

Female Identity in Translation

The Linguistic Representation of Femininity in the American and French Editions of 1920s *Vogue*

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Abstract

This essay aims to bridge the gap between gender, periodical, and translation studies by adopting an interdisciplinary approach that emphasises the role of language and translation in constructing female identity in women's magazines when these texts are transferred into other languages and disseminated across different cultures. It also seeks to shed new light on the often-overlooked genre of the female fashion article as a mediator of gender ideologies in diverse linguistic and cultural contexts. Corpus methodology is employed to conduct a contrastive analysis – both quantitative and qualitative – of the linguistic representation of femininity in the American and French editions of 1920s *Vogue*, focusing primarily on the titles of its extensive fashion features, which were originally written in English and subsequently translated or adapted into French. An examination of the meanings and associations underlying naming and referential strategies related to discourses of womanhood in *Vogue US* and *Vogue France* reveals that both editions consistently promoted the same elevated standard of femininity, linguistically construed in terms of fashionability, modernity, originality, and distinction. However, the widespread use of creative and culturally adaptative strategies as well as rewriting in *Vogue France* resulted in an overall loss of emphasis on the identification of womanliness with French fashion culture. Moreover, the rich connotations carried by recurrent lexical items in the English titles – including those evoking female agency – are frequently attenuated or lost in translation.

1. Introduction: female gender, female genres, and translation

Over the past several decades, the complex interplay between gender and translation has been the subject of sustained scholarly attention. Researchers have explored various dimensions, including how gender identities are discursively shaped in translation; how cultural differences related to gender are expressed linguistically and transferred across languages; how translation operates as a gendered practice; and how feminist and sexist approaches

inform both the theory and practice of translation.¹ Since the “cultural turn” in translation studies (Bassnett and Lefevere 1990) and the publication of such foundational texts as Simon’s *Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission* (1996) and von Flotow’s *Translation and Gender: Translating in the “Era of Feminism”* (1997), an increasingly productive dialogue has developed between gender studies and translation studies. The cultural turn helped foreground political, social, and gender-related issues, emphasising the importance of studying translation within its sociocultural context and considering its role and function in the target culture. The emergence of feminist perspectives in the 1990s further expanded the field by treating gender as both an interdisciplinary research theme and a dimension of translation practice, thereby adding a significant sociopolitical component. Within cultural approaches that focus on how identities are construed through translation, scholars have pointed out that language and translation serve as means of negotiating, reinforcing, or undermining identities, which are understood as socially constructed and strategically represented rather than stable (Santaemilia 2011). Similarly, much work in feminist linguistics and feminist translation studies highlights how language and translation contribute to shaping the social world. Particular emphasis has been placed on examining how gender roles emerge through discursive practices in language and translation, both conceived as inherently social (Castro 2013).

Beyond feminist linguistics, critical approaches to the study of language, such as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), have strongly emphasised that discourse is simultaneously conditioned by and constitutive of sociocultural structures (Fairclough 2013; 2001; Fairclough and Wodak 1996). Such frameworks highlight the close connections between language and power, and between language and ideology. From this perspective, discourse functions as a form of social practice that reflects, enacts, or challenges social and power relations as well as dominant ideologies. Nevertheless, the systematic integration of this rich theoretical framework into translation research and practice remains relatively limited (see Bazzi 2022). Baumgarten and Schröter (2018) point out the lack of a consistent strand within translation studies that incorporates insights from CDA, which they believe could sharpen our understanding of how translation and interpreting contribute to maintaining unequal power relations and social hierarchies. Besides shedding further light on issues of ideology, power, and control in translation studies, adopting such a critical perspective could enrich the study of text genre and/in translation, especially when considering often-overlooked textual forms

¹ See, for instance, Federici and Santaemilia 2022; Federici and Maci 2021; von Flotow and Kamal 2020; Camus Camus, Gómez Castro and Williams Camus 2017; Castro and Ergun 2017; von Flotow and Farahzad 2017; von Flotow and Scott 2016; Federici and Leonardi 2013; Federici 2011; Larkosh 2011; Santaemilia 2005.

such as women's magazines or the female periodical article, which are closely tied to the construction of gender identities and ideologies. If language is understood as a political act that mediates and communicates in ways that perpetuate or challenge existing power structures, the same applies to translation, which likewise functions as "a process of mediation" (Castro 2013, 6) and as "cross-ideological transfer" in addition to "cross-cultural transfer" (Nissen 2002, 25). From this perspective, language and translation can be seen as instruments for either legitimising dominant structures or resisting them, and as means of enforcing or challenging gender-based oppression (Castro 2013, 6).

At the same time, although genre features and their translation have recently regained prominence in scholarly debates, the analysis of genres such as women's magazines in translation remains largely absent. Woodstein's monograph *Translation and Genre* (2022), for instance, demonstrates renewed interest in bringing these fields together more systematically. While one chapter addresses "Women's Writing," the specific genre that is the focus of the present study does not appear in that discussion, nor does it feature prominently in other translation studies publications, as far as I am aware. Research examining the interplay between periodical studies and translation studies has mainly concentrated on literary translation in literary periodicals. In this context, Guzmán (2019) argues that periodicals – especially those with transnational and intercultural orientations – are valuable sites for investigating the multilingual and transnational circulation of ideas. Özmen (2019) further suggests that periodicals can serve as ideal sources for uncovering the historical role of translation and translators within cultural processes. Nonetheless, scholars have also observed that despite the strong connections between periodical studies and translation studies, research on periodical translation remains fragmented, underexplored, and often framed within national boundaries (Fólica, Roig-Sanz and Caristia 2020, 2). These studies tend to treat translators and translations within periodicals as disconnected from their broader contexts rather than adopting a holistic perspective on the relationships between translation and these print genres (Özmen 2019, 3). Indeed, such genres should be recognised as "typologically distinct and historically coherent objects" (Latham and Scholes 2006, 529). Although non-literary periodicals have been studied in relation to translation and media, this work has primarily focused on news media and journalistic publications. By contrast, translation and/in magazines, particularly women's magazines as mediators of gendered discourses, has rarely been examined through a comparative linguistic, cultural, and historical lens.

The marginalisation of the female periodical genre within translation studies reflects a parallel neglect in the sphere of close linguistic investigation. Since Barthes's influential *Système de la mode* (1967), which examined how fashion magazines employ language to

establish a system of meaning around clothing, women's periodicals have been analysed from numerous angles. These include broad cultural, sociological, and media perspectives (Rooks, Pass and Weekley 2017; Duffy 2013; David 2006; König 2006; McCracken 1993), as well as more targeted feminist and gender studies, given the inherently gendered nature of these texts (Ritchie et al. 2016; Forster 2015; Ballaster et al. 1991; McRobbie 1991; Ferguson 1983). Although scholarship in these domains has foregrounded ideologies and representations of femininity in magazine texts, it has predominantly centred on content analysis, rarely focusing on the fine-grained linguistic features that produce such representations. Informed by post-structuralist theories that conceptualise text and discourse as "*broad constitutive systems of meaning*" shaping identities and social practices (Sunderland 2004, 6), research has also examined in detail how femininity is discursively constructed in periodicals targeting female audiences, especially from the perspective of CDA. A substantial body of scholarship now treats women's magazines as vehicles of specific discourses of femininity (Caldas-Coulthard 1996, 253), often adopting a critical linguistic or critical discourse analytic lens (see Pilyarchuk 2024; McLoughlin 2017; Conradie 2011; del-Teso-Craviotto 2006; Eggins and Iedema 1997; Talbot 1992). However, much of this work remains limited to small-scale analyses of monolingual texts, giving little consideration to what happens when gender ideologies and discursive representations of femininity circulate transnationally through translation – a phenomenon characteristic of publications like *Vogue*, which maintain multiple editions across different countries. In other words, despite the recognition that translation frequently functions as a key textual and editorial strategy in structuring and organising periodicals that draw extensively on foreign content (Özmen 2019, 3), critical research on women's magazines has largely disregarded translation issues, just as translation studies as an interdiscipline has tended to overlook these periodical forms.

Given that translation is often characterised as a communicative act bridging linguistic and cultural boundaries or as the production of texts for new cultural audiences (Schäffner 2013), women's magazines, as complex cultural artefacts reaching linguistically and culturally diverse readerships, surely merit greater scrutiny within the framework of translation studies. In the specific case of *Vogue*, translation has played an essential role in shaping the publication and cultivating its audience since its inception. Founded in New York in 1892, with British and French editions (edited autonomously from London and Paris, respectively) following swiftly in 1916 and 1920, *Vogue* is now available in twenty-eight languages and countries. From the outset, the magazine projected an image of refinement and social exclusivity by showcasing luxury clothing and accessories and by addressing an affluent female readership, or those aspiring to such status. In a cultural moment that prized modernity, sophistication, and elite distinction, and that also witnessed the emergence of new

feminine identities and social roles, *Vogue* utilised engaging coverage of contemporary fashion trends to convey innovative ideals of womanhood and challenge conventional gender norms. Departing from entrenched portrayals of women as passive figures confined to domestic or maternal spheres, linguistic analysis of *Vogue's* fashion features reveals how the magazine disseminated compelling visions of female autonomy, self-assurance, and glamour, positioning fashion as a key means by which women could engage with modernity. Especially through titles, subtitles, and editorial captions designed to attract and persuade, *Vogue* demonstrated a strategic use of linguistic form alongside visual content to inspire readers towards self-fulfilment and personal pleasure, while subtly advancing a progressive gender ideology that endorsed women's agency, physical presence, and modern lifestyles.

Besides revealing ideological constructs, translated magazines and magazine articles offer a rich site for examining translation as a form of intercultural communication and localisation. These genres exemplify how "moving texts" (Pym 2004) are linguistically and culturally adapted to new audiences. Their transnational circulation highlights the fundamentally transdisciplinary, mobile, and open-ended character of translation in the era of "post-translation studies" (Nergaard and Arduini 2011, 8), in which translation is increasingly regarded as a form of "rewriting" (Gentzler 2017; Lefevere 1992). Significantly, the notion of post-translation, or transdisciplinary translation studies, calls for rethinking traditional definitions of translation and emphasises the inadequacy of separating originals, translations, and rewritings into neatly bounded categories. These dynamics are particularly evident in the magazine under discussion and relate to both the nature of the periodical text as a genre – whose simultaneous publication across cultural contexts poses challenges to old-established notions of source and target text – and the distinctive character of press translation, often described through the concept of "transediting," or the combination of information selection, translation, and editing (Schäffner 2012).

While genre-based approaches within translation studies have largely neglected periodicals, research on print media since the early 1990s has given considerable attention to theorising the periodical as a unique publishing format. Scholars examining the peculiarities of periodical texts frequently emphasise that their diverse contents are rarely self-contained. Unlike so-called "closed" or "masculine" forms that assert dominant meanings by constraining alternative interpretations (Beetham 1990, 27), the characteristic openness of the periodical form allows for multiple readings and the possibility of alternative meanings – an openness linked to creativity, disruption, and what Beetham describes as the "feminine" (1990, 27). In studies of women's magazines, this complexity – manifested in their heterogeneity, multiplicity, and occasional ambiguity – has often been emphasised. Indeed, the magazine form, with its fragmented and open-ended structure, has been seen as particularly well-suited

to expressing varied representations of femininity (Ballaster et al. 1991, 7). Moreover, as genres that resist closure and categorisation, periodicals constantly gesture beyond themselves, referencing other content within the same publication as well as other texts in different languages and cultures. It is largely for this reason that Latham and Scholes (2006) emphasise both the distinctive autonomy of periodicals as cultural artefacts and their status as dialogic, heterogeneous spaces in which texts engage in dialogue with other texts and voices. When periodicals are translated or adapted for linguistically and culturally diverse audiences, this intertextual quality becomes even more pronounced, with the periodical as a (target) text/genre pointing explicitly to other (source) texts produced in other (source) languages.

As this overview suggests, scant attention has so far been paid to the translation of women's periodicals and, more specifically, women's fashion articles, despite their close association with representations of female identity and the construction of gender ideologies. A more robust dialogue between what has been termed "the gender/translation interdiscipline" (Santaemilia 2011, 10), or "the gender and translation transdiscipline" (Federici and Santaemilia 2022, 3), and periodical studies could therefore offer significant insights into the linguistic representation of femininity in women's magazines as sites of gendered discourses.

2. Aims and methodology

Building on these theoretical foundations, the present essay aims to connect gender, genre, and translation studies through an interdisciplinary perspective that foregrounds the role of language and translation in shaping female identity within the female periodical as a distinctive textual genre. It also seeks to demonstrate the reciprocal significance of translation and periodical studies, with a particular focus on illuminating overlooked genres – such as women's magazines or the female fashion article – as vehicles for the circulation of gender ideologies across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

To this end, corpus linguistics methodology is adopted to conduct a contrastive analysis – both quantitative and qualitative – of the linguistic representation of femininity in the American and French editions of 1920s *Vogue*, with special attention to its extensive fashion features. These articles were initially written in English and subsequently translated or, more accurately, adapted for a French readership. *Vogue US* has been extensively digitised and is publicly accessible via the Internet Archive,² while *Vogue France* can be partly consulted through Gallica, the digital repository of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.³ A search of

² <https://archive.org/search?query=vogue&and%5B%5D=mediatype%3A%22texts%22>. All websites last visited on 01/12/2024.

³ <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb343833568/date.r=vogue.langEN>.

both archives yielded 138 issues and 262 fashion articles published in the decade January 1920-December 1929, available in both languages. It is important to note that even a cursory examination of these texts reveals that the French edition primarily functioned as a creative adaptation and rewriting (Gentzler 2017) of the American version. Put differently, parallel issues in the American and French editions during this period should be regarded as distinct, though necessarily interconnected, cultural products. This is most evident in the fact that not all English articles were reproduced in French and, when they were, both titles and main texts were frequently adapted to position them within a different linguistic and cultural context.

The value of corpus methods for studying translations has long been recognised, with parallel corpora widely employed to investigate large amounts of textual data in contrastive linguistics and corpus-based translation studies. For this study, two small but highly specialised corpora were compiled by collecting the titles of fashion articles published between January 1920 and December 1929 that appeared in both editions. These corpora, named *Vogue_English* and *Vogue_French*, each comprise 262 titles and amount to 5,442 and 5,201 tokens, respectively. Once compiled, they were loaded as aligned parallel corpora into *Sketch Engine* (Kilgarriff et al. 2014), an online corpus tool that enables, among other functions, the analysis of parallel concordances and translation correspondences. In this case, the tool was used to explore how female identity was construed across two languages and cultural traditions. More specifically, the Wordlist function in *Sketch Engine* was employed to generate for each corpus frequency lists of nouns and adjectives as parts of speech typically associated with naming and referential strategies. These can be understood as discursive practices through which text producers “name” and “represent” their “view of the world” (Jeffries 2010, 17), or refer to and depict “social actors” (Van Leeuwen 1996), in line with critical approaches to language. Given the focus on female identity in translation, the nouns *Paris*, *Parisienne*, and *woman/femme* were selected for closer scrutiny, as they were the only tokens referring directly to female subjects – amid a majority of references to garments and accessories – that appeared consistently in both corpora. The noun *Paris* features regularly in *Vogue_English* (freq. 105) and less so in *Vogue_French* (freq. 17). *Parisienne*, one of the numerous French loanwords integrated into *Vogue_English* (freq. 42), is fairly systematically retained in *Vogue_French* (freq. 31). Lastly, *woman* (freq. 17) has a direct equivalent in *femme* (freq. 29). The Word Sketch and Parallel Concordance tools were used, respectively, to examine the collocational patterns associated with these lexical items and to extract contextual examples of their use in both languages, which were then subjected to detailed qualitative analysis.

Since collocational patterns may represent “a packaging of information” that can “become entrenched in language use” (Baker 2010, 127-128), this approach yields valuable insights into

the lexis associated with female identity, its connotations, and ultimately the discourses with which woman is identified. Although the quantitative data are necessarily limited by the modest size of the corpora, integrating them with qualitative methods and examining parallel concordances makes it possible to critically (re)consider the role of translation in disseminating such discourses. Comparing the English and French corpora sheds light not only on the overarching translation strategies adopted, but also on the cross-cultural similarities and differences concerning the representation of femininity in the two editions of the magazine. As an additional methodological observation, concentrating on the early phase of *Vogue*'s international trajectory offers several benefits. On the one hand, it helps bridge the divide between historical research on women's magazines (e.g., Beetham 1996; Braithwaite 1995), which has predominantly focused on content exploration, and linguistic analyses of such gendered media texts, which have to date almost exclusively examined contemporary publications highlighting the enduring power of established ideologies of femininity linked to consumerism, stereotypical gender roles, and idealised visions of the female body (see McLoughlin 2017; Jeffries 2007; Eggins and Iedema 1997). On the other hand, it provides a representative perspective on how the magazine appeared when first translated and adapted into a different language and cultural context.

3. Representing and translating femininity in women's magazines: the example of *Vogue US* and *Vogue France*

Drawing on a combination of corpus-based and critical analytical approaches, this essay investigates the meanings and associations of naming and referential strategies related to discourses of femininity and fashion in *Vogue US* and *Vogue France* during the 1920s. Based on the premise that gender identity is articulated in texts through a variety of discursive practices (Sunderland 2004, 18), women's magazines – largely produced by women for female audiences – constitute particularly fertile ground in which such discourses can be traced and the linguistic representations of female identity scrutinised in detail. As Cameron (1990, 12) notes, the names we attach to the world are not neutral descriptions of reality; rather, they are the means through which cultures define what will be regarded as real. This perspective implies that naming people or objects inevitably reflects particular ideological positions and beliefs, rather than serving as mere labelling.

In her detailed exploration of how early 21st-century magazines construe the female body in ways that sustain pervasive ideals of femininity, Jeffries theorises “naming and describing” as part of a broader set of “textual-ideational functions,” with the aim of establishing “what the text is *doing* ideationally – and thus ideologically” (2007, 17) by means of language.

Although no direct correspondence necessarily exists between conceptual/ideational functions and the linguistic forms/textual features that realise them, Jeffries contends that these functions are central to shaping language itself and generating a particular version of reality within a text. The function “naming and describing” concerns how entities assumed to exist are labelled or referred to in texts principally through the construction of noun phrases, which involves selecting specific nouns, employing nominalisations, and determining modifiers and their positions. The impact of choosing particular nouns to designate referents, and the ways in which these nouns are modified, lies in the observation that naming is a primary means through which texts characterise entities and embed ideologies (Jeffries 2007, 63). More broadly, the effect of assembling the elements of a definite noun phrase and presenting it as given information is “to reify its existence” (Jeffries 2007, 64), which is not merely a question of generating an existential presupposition, but also of attaching to a referent ideological connotations that can become naturalised in language and subsequently accepted as self-evident.

In the specific context of the gendered texts examined here, the choice of nominals not only highlights particular aspects of female identity that authors in a woman’s magazine may wish to foreground, but also allows noun phrases – frequently modified by evaluative adjectives denoting novelty, elegance, and sophistication – to embed assumptions and beliefs that can become difficult to challenge. Since *Vogue’s* fashion articles do not clearly separate discourses about new forms of womanhood from vivid accounts of contemporary trends in clothing, but rather blend the two, this analysis pays particular attention to the linguistic choices involved in constructing noun phrases associated with fashionable femininity and granted particular prominence in titles. The principal dimension of naming and describing addressed here, therefore, is the way nouns and their modifiers are deployed to present contemporary women as modern subjects who cultivate fulfilling relationships with stylish garments, accessories, and fabrics.

A range of scholars in gender and cultural studies have discussed how, in the early 20th century, femininity and modernity were closely related through fashion, both in a symbolic sense and as a material reality. At that time, Parkins (2012) argues, the continual emphasis on novelty in fashion carried the possibility of situating women firmly within a modern framework, while the rapid pace of fashion as a reflection of modern life appeared to incorporate women into modern temporalities and into social and cultural participation. According to Parkins and Sheehan, fashion during this period offered a valuable perspective from which to reconsider how femininity related to modernity, allowing researchers to trace connections between representations of women as both “symbols or objects” and active “agents of the modern” (2011, 11). In other words, fashion helps to reveal how gendered depictions of

modernity intersected with women's lived experiences and how they negotiated their identities as modern subjects.

3.1 "Paris" as a personification of the modern woman of fashion

What emerges from an analysis of the data retrieved from our parallel corpora is a remarkable set of consistent habits of referring to, naming, and describing women, employed across a significant number of often concise, yet extremely captivating titles. With 105 total occurrences, *Paris* is the most frequent noun in the entire *Vogue_English* corpus. Quite interestingly, it is also pervasively used as a personification of the modern woman of fashion, or more precisely as a collective representation – via synecdoche – of those stylish Parisian women whose tastes and behaviours set fashion trends both at home and abroad. This is demonstrated by the fact that *Paris* functions as the subject of a variety of verbs expressing material actions (such as *adds, begins, continues to frown, creates, dresses, drops, embroiders, follows, gives, keeps, lengthens, makes, offers, paints, pays, picks, prepares, sends, strokes, takes, tempts, traces, travels, trims, turns, wears, weaves, wraps, writes*), mental cognition (*adopts, chooses, counts, decides, forecasts, prophesies, revises*), and verbal processes (*reports, says, states, tells*) most typically attributed to human entities. All these verbs occur only once (except for *creates, gives, keeps, makes, sends, wears, forecasts, and says*, which appear twice), as can be expected in a small corpus. Nonetheless, they remain significant for qualitative analysis, as they attest both to the variety of the titles – an important marketing strategy revealing the necessity to keep readers' attention constantly engaged with content that is simultaneously familiar and perpetually new – and to the range of actions in which fashionable women are involved. However, reading through parallel concordances shows that only 17 occurrences of this noun are maintained in *Vogue_French*, among which merely 5 are employed as personified subjects (specifically with the verbs *décide, oppose, présente, s'équipe, and s'habille*). This tendency may indicate that while American fashion culture in the 1920s considered *Paris* (and the *Parisiennne*, as discussed below) the epitome of fashionable femininity, this association was taken for granted in the target culture and therefore required little specification. As the following selection of examples shows, not only is the noun *Paris* frequently absent from French titles due to the choice of different sentence constructions, but the titles themselves often take the form of noun phrases, thus removing the predicates for which *Paris* functions as subject in the English versions.

In examples (1)-(3), *Paris* is replaced by *la mode*, and agency is thus transferred from the personification of the modern woman of fashion to fashion itself:

- (1) *PARIS PAYS ITS RESPECTS TO RIBBONS*
*LA MODE HONORE ET FAVORISE LES RUBANS*⁴
- (2) *PARIS CONTINUES TO FROWN ON EXAGGERATION*
LA MODE CONTINUE À REPOUSSER L'EXCENTRICITÉ
- (3) *PARIS SAYS: BEHOLD, THE NEW MODES OF SPRING ARE HERE!*
LA MODE, COMME LA NATURE, CRÉE SON RENOUVEAU

In (4)-(8), syntactic restructuring results in other clause components in the English titles (*its furs, fur, its skirts, the coat, winter hats*) becoming the subjects of the French titles (*la fourrure, nos jupes, le manteau, la petite forme*). In these cases, *Paris* is replaced by nouns designating articles of clothing, which are attributed varying degrees of agency through verbs such as *subit, est, s'allongent*, and *dispute*:

- (4) *PARIS STROKES ITS FURS IN THE MODISH WAY: Not Even That Most Recalcitrant of Materials Can Resist the Parisienne's Demand for Lines Which Express the Silhouette of the Moment.*
LA FOURRURE SUBIT LES EXIGENCES DE LA MODE: Pour s'adapter à la silhouette du moment, la fourrure elle-même quoique coûteuse et difficile à transformer sera rétaillée.
- (5) *PARIS TRIMS ITS HATS AND WRAPS WITH FUR*
LA FOURRURE EST À L'ORDRE DU JOUR
- (6) *PARIS LENGTHENS ITS SKIRTS: In the City, the Frenchwoman Walks in Silken Gowns, Which Continue to Grow Longer, but at the Seashore or in the Country, She Wears Filmy Frocks of Organdie, Cotton Crêpe, or Sheer Muslin.*
NOS JUPES S'ALLONGENT VRAIMENT: La Parisienne fait ses courses en robes de soie qui s'allongent, mais au bord de la mer et dans les sites champêtres, elle préfère naturellement les robes d'organdi, de crêpe de coton et de mousseline.
- (7) *PARIS COUNTS THE COAT THE CAPE'S FAIREST RIVAL*
LE MANTEAU DISPUTE À LA CAPE SA FAVEUR
- (8) *PARIS CREATES WINTER HATS OF INTERNATIONAL CHIC*
LA PETITE FORME EST CHIC ENTRE TOUTES

In the following pairs, the French titles are not translations but rather creative adaptations or rewritings, as in (9)-(11), or even completely different versions of the English texts, as in (12). In all these instances, *Paris* is altogether omitted, along with the actions performed by this

⁴ In this and following quotations, the original use of capitalisation in the two editions of *Vogue* is scrupulously retained, while italics are employed to emphasise elements relevant to the analysis.

personified entity (*says, keeps, forecasts, wraps itself*). Example (9) is particularly notable, as the direct discourse through which glamorous Frenchwomen dictate the trends for the upcoming summer season is not retained, nor is *Paris's* role as sayer in the verbal process. In (10), the pun portraying the stylish Parisian lady as being in control of footwear fashion equally disappears in translation:

- (9) MANY PLEATINGS MAKE A MODE: During an Organdie Summer, “The Frill’s the Thing,” Says *Paris*, “for Frocks, Hats, Parasols, and Gloves.”
 LA MODE EST AUX PLISSES NOMBREUX: Cet été, les volants plissés d’organdi ornent les robes, les chapeaux, les ombrelles et même les gants.
- (10) *PARIS* KEEPS THE MODE AT HER FEET
 CE QUE PEUT RÉVÉLER UN PIED FINEMENT CHAUSSÉ
- (11) *PARIS* FORECASTS A CHANGE OF FASHION, MORE FORMAL AND LESS UNIFORM
 L’HIVER NOUS CONDUIRA VERS UNE MODE PLUS RICHE ET PLUS PERSONNELLE
- (12) *PARIS* WRAPS ITSELF IN FURS OF NEW SUPPLENESS
 L’ART MODERNE A UNE INFLUENCE CONSIDÉRABLE DANS LA CONFECTION DES NOUVELLES FOURRURES, MAIS LE CLASSICISME LUI OPPOSE SA BEAUTÉ RECONNUE

In examples (13)-(22), English titles (and subtitles, when present) are structured as complete sentences, while their French equivalents are reduced to noun phrases. As often emphasised in critical approaches to language (Fairclough 2001; Fowler 1991), nominalisation – the grammatical transformation by which a verb expressing a process changes into a noun and various participants in the process are left unmentioned – can be used for potentially manipulative purposes, such as concealing tense, modality, and agency, reifying the process itself, or creating existential presuppositions. Although the head nouns forming the French titles (*vie, feuilles, chapeaux, arsenal, mode, aperçus, accessoires, prévisions, enquête*) are not derived from the verbs occurring in the English versions, they maintain a loose semantic connection with them. Most notably, these nouns replace *Paris*, thereby erasing not only the personification of woman foregrounded in the American edition, but also her agency in performing actions expressed by verbs such as *wears, picks, keeps, states, travels, drops, adds, says, prophesies, and adopts*:

- (13) *WHAT PARIS WEARS IN PRIVATE AND IN PUBLIC: Metal Cloths Veils and Lace Poke-Bonnets Accompany French Society to the Theatre.*
LA VIE ÉLÉGANTE: Après un court voyage à Londres la Parisienne partage ses soirées entre le théâtre et les réunions musicales. Que de jolies toilettes sur la scène!
- (14) *PARIS PICKS ITS AUTUMN BONNETS*
DERNIÈRES FEUILLES, PREMIERS CHAPEAUX
- (15) *PARIS KEEPS THE MODE AT ITS FINGER'S END: Smart French Hands Hold an Exquisite Cigarette Case or an Accessory of Equal Daintiness.*
LE PETIT ARSENAL PRÉCIEUX DE LA FEMME: Étuis précieux, boîtes à poudre, sacs originaux composent le blason varié de l'élégance.
- (16) *PARIS STATES ITS VIEWS ON SPRING MILLINERY*
LA MODE PARISIENNE DES CHAPEAUX DE PRINTEMPS
- (17) *PARIS TRAVELS THE HIGH ROADS OF THE NEW MODE: The Parisienne Motors with the New Mode to Rediscover Forgotten Byways and Old Corners of European Charm.*
LA MODE SUR LA GRAND'ROUTE: Les femmes élégantes, vêtues selon la mode nouvelle, partent découvrir à nouveau les vieux coins perdus de France.
- (18) *PARIS DROPS SEVERAL HINTS ABOUT THE AUTUMN MODE*
QUELQUES APERÇUS SUR LES MODES DE CET AUTOMNE
- (19) *PARIS ADDS THE TOUCHES WHICH PERFECT THE MOTOR: Accessories of Shell, Fur Robes Lined to Match the Liveries, and Specially Designed Luggage Complete Cars Smart in Proportion to Their Length and Gloss.*
LES ACCESSOIRES ÉLÉGANTS DE L'AUTOMOBILISTE: Nécessaires en écaille, valises spéciales, couvertures de fourrure, tout doit être en harmonie dans ce home roulant que toute femme souhaite posséder.
- (20) *PARIS SAYS A FIRST WORD ABOUT EARLY WINTER HATS*
PREMIERS APERÇUS SUR LA MODE D'AUTOMNE
- (21) *PARIS PROPHESES COMPLICATED LINES LEADING TO SIMPLICITY*
LES PRÉVISIONS DE VOGUE
- (22) *PARIS ADOPTS A NEW MODE AND FINDS IT GOOD*
ENQUÊTE SUR LA NOUVELLE MODE

Overall, the analysis of parallel concordances for *Paris* suggests that, besides making its identification with the modern woman of fashion less explicit, the translation strategies adopted in the French titles also tend to diminish the idea of female agency that, in the English versions, is evoked by the metaphorical representation of smart and chic femininity as

embodied by the world's fashion capital performing actions typically attributed to human subjects. When different syntactic structures are adopted in the French titles and *Paris* is replaced by other lexical items (as in examples 1-12), the agency conveyed by the predicates for which *Paris* originally served as subject is transferred to inanimate entities, including *mode*, *fourrure*, *jupes*, *manteau*, and *forme*. Finally, in examples where the French titles consist solely of noun phrases, such as (13)-(22), *Paris*'s agency as the subject of verbs expressing material actions, mental cognition, and verbal processes is not reassigned to other participants, but entirely lost through the omission of verb phrases.

3.2 “*Parisienne*” as the epitome of fashionable femininity

After *Paris* and *mode*, the French borrowing *Parisienne* is the third most frequent noun in the *Vogue_English* corpus. The 42 occurrences of this epithet, used as a kind of catchword to persuade readers to embrace *Vogue*'s high standard of womanhood, are particularly noteworthy for a variety of reasons. From the perspective of the dominant gender ideology shaped and promoted by the magazine, *Parisienne* offers compelling evidence that the ideal of femininity *Vogue* aimed to convey to its international readership was perfectly embodied by the French woman of fashion, grounded in the prestige and cultural authority of Paris as the global capital of luxury, design, and haute couture. The bilingual Word Sketch for the term further shows that, as a strategy for naming *Vogue*'s archetype of womanliness, *Parisienne* – occasionally modified by the adjectives *smart*, *chic*, and *élégante* (each occurring once) – appears in definite noun phrases activating existential presuppositions. Furthermore, the *Parisienne* exerts agential control, individuality, and discernment through the performance of actions expressed by verbs such as *brings*, *calls*, *chooses/choisit*, *considers*, *dresses*, *finds*, *hies*, *introduces*, *loves/aime*, *maintains*, *motors*, *moulds*, *places*, *prepares/se prépare*, *ratifies*, *revives/fait revivre*, *states/fait connaître*, *takes*, *unfurls*, *varies*, *ventures/met à l'épreuve*, *wears*, *a opté*, *affronte*, *dispose*, *emporte*, *fait*, *fête*, *partage*, *passe*, *revient*, *se compose*, and *veut rester*. As forms of implicit meaning, existential presuppositions assume the existence of a referent and function as powerful ways for text producers to influence receivers' viewpoints. By presuming shared knowledge about the existence of an entity to which specific connotations are attached, texts can express ideological stances and help naturalise certain ideas, including those related to femininity. Jeffries (2007, 129) observes that assumed and implied meanings can function at a relatively unconscious level. Moreover, when texts of a similar nature repeatedly convey the same ideological assumptions, their cumulative effect may shape readers' worldviews. From a lexical and translational standpoint, *Parisienne* is also one of the many French loanwords adopted in the American edition of *Vogue* primarily for reasons of style and register that were in most cases borrowed back in the French edition.

In this respect, it is notable that 24 of 42 total occurrences of *Parisienne(s)* in the English titles are either omitted or replaced by other lexical items in the translations, as illustrated by the following examples. In place of this epithet, the French titles sometimes introduce near-equivalents such as *la femme élégante* for *the smart Parisienne* in (23), or generalisations such as the adjective *féminines* in (24), the personal pronoun *elles* in (25), and the noun *femme(s)* in (26) and (27). These examples indicate that while the identification of stylish women with Parisian women was consistently highlighted in *Vogue US*, such assimilation could readily be assumed by readers of *Vogue France*:

- (23) DISTINGUISHED WEDDINGS IN FRENCH SOCIETY: *The Smart Parisienne's* Trousseau Is Exquisite Enough for a Fairy Tale and Is Packed Away into Luggage That Is Very New and Very Luxurious.
MARIAