical construct. Antisexism is frequently used and easily understood by people who have a political understanding of gender relations. It is a way to cast light on gender issues without being a gender ‘specialist’. Many anarchist and antiauthoritarian texts in French, more so than Marxists texts, use the word *antisexisme* as a synonym for *antipatriarcal* ‘antipatriarchal’ emphasizing the relationship between sexism and domination and the need to challenge both.

To distinguish between the practice of antisexism in language and what is usually called feminization, I will speak here of *double gender* to indicate that what is being done in these texts is not the addition of the feminine gender to an otherwise masculine text, but the simultaneous introduction of the two genders in order to move beyond gender oppositions as a discursive category. Other differences between antisexism and standard feminization are both quantitative – double gender marking involves over-marking of gender rather than marking actual gendered realities – and qualitative – the use of new typographies and words which work to problematize gender as a social category. Although the use of double gender marking is extensive, we will see that it does not form a regularized system. Some irregularities appear between the uses of different writers and sometimes within the use of the same writer that allow us to observe the mechanics of the operations, motivations and stakes of such linguistic interventions, which, not being prescriptive, are not a standard form of language planning, but are nonetheless, the conscious work to alter language.

The data used for this work consists of series of political pamphlets written from anarchist or Marxist perspectives that cover a broad range of topics but take a similar stance on gender. In these documents, the use of antisexist language is like a backdrop to take a more radical stance than is done in some types of feminism. Deliberately choosing a non-prescriptive approach, I have observed some ‘transgressive’ and emerging forms of language use, linked to an intentional intervention on gender in language, but not in the realm of feminization as it is usually understood. I have surveyed how aspects of the feminization of language have been handled in these political pamphlets. This paper will argue that it is possible to speak about antisexist language use as a form of micro-language planning (Liddicoat & Baldauf, 2008), in which both aims and forms are different from those of standard feminization.

This paper will begin by discussing the nature of antisexism in language. It will then examine gender marking in French and the practices of double gender marking adopted

in radical political writing. It will then examine double gender marking as a linguistic practice of antisexism, raising and confronting issues which are both technical (how to do it) and ideological (why to do it). The technical dimension of how antisexist language is enacted will be discussed in the sections of typography, morphosyntax and lexicon; while the section dealing with rhetoric introduces elements of the ideological aspect – why antisexist language is used. This will allow us to discuss the political aspects of this kind of linguistic intervention and its relations to language planning.

### The corpus

The corpus for this study comprises six photocopied booklets, the shortest of which is four pages and the longest of which is 40 pages; together they contain 15 separate texts (Table 1). There are hundreds of such booklets in French, although it is impossible to give an exact number because they are produced outside mainstream publishing and there is no record of their production. The subjects addressed are various, but they are generally all antiauthoritarian and oppose discrimination.

Table 1. Texts constituting the corpus.

Text	Title	Writer	Extent	Comments
Booklet 1	<i>Le Guide de l'ALF, action directe et libération animale</i> [The ALF Primer, A Guide to direct action and the animal liberation front]	Anonymous	36 pp.	Translated from English
Booklet 2	<i>Le Manifeste contre la culture</i> [Manifesto against culture]	Fondation babybrul	24 pp.	
Booklet 3	<i>Diaporama: l'apartheid des sexes</i> [Sex apartheid: a slideshow]	Anonymous	4 pp.	
Booklet 4	<i>Appel pour l'action directe</i> [Call for direct action]	Anonymous	8 pp.	
Booklet 5	<i>Des black blocs pas vraiment sans Gênes</i> [Black blocs without embarrassment]	Collective	32 pp.	
Text 5.1	<i>Des black blocs pas vraiment sans Gênes</i> [Black blocs not really unembarrassed]	Zanzara athée	3 pp.	
Text 5.2	<i>Blindés, frontières fermées, armée dans les rues ... Voilà la Démocratie !</i> [Armoured vehicles, closed borders, army in the street ... This is Democracy!]	Eleonora	2 pp.	Translated from Italian
Text 5.3	<i>Déclaration d'activistes du black bloc</i> [Declaration by activists of the black bloc]	Participants in the black bloc	1 p.	Translated from English
Text 5.4	<i>Communiqué d'un groupe affinitaire actif au sein d'un black bloc lors de la journée d'actions et de la manifestations des 20 et 21 juillet 2001 à Gênes</i> [Release of an affinity group, active in a black bloc during the actions day and demo of the 20th and 21th July 2001 in Genoa]	Anonymous	5 pp.	

Continued

Table 1. (Continued).

Text	Title	Writer	Extent	Comments
Text 5.5	<i>Lettre de l'intérieur du black bloc</i> [Letter from the black bloc]	Mary Black	8 pp.	Translated from English
Text 5.6	<i>Gênes: Lutte de classe ou marché du militantisme ?</i> [Genoa: Class war or militancy supermarket?]	P.R.O.L.	5 pp.	
Text 5.7	<i>Glossaire et bibliographie</i> [Glossary and bibliography]	Zanzara athée	5 pp.	
Booklet 6	<i>Black bloc, au singulier ou au pluriel... mais de quoi s'agit-il donc ? + communiqués</i> [Black bloc, singular or plural, but what is it about? + Communiqués]	Darkveggy	32 pp.	
Text 6.1	<i>Black bloc, au singulier ou au pluriel... mais de quoi s'agit-il donc?</i> [Black block, singular or plural, but what is it?]	Darkveggy	15 pp.	
Text 6.2	<i>Communiqué du black bloc du 30 novembre à propos de Seattle</i> [Communiqué of the black bloc of the 30th November about Seattle]	Section of the anarchist black bloc	6 pp.	Translated from English
Text 6.3	<i>Appel à manifester du Revolutionary Anti-Capitalist Bloc</i> [Call to demonstrate of the Revolutionary Anti-Capitalist Block]	Revolutionary Anti-Capitalist Block	4 pp.	Translated from English
Text 6.4	<i>Philadelphie, mercredi 09 août 2000, Communiqué de presse de l'Anarchist Black Bloc</i> [Philadelphia, Wednesday the 09th August 2000, press release of the Anarchist Black Block]	Black Block of Philadelphia	2 pp.	Translated from English

We can note that, although they are not produced by a homogeneous movement, these texts emerge from a common underground culture tied to communist and/or anarchist thought.<sup>1</sup> They share some political bases, such as antisexim, antiracism, questioning power relations, etc. From this common perspective, each text develops its own subject. The subjects of the selected texts are antispeciesism<sup>2</sup> and animal liberation, normalized culture, gender and sex categorization, direct action, black block practices<sup>3</sup> and the G8 meeting in Genoa in July 2001. The corpus contains different genres: pamphlets, letters (*Lettre de l'intérieur du black bloc*), communiqués (*Communiqués des Black blocs de Seattle*), manifestos (*Manifeste contre la culture*), guides, narratives, testimonies, appeals or articles. Most have been written directly in French, but a few are translations from English or Italian.

With the corpus analysed here, I first began by noting the double-marked forms – forms in which the same item is presented in both masculine and feminine forms. Next, I noted the non-double-marked forms – that is to say items marked by a single gender, either masculine or feminine – in order to determine the function of any departures from the antisexist approach adopted in the text. Finally, epicenes (nouns in which gender is not linguistically marked) and hypernyms (a noun denoting a superordinate category such as ‘people’: in French *personne*, *individu*) examined in third time,<sup>4</sup> because in these cases gender marking would normally be done by using a masculine or feminine article, pronoun or adjective. For these words, the use

of double gender marking would play a special role because gender here is seen as arbitrary and not reflecting the socialized gender of referents. Such uses would be specific to antisexist language and are not found in standard feminization.

## French gender marking and double gender marking

### *Gender marking in French*

Gender in French is a binary grammatical marking which is used to classify nominals and which can mark oppositions in meaning, for example:

le voile (masc)/ <i>the veil</i>	la voile (fem) <i>the sail</i>
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Most nouns with animate or inanimate referents have an explicit gender marker, either masculine or feminine. For example:

le chanteur / the singer (masc)	la chanteuse the singer (fem)
le comédien / the actor (masc)	la comédienne the actor (fem)

However, some nouns with animate referents may have no overt gender marking. These nouns without gender marking are called epicenes. These epicenes notably include words ending in *-iste* or *-ogue*, but there are many others. The gender of epicenes is not shown by the noun itself, but by other elements in the noun phrase:

le géologue / the geologist (masc)	la géologue the geologist (fem)
le linguiste / the linguist (masc)	la linguiste the linguist (fem)

Gender marking is also found with parts of speech which involve nominal agreement: adjectives, pronouns, articles, past participles, as is shown in the examples below:

- (1) NP / VP  
*La vieille machine* / *marche encore*  
 [fem art] [fem adj] [fem noun] / [verb] [adverb]  
 'The old machine still works'.
- (2) NP / VP  
*Le vieux quartier* / *se situe au sud*  
 [masc art] [masc adj] [masc noun] / [verb] [prep] [masc noun]  
 'The old district is located to the south'.

In these examples, each component of the noun phrase (NP) has a gender marker (article and adjective) which agrees in gender with the syntagmatic head, the noun, which is feminine in (1), masculine in (2).

There are three main linguistic levels of gender marking in French (Michard, 2002): lexical, morphological and syntactic. In lexical gender marking, the whole word has a semantic feature of gender:

- (3) *fil* / *garçon* 'girl / boy'  
 (4) *il* / *elle* 'he / she'

Morphological gender oppositions are shown in the ending of the word: there is a required choice between two different endings available (principally for nouns and adjectives):

- (5) Nouns: *historienne* / *historien* ‘historian[fem] / historian[masc]’  
 (6) Adjectives: *grand* / *grande* ‘big[masc] / big [fem]’

Syntactic gender marking is found with epicenes and involves gender marking by some element in a syntactic group other than the noun:

- (7) *la linguiste* / *le linguiste* ‘the[fem] linguist / the[masc] linguistic’

As a grammatical category, gender is arbitrary. It refers to the internal grammatical system of the language in which nouns are obligatorily classified as either masculine or feminine. However, gender can also be motivated where grammatical gender relates to sex. Gender is arbitrary when it refers to inanimate nouns, and motivated when it refers to animate nouns, especially to humans. In this case, there is an extra-linguistic referent, which is invoked by the grammar: the social categorization of sex, which corresponds to the semantic feature male/female. There is therefore both a social gender and a grammatical gender involved in such cases. However, the border between the arbitrary and the motivated use of gender is often blurred. There could be an overlap, for example, between the functions and the people: the grammatical gender of a word does not always correspond to the social gender of the performer of this function:

- (8) *Cette sentinelle est un homme*  
 [fem art.] [fem noun] [verb] [masc art.] [masc noun]  
 ‘This sentry is a man.’
- (9) *Ce mannequin est une femme*  
 [masc art.] [masc noun] [verb] [fem art.] [fem noun]  
 ‘This model is a woman.’

In examples (8) and (9), a noun with a grammatical gender *A* refers to a person with a social gender *B* (a feminine word for a masculine person in (8), a masculine word for a feminine person in (9)). This is why one can write a sentence of type: [*human referent*] *noun* + *gender A* is [*human referent noun*] + *gender B*.

### Double gender marking

In French, as shown above, gender is both arbitrary and motivated. In order to reflect motivated gender marking, it is possible to adopt ways of marking both genders at once in the same word. That is, a word can have double gender marking. Choosing to act on gender by marking both genders can involve different stances. Acting on a generic level – by systematic double gender marking of words referring to human beings without distinguishing between what is clearly linked to the social gender of particular people and what is not – seems to come from a desire to destabilize the grammar and its oppositions. Acting on a particular level – using both the feminine or masculine forms when the reality being referred to includes both men and women, and only doing so in this case – shows a desire to reflect the reality more precisely. The latter is, in our opinion, the goal of standard feminization approaches, while the former is what we call antisexist. In fact, due to the blurred nature of the border between grammatical and social gender and between the generic and particular level, the choice of speakers/writers is never so obvious. This is why the overlaps or gaps between grammatical (arbitrary) and social (motivated) gender offer an ideal point for observing the double gender marking phenomenon, precisely because at this point, irregularities appear within which we can observe different emerging strategies, different attempts to exploit language.

Actually, there are three possible uses of double gender marking, which are sometimes found simultaneously:

- (1) Double gender marking can be used in order to represent both genders simultaneously, that is, it marks the presence of both in the world.
- (2) Double gender marking can be used in order to eliminate gender as a relevant feature, where the use of both genders serves to cancel each other out.
- (3) Double gender marking can be opposed to single gender marking. The possibility of separating gender as arbitrary and gender as motivated means that double gender marking can be used in order to give further ideological meaning to the gender feature, that is to say to split masculine and feminine according to other dichotomies, as, for instance, giving the masculine for depreciated forms (enemies) and feminine for revaluated forms.

The aim of double gender marking is to use both genders at the same time in order to make gender inoperative by cancelling the relevance of gender. The systematic appearance of both genders, that is, double marking gender each time it is possible, pursues the goal of removing the distinctive relevance of the gender opposition. That is, double marking of gender participates in the arbitrary nature of gender marking rather than in its motivated nature and means that any gender marking becomes arbitrary, and this arbitrariness is signalled through language choices.

### **Mechanisms for double gender marking**

The texts in the corpus vary in the quantity of double marking and in the way they have been personalized. Two of them are not marked at all: that is, they use only single gender, others show a strong use of double gender marking with almost every word referring to humans or animates being double-marked. Between these two poles, there is a continuum. As such, it is not possible to speak of standardized conventions of double gender marking in the corpus, either in terms of the forms used or in the ideological motivation for using such conventions (what is double-marked and why). This lack of standardization reveals different understandings of the linguistic tool; however, the recurrence of terms reveals certain strategies which are more or less stable. Strategies for double gender marking are found at four different linguistic levels: typographic, morphosyntactic, lexical and rhetorical. We will discuss what language mechanisms are involved at each of these levels, before discussing the implications in terms of language planning of such a linguistic intervention.

#### ***Typographic level***

Different typographical conventions are used in the texts to add a gender (to show simultaneously the short form and the long form) or alternate genders. The signs used are the dash, the slash, the opposition between uppercase and lowercase, underlining and forms with no specific typographical symbol, such as amalgamations.

#### ***Dash***

The dash is usually used with morphological markers of gender. It can be used to add either a feminine or a feminine and plural marker to the masculine form as in:

*regroupé-e* ‘RAD-grouped[= masc]-[+fem]’<sup>5</sup>  
*divers-es* ‘RAD-various[= masc]-[+fem + pl.]’

The dash can also be used to frame a feminine marker between a masculine form or radical and a plural marker, as in:

*masqué-e-s* ‘RAD-masked[=masc]-[+fem]-[+pl.]’

The dashes separate out the feminine gender marker here to highlight the feminine element.

The forms used with a dash can be used with either a feminine or a masculine radical where the radical has different forms for each gender:

*familièr-e-s* ‘RAD-familiar[= fem]-[+fem]-[+plur.]’

In this example, the grave accent, belonging only to the feminine form, is used in form of the radical and the femine marker is framed between the radical and the plural marker. In this case, the radical appears in the feminine form (cf. masculine *familier*), but the dash breaks the word where the normal end of the masculine would be found. That is, the feminine radical replaces the masculine form.

In some cases, the dash is used to show both gender markers when these differ, as in:

*radicaux-ales* ‘RAD-radical[+masc pl.]-[+fem pl.]’

The dash can also be found with instances of semantically marked gender to join words of similar meaning, but with different lexical gender, as in:

*ils-elles* ‘they[=masc]-they[=fem]’

### Slash

The slash is used in alternating endings, in the same way as, and often instead of a dash:

*traducteurs/trices* ‘RAD-translators[+masc pl.] / [+fem pl.]’  
*vieux/vieilles* ‘old[=masc pl.] / old[=fem pl.]’

The use of the slash differs from the dash in that it neither frames the feminine marker nor is it used to create long forms which involve orthographic variations in the radical.

### Upper case letters

Upper case letters are used to add a feminine marker to a word written in lower case:

*manifestantE* ‘RAD-demonstrator[=masc (LC)] [+fem (UC)]’<sup>6</sup>

Sometimes, the plural marker is also written in uppercase:

*mauvaisES* ‘RAD-bad[=masc (LC)] [+fem (UC)] [+plur. (UC)]’

Upper case letters are also found with alternation of the radical, in which case, the upper case allows the word to be blended with both forms present, as in:

*captif**VEs* ‘RAD-captive [+masc (LC)] [+fem (UC)] [+plur. (LC)]’

Here the *f* of the masculine form *captif* and the *ve* of the feminine form *captive* are included in the same word. In some cases, the uppercase letters are used in words with different radical forms for each gender with the feminine form only, as in:

*nombreu**SES* ‘RAD-numerous (LC) [+fem (UC)] [+plur. (UC)]’

In this case, the *x* of the masculine *nombreux* is replaced by an uppercase *s* of the feminine, together with the feminine ending.

For epicenes, in which the word does not have a gender mark, the uppercase letters can be used to highlight a part of the word which resembles a gender marker:

*jeun**Es* ‘RAD-young (LC) [end of radical/fem (UC)][plur. (LC)]’

In this case, the use of the uppercase *e* marks this letter as if it were a feminine marker, although the forms of both masculine and feminine are identical (*jeune*).

### Underlining

Underlining is rare in the corpus and irregular in its use: there are only two occurrences in the entire corpus:

*sauvages* ‘RAD-wild[end of radical/fem] [plur. mark]’

In this case, the underlining of the *e* works in much the same way as the capital *e* in *jeunes* above, as the form here is the same for both masculine and feminine.

### Amalgamations

Finally, writers use amalgamations of gendered words to create neologisms, unattested in standard French or standard feminized French:

*éditeureuses* ‘RAD-publisher [+masc] [+fem] [+pl.]’  
*ille* ‘she/he[=mix of masc and fem]’

In the form *éditeureuses*, the masculine form *éditeur* is amalgamated with the feminine form *éditeuse* (although the standard feminine form is *éditrice*) to create a single word with gender marks from both. Similarly, the form *ille* amalgamates *il* and *elle* in a single word instead of using the collocation *il et elle* ‘he and she’.

On the whole, these typographic usages are relatively regular in the corpus. An average of 73.3% of identical forms can be observed per text. Writers usually choose a typographic form and use it consistently. They vary only when the usual form does not allow for double gender marking some items, for example, often for pronouns, which have two different forms, and not only different endings. Standard feminized French usually uses a different range of conventions – the dash, the slash, brackets and coordinating conjunctions.

Brackets do not appear in the corpus of texts for this study and it appears that the basis for this is that the usage would put the feminine marker in brackets and therefore marginalize women typographically and symbolically. Conversely, there are several forms found in the texts which never appear in standard feminized language – underlining, uppercase and amalgamation of words to create neologisms. These forms are more surprising for the reader and correspond to a desire to make more visible the linguistic action being taken on gender and to force the conventional use into an antisexist direction. The typographical forms of antisexist language may make texts more difficult to read but the difficulty draws attention to the feature of language being manipulated.

### *Morphosyntactic level*

Writers use a range of morphosyntactic conventions for double gender marking: the use of doublets, the alternation of masculine and feminine forms (and of which appears first), the choice of which radical will be the basic form, the treatment of the epicenes and hypemymns, morphological innovations, and the use of items which are not marked for gender.

#### *The use of doublets*

Doublets are juxtapositions of full forms of gendered words: the word is given in its whole masculine form, then in its whole feminine form or in the opposite order. The doublets do not usually disrupt reading fluency, but makes the text heavy with frequent repetitions. However, the use of doublets allows semantic equivalences to be expressed without needing formal lexical equivalence between gendered forms. For example:

*tout-te-s les autres frères et sœurs*  
 ‘all the other brothers and sisters’.

In this example, a doublet *frères et sœurs* (‘brothers and sisters’) is used with a typographical form of ‘all’ (*tout-te-s*) to capture both genders and an invariable article and modifier *les autres*. *Frères* and *soeurs* have the same signified, except for the gender marking but are lexically very different. It is therefore not possible in this case to form a single word which marks both genders, and so it is necessary to use the two forms.

It also happens that an item which is able to be double-marked in one word using typographical convention (where the gender mark only concerns the ending and not all the word) is encoded as a doublet:

*les travailleurs, les travailleuses* ‘the workers [masc], the workers [fem]’).

The practice of using doublets is found in all texts except two. Morphosyntactically, it is a more conventional use, which is also founded in standard feminization in French. This is therefore a less surprising form for a French reader.

#### *Alternating forms*

The syntagmatic axis of language is linear and in producing doublets or other double-marked forms, it is inevitably the case that one gender marker will appear before the other. This raises a question about whether the masculine or the feminine form will be used first. Strategies to address the linearity of language can be seen in words or word

groups which present two gendered forms. For instance, *captifVEs* ('RAD-captive [+masc (LC)] [+fem (UC)] [+pl. (LC)]') presents the masculine and then the feminine (i.e. M/F), whereas in *radicales-aux* ('RAD-radical[+ fem pl.]-[+masc pl.]'), it is the feminine then the masculine (F/M). Ten of the 15 texts use these kinds of alternations between masculine and feminine. In these texts, I examined which gender appears first to determine if there is stability in the order of appearance, or if it is randomized. The order of appearance in two of the texts is totally random (close to 50% for each form M/F and F/M). The eight other texts are relatively stable in terms of order, with 80–100% of the same order within one text. In these eight texts, four texts present a majority of masculine forms first, whereas the other four present a majority of feminine first. There is then a high level of variability in the practices of the writers in using such forms.

### *Choice of radical forms*

I have examined the form of the radical of double gendered words used in the texts. Most classical grammars consider the masculine as the basic form and consider the feminine to be derived from it by addition of morphemes, other grammarians, however, take the feminine as the basic form because it is the longer form, from which the masculine form can be constructed by subtraction (e.g. Blanche-Benveniste, 1997, Breyse, 2002; De Felice, 1950). In my corpus, I found two kinds of double gender marking constructions. Words like *émeutièr-e-s* ('RAD-rioter[=fem]-[+fem]-[+pl.]') take the feminine as the basic form: the radical includes a grave accent on the second *-e*, which is found in the feminine form *émeutière*, but not in the masculine, *émeutier*, and this leads us to consider the feminine as the basic form in this use. Alternatively, *émeutier-e-s* ('RAD-rioter[=masc]-[+fem]-[+pl.]') uses the masculine form as the basic one to create the double gender marking construction: here it is the feminine which is added. It is not always easy to determine if there is a standard practice in selecting the form of the radical. Some texts do not have enough forms to test this because the radical is often identical in masculine and feminine forms and forms with different radicals may not occur. Five of the texts allow us to see a recurrent basic form. Four of them show the masculine as the basic form while the remaining text alternates 50% of the time between the two basic genders. In these texts, it appears that the basic form is not an identifying feature of the language use patterns of antisexist writers as none of the writers intentionally puts the feminine as a basic form systematically. The form of the radical is therefore not something that many writers take into consideration, although it seems that some writers may consider this to be a point of intervention in language.

### *Epicenes and hypernyms*

The use of epicenes and hypernyms is a characteristic feature of the texts in this corpus. The presence of a lot of epicenes and hypernyms in this corpus reveals a strategy chosen by the writers. These writers are presenting a generic discourse about reality and not a particular narrative about individuals. This means that they treat categories of people rather than specific people and so epicenes and hypernyms are an important feature in their writing in that they encode the generic and generalized not the particular and individualized. Using epicenes or hypernyms in which gender is not a feature of the referents and in only the conventional grammatical gender is marked can be associated with a strategy of avoiding gender. Where there are epicenes and/or hypernyms without double gender marking combined with a lot of passive sentences which allow the agent to be omitted, the strategy is to adopt words which express the generic level and to minimize the use of

words referring to particular entities. This involves an orientation to a clear the border between grammatical gender and social gender. It uses as much as possible grammatical gender without gendered referents to avoid engaging with social gender. In other cases, writers adopt a strategy of systematizing double gender marking. In this strategy, epicenes and hypernoms are found with double gender marking even though such gender marking is not a usual part of the morphosyntax of the word:

*individuE* ‘InvariableRAD-individual[=masc (LC)] [+fem (UC)]’

In this case, the form *individuE* with uppercase *e* is used instead of the standard form *individu*, which is morphologically invariable and does not mark any semantic feature of gender. The addition of the *e* is therefore an explicit double marking of gender by introducing a new element into the structure of the word. Double marking, this term shows a desire to use double gender marking systematically in order to strengthen the grammatical component of double gender marking and empty its extra-linguistic social category. Indeed, if all nouns referring to humans are double-marked, without considering their referent (particular or generic), or the type of gender encoded (grammatical or social), the result is a form of grammaticalization of double gender marking, and consequently of gender opposition. By becoming more grammatical, it becomes less social. In 10 of the 15 texts, hypernoms are not double-marked and therefore their grammatical gender is understood as arbitrary and not linked to social gender. In another three texts, fewer than 10% of the epicenes and hypernoms are double gender-marked. One text contains close to 50% double gender marking, which shows a tendency to use double gender marking more systematically, whether referring to the particular as to the generic level for all words with human referents. In only one text is this done systematically with 100% of the epicenes and hypernoms being double gender-marked.

### *Morphological innovations*

We can point to a few morphological innovations which show the linguistic dynamic of some authors and their distance from the norms of the standard language. A morphological innovation is when a writer creates a new word which is not clearly either a feminine or masculine standard form, or an amalgamation of both. For example, *voleurE* ‘RAD-robber[=masc (LC)] [+fem (UC)]’ is a new creation which is neither the feminine standard form *voleuse* nor the masculine standard *voleur*. The word *voleurE* is a neologism created using a common morphological process – adding an *e*, which is a common marker of feminine gender in French. This is the same for *individu-e* ‘individual’, discussed above, which is usually invariable in gender, but given in a newly created double gender marking form. In some cases, these neologisms are rejections of words proposed for feminizing French. For example, *auteurSEs* ‘author’ assumes a feminine form *auteuse*, although institutional feminization puts forward *auteure*, related to the standard masculine form *auteur*. Thus, the antisexist form uses a feminine ending other than the one morphologically expected in standard French (no feminine) or that founding standard French feminization (*auteure*). It appears that this use is linked to the writer’s feeling of the legitimacy in acting on language for political ends: the political point being made is sufficient to justify the departure from accepted conventions and the act of creating new forms emphasizes the writer’s intervention in the language for particular political purposes, rather than the acceptance of others’ forms. Such neologisms appear in seven texts, that is, in close to half of the corpus, with a percentage rate of 5–10% of items in the texts. These results are quite low and this may be

because of the need for readability with which large amounts of morphological innovation could conflict. However, even this amount of use gives evidence of a greater transformation of language than found in standard feminization.

### *Non-marked items*

Some terms exist in both masculine and feminine forms in French, but are not double-marked in the corpus. These words have a signified, which is socially gender-marked, and a signifier, which is able to show both feminine and masculine forms, but these possibilities are not exploited in the texts. Globally, the percentage of non-marked items is around 15% of the total of items able to be marked, except for one text with 38% of non-marked items. These occurrences too seem to be an indication of a process regularity of the use of double gender marking. A part of the explanation for this pattern of regularity lies in rhetorical phenomena and ideological emphasis, which exceed the morphological framework. (This will be discussed below.) It is possible that some cases of a lack of double gender marking may be considered to be errors on the writer's part – forgetting to use forms which are not part of the usual language repertoire). There are also some references to an explicitly sexed reality (perceived as such) although the aim is to characterize and denounce this sexed reality. That is, sometimes writers wish to emphasize a particular actor's social gender for rhetorical purposes. This concerns terms like *hommes/femmes* 'men/women', *garçons/filles* 'boys/girls', *une partenaire lesbienne/un mari stérile* 'a lesbian partner/a sterile husband', that is words in which the gender variation is lexical rather than being morphosyntactically marked. Most of the time, these words are presented in the texts as pairs of opposites and it is because they function as opposites of each other that they are not double-marked. Therefore, the marking of double gender is not applied in critical opposition to gendered realities. Because double gender marking aims to make the gender opposition disappear, a writer could not denounce this opposition without abandoning the linguistic practices of double gender marking. Therefore, use of particular genders appears to be a precision of an antisexist stance. When gender is the subject, one needs categories to criticize it, and these categories require single gender marking.

### *Lexical level*

Most part of double gender marking found in the texts is typographic or morphosyntactic. However, there were also a number of cases of neologisms, which are a lexical level response. I found words such as *ceulles* or *celleux* (contractive forms for *celles et ceux* 'those[=fem] and those[=masc]'), *ille* (contractive form for *il et elle* 'he and she'), etc., where a new word is created by mixing two lexical forms. Nonetheless, the use of neologisms remains unusual in the texts – it occurs in only two texts – probably for similar reasons to those that limit morphological innovations, that is to say the requirements of legibility.

### *Rhetorical level*

Double gender marking is not used in the texts in a systematic way if considered at the level of grammar; morphology and syntax do not explain everything. It is also important to consider the rhetorical function of gender marking in the text to understand fully what the writers are doing in manipulating language. Double gender marking is a demonstrative language planning action; it attempts to convince readers of the necessity and the possibility of acting on gender as a political action. The persuasive dimension of this linguistic activity

does not lie in what is said, but in how it is said. That is, it lies in the action on linguistic forms. In this way, as a component of their political action (a struggle against gender domination), the writers act on the forms of language to modify political values. This is a values issue (what is good or bad to say) and not a truth issue (what is right or wrong). This work in changing language for political purposes results in a language policy and further, in acts of local language planning.

### *Ideological emphasis*

Sometimes, the use of double gender marking exceeds its infra-linguistic role and is distributed according to connotation. There are seven texts which use this opposition between double marking and simple marking for ideological purposes. This rhetorical use is more likely to occur in the more confrontational texts. This distribution of gender marking allows the reader to identify a positive or negative value associated with particular people. Those entities which are double gender marking are positively connoted and, conversely those entities which are not so marked will not be. Generic masculine entities, denounced as dominating and pervasive in the booklets, are stigmatized compared with double gender-marked entities. This process of allocating value to referents through patterns of gender marking functions as a form of ideological emphasis, because it stresses a further ideological value of good and evil through forms of gender-marked language. An enemy is masculinized to be identified as the enemy of a speaker or a group of speakers who are antisexist. Thus, the enemy is stigmatized by being marked as masculine, while double gender marking is associated with positive values.

To illustrate this ideological distribution, compare these two extracts from the same text:

*Nous sommes ses ennemiEs* ('We are their enemies [double-marked]')

*Nous devons connaître mieux l'environnement géographique que les policiers.* ('We have to master the geographical environment better than the policemen [masc]').

The first sentence speaks about the writers (*nous* 'we') who are on the side of good in the values field being constructed in the text. Therefore, the word *ennemiEs* (enemies) is double-marked. It is those who are on the side of the writers who are the enemies of the (sexist) established order. In the second sentence, the word *policiers* ('policemen') is not double-marked, police being an enemy from the perspective of the booklets' writers and so presented in the masculine form and rhetorically located with reference to the gendered social system being opposed. The masculine form has an ideologically double negative charge. The enemy is multiple here: an enemy in social and political conflict (the police) and, above all, a male enemy, representing the oppression of existing power structures and social realities.

When epicenes and hypernyms are double gender-marked in a text, the contrast with non-marked terms for ideological emphasis is reinforced: all terms with human referents, even those terms referring to categories of humans, are double gender-marked, except for those which refer to the enemies. Sometimes, the stigmatized enemy is encoded as masculine, but this is not a straightforward representation of masculinity: there are both women and men who are bankers, so in applying to them the masculine term *banquiers*, writers allocate to them a masculinity for rhetorical purposes. That is, bankers are deliberately masculinized to locate them within a frame of domination and exercise of power. This rhetorical masculinization is not the same for bishops or riot policemen, who in reality are always

male, and so for whom the category of masculinity is a constitutive feature: that is, for bishops and riot police the masculine gender is referentially appropriate while for bankers the use of a masculine form ignores gendered realities. The use of masculine forms for all these is rhetorical but for bishops and riot police it is purely referential. Giving 'him' an extra-linguistic function also gives 'him' a social function. The writers are invoking gender as a social feature; however, in this case, the linguistic intervention on gender is the opposite to the purpose of double gender marking: it is to denounce a social gender as the author of domination. As such, the gender distinction is shown to persist and strengthen the masculine/feminine dichotomy and to be a focus for political struggle.

### *Enunciative strategies*

The enunciative system plays an important part in the distribution of gender marking. By the enunciative system, I mean the frame of all the voices presents in the discourse, including this one of the speaker as much as other enunciators. That is, the use of gender marking is associated with who speaks in the text and is used to frame ways of understanding the source of particular statements. When authors give a voice to their opponents by quoting them, they use a single gender-marked language. On the one hand, this use relates to the presupposed masculinity of those opponents who thus speak of themselves as masculine and on the other hand, because of their occasional use of sexist arguments, it is also relevant they speak about others. That is, quotes of others' speech position these others within a sexist paradigm and serve to index the position within a gendered, oppressive reality.

Four of the texts use this rhetorical process of distributing double and single gender marking according to the enunciators. This can be seen in the following quote of a mainstream discourse about woman fabricated by the author of one of the texts:

*Être passive et victime, douce et modérée sont pourtant des clichés féminins* 'Being passive and a victim, sweet and moderate are yet feminine clichés'

What is said here about women could only be single gender-marked, precisely because of the sexist stance of this sentence. In reality, it is not the voice of a particular individual that is being presented, but rather the voice of the mainstream to whom the writer is opposed.

A writer might also use a quotation as evidence for an accusation of sexism or other forms of discrimination. This enunciative distribution of gender is fairly common in the corpus, particularly in those texts dealing with the black blocs. The black blocs have received a lot of attention in the media and thus many different voices exist, answer or call out to each other. These voices are exploited in the texts:

*'Ils sont une bande de jeunes garçons en colère.'* *En dehors du fait que dire cela revient à faire preuve d'âgisme et de sexisme, c'est faux.*

“‘They are a gang of angry young boys’”. Apart from the fact that saying so is a sign of ageism and sexism, it is also false.’

This example not only represents the voice of an enemy (here, the media) claiming a gendered identity for members of the black bloc, but also an assessment of this voice as sexist. The writer evaluates in a critical way the voice he invokes. In this way, the identity of the enunciator is reinforced by his use of language. The original speakers' focus on gender becomes a marker of sexism and gender stereotyping.

These two strategies – ideological emphasis and enunciative distribution – argue for a strong cross-over between gender issues and the allocation of political values. Antisexism is never the only claim, it is always interrelated with other political issues. In a rhetorical landscape, the positively and negatively connoted values, which include gender, form a network of stances, in which polarizations act on each other for effect.

### *Distinction between particular and generic field*

This section questions the particular/generic dichotomy which has been discussed above. This dichotomy involves a contrast in referring to specific objects in the world and referring to categories constructed to think about the world. Gender is a grammatical class, and the notion of class itself pertains to the generic field. But French applies the grammatical class of gender to all nouns, including those referring to the particular field. This raises the question of how the choice of the double gender marking acts in a generic or particular reading of reality. The use of plurals, epicenes, hypernyms and the systematicity of double gender marking are all potential indicators of a desire to act from a generic perspective. The writer's identity also has a role in this. If the writer signs as a collective, the narrator is then 'we', and the border between 'we particular individuals' and 'we people from a generic category' becomes blurred. It becomes difficult to know if the author is speaking personally or in the name of the category. It is important also to understand how other human entities in texts are referred to as particular entities or as a generic class and so, if they are double gender-marked it may be because they are a mixed group of particular individuals or because they are a generic category.

The topic of the text is also meaningful: a narrative of an individual story or a presentation of theoretical thought will have different uses of generic and particular. Most of the texts (13 out of 15) are globally generic and do not distinguish between particular use and generic use. In these texts, double gender marking seems to show a desire to create a new generic use in order to escape from gender categorization, rather than a desire to break away from the gender dichotomy. This stance involves a redefinition of the gender sign which appears more realizable than the abandoning of gender oppositions, which is a strong feature of the French linguistic system. There are no texts referring to the particular field with systematic double gender marking, although some have occasional use of double gender marking referring to individuals. It would be possible to imagine the use of double gender marking in such cases as a means not to define each person by their gender by not giving the gender information required in French. In this kind of use, double gender marking would be a third gender, an indefinite gender respecting the French grammatical constraint of nouns classification. Only two texts mark an opposition between particular and generic with single gender marking for particular individuals and double marking for generic categories.

### *Conflict of action*

The corpus presents two cases of conflict between action on gender and other actions. Indeed, we saw that double gender marking usually concerns nouns referring to human beings. This delimitation of the application of double gender marking to humanity is questioned in some of the texts. In the first case, there is a competition between antispeciesism and antisexism. In this text, the authors have chosen to double mark non-humans, for example, with *rongeurSEs* ('rodents [masc + fem]'), where it is animals which are double gender-marked. In French, some animals do not have marking for both gender (i.e. they are hypernyms), while some other (often pets or farm animals) have a gender

variation either lexically or morphologically. But, some masculine nouns referring to animals which function as hypernyms are formed morphologically in such a way that it is possible to create a feminine version, for example, the masculine ending *-eur* regularly alternates with a feminine form *-euse*. Thus, the form *rongeurSEs* creates a morphological feminine form and then uses this to double mark gender. This form does two things. At the level of action on gender, double gender marking aims to co-present masculine and feminine in order to make it an ineffective categorization. At the level of action on speciesism, double gender marking an animal aims to associate the animal with the human by giving the same linguistic treatment to both. This involves anthropomorphic reasoning since it uses a human construction (the social gender dichotomy) which is otherwise criticized as a relationship of domination for living beings which do not have social constructions. This is done to inject social meaning where there is none in order not to discriminate. This is achieved by not distinguishing different perceptions of status for living things – humans, who are socially gendered, and non-humans, who are not socially gendered – and equating them within the social world. Thus, the application of linguistic mechanisms designed to critique human categories can be applied to other entities for different political purposes.

The second case is a conflict between the signifier and the signified. The text in question talks about gender sharing and uses double gender marking. In this case, a text about gender ‘deconstruction’ is double-marked. This text reveals a few paradoxes between the desire to make gender disappear, to make it appear in order to denounce it, and to give two genders simultaneously in order to neutralize them. The text contains the sentence: *Nous sommes unisexuel-le-s* ‘We are unisexual [masc] – [+fem] – [pl.]’, where form and meaning are entirely in conflict, because the signified of *unisexuel* is precisely outside gender categories, while the double gender marking ending puts it necessarily inside gender, even if it is in a generic use. There is a clash between the desire to erase gender as a meaningful social variable represented by the word *unisexuel* and an egalitarian desire to reassert gender in its duality as a strategy for critiquing gender. It would be possible to write *unisexes* ‘unisex’ (which is an epicene, with no gender ending) and to avoid the necessity of marking gender at all in the sentence, however the form *unisexuel-le-s* would seem to provide greater visibility for the issue under consideration. *Unisexes* and *unisexuel* are not themselves words which are attested in standard French and so the choice is between neologisms not between a neologism and an official term. The choice of form here which requires gender marking is therefore a deliberate rhetorical strategy.

#### *Overlap between linguistic gender and social gender*

As has been argued above, gender in French is on the one hand a social category which is linguistically motivated, and on the other hand an arbitrary grammatical class. There is occasionally a shift between these two functions, an overlapping of social gender onto grammatical gender. The corpus contains terms which are distinctly arbitrary in terms of gender, such as abstract nouns, which are double-marked. Three texts manipulate such an overlap between social/motivated gender and linguistic/arbitrary gender. For example, in the following phrase, the writer uses double gender marking which goes beyond instances of social gender:

*changements et évolutions instantanées, si déroutant-e-s*, ‘changes[masc] and instantaneous [fem] evolutions[fem], which are very puzzling [masc] – [+fem] – [pl.]’.

The writer applies double gender marking in the syntactic agreement of the adjective *déroutant-e-s* (‘puzzling’) to both *changements* and *évolutions*. This marks the grammatical

gender of both words, although such gender marking is not the norm in standard French, where the masculine would normally be used. In this way, double gender marking tends to become a linguistic category, rather than a social category. It has become a morphological convention dealing with the marking of arbitrary genders in a way which deploys double gender marking as a strategy for resolving grammatical agreement with combined masculine and feminine nouns. This phenomenon is very interesting: double gender marking of abstract objects acts on the categories of language itself and not only on the motivated dimension of gender. Arbitrary gender is treated as if it was motivated and in so doing the motivation itself is called into question. Gender is reduced to a morphological category without a cross-reference to reality. It proposes a solution to the need to retain grammatical gender in French without perpetuating the social dichotomization of gender in language, re-employing it, giving it a new meaning. The use of double gender marking beyond the marking of social categories attempts to eradicate socially understood gender from the grammatical paradigm and to replace social considerations of gender with purely linguistic ones.

### **Conclusions: double gender marking as micro-level language planning**

Writers using double gender marking have chosen to act on language, on linguistic forms, in order to transform the reality. Because language takes part in the world's construction and the world's construction is political and a site for challenge, language is a tool of political action. The development of double gender marking as a form of linguistic action is, therefore, an example of corpus planning, of changing the forms of language, for a social purpose. It is not simply a change in the use of language, but rather a manifestation of the consciousness of language and the impact of changes to language on the social world. The writers force language in an antisexist direction through their individual action on language. In a way, this forcing of language into a particular direction resembles other forms of feminist language planning as it involves local actors intervening on language to achieve political purposes. It differs from other work in feminist language planning, in that it does not try to respect the linguistic system of French but rather challenges it. This is not an update of language to reflect social reality, rather it is a call for a new social reality and a use of language to create that new reality. The authors of the texts in the corpus create equivalence between moral values (good and evil), social values (dominated and dominating) and linguistic norms (feminine and masculine genders), where the negatively valued features evil, dominating and masculine are grouped together in order to be rejected in favour of a new language used as a political tool to act on the world.

In this way, with Liddicoat and Baldauf (2008), we consider this intervention to be a form of micro-level language planning, which does not come from the top to down, from institutions of power to people. Neither are these practices truly a *bottom-up* form of language planning in which individual actors attempt to change language for their own purposes and influence other language planning agents. For these writers, there is no attempt to have their conventions of language use recognized by any institution or power, as these are not the audience for whom the texts are designed. We could say it is a *level* form of language planning: it is self-organized, developed by users and directed at other users. It is a form of language planning without linguistic experts designed without reference to linguistic expertise. While standard feminist language planning uses resources such as guidelines, specialist committees and dictionary updates, and adopts a prescriptive position in relation to language, these users of double gender marking do not have a similar stance: institutional acceptance of this language is rejected as a prescriptive position located within a social structure that is also rejected.

The booklets that form the corpus for this study are drawn from Marxist and anarchist political action. There are therefore common values and a common political culture shared by the writers. However, this common political frame does not appear enough to warrant considering the development of double gender marking to result from a coherent political grouping undertaking a form of collective action. Examining the forms and strategies used in the texts, we see that some authors use similar forms (typographical forms, for instance), but different strategies (e.g. in the use of epicenes and hypernyms) and conversely, some texts present different forms, while the strategies used are the same. So, there is no unification of practice: it remains non-defined. Moreover, it is not necessary for a reader or writer to be initiated into the conventions or to master a certain code in order to comprehend the meaning of the changes, to adopt such a usage or to understand its stakes and stances. There is no necessity for learning the conventions: it is a non-exclusive code, understandable for each new reader.

The norm is not seen as a shared common field and there is no explicit will to create a new norm in place of the previous one, but rather a desire to interrogate the gender issue, allowing each writer a choice in the forms used. The legitimacy for the authors in acting on language concerns the activity itself and not the forms developed. It is a particular form of language planning because of this positioning: the implicit injunction is to do something about gender through language, but not what or how this should be done. There is therefore no formalization of language use or definition of the linguistic conventions: although some texts explain and justify their intervention and providing keys for understanding them, they do not prescribe ways of using language. However, in sharing some common features, writers, despite themselves, produce recurrent patterns of language use which have the capacity to become a standard way of using language. This is not enough to form a norm, but enough for a normalizing of double gender marking in which standard, but not standardized, practices appear. Therefore, although there is not an intention to standardize double gender marking or to create a language plan, some speakers share a deliberate and demonstrative use of language which is politically based and has an identifiable set of conventions. As it is not prescriptive, this is a form of language planning which does not acknowledge itself as such.

What constitutes language planning here is the network of shared strategies and aims, which are a reflection of gender issues: aims of egalitarianism or aims of deconstructing gender categories. The principal focus of this language planning is a defined discursive space, which could be delimited as the act of producing an antisexist text. Its principal meaning is to specify that the writers, in this discursive space, are concerned with gender issues. This stance is reinforced by its mutualization and thus takes the form of language planning. It is more a way of writing, than a homogenous frame. Writers often are confronted with problematic gender issues, and they want to respond to it in their own terms. This is why it seems better to talk about strategies and convergences than about systems and regularities.

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### Notes

1. For a more accurate view of the relationship between anarchism and feminism/gender, see Gemie (1996) and Dupuis-Déri (2009).

2. Antispeciesism is a way of thinking which rejects discrimination based on species. It considers all animals including humans to be equal in terms of rights. This thinking is based on the idea that there is no natural order and that natural order is an ethical value.
3. A black bloc is a strategy of street struggle, in which individuals wear black clothing and face-concealing items. The clothing is used to avoid being identified, to appear as one large mass and promoting solidarity. Black blocs come principally from the anarchist movement. Media have often discussed them in terms of violence, even if it was not a meaningful aspect of their actions during demonstrations.
4. We treat epicenes and hypernyms together because the texts were often general in the texts and so most epicenes were in plural form. In this way, the question of the gender in singular form is less problematic in my corpus, even if the use of epicenes is linked to the generic/particular issues.
5. 'RAD' = radical.
6. UC is for uppercase, LC for lowercase.

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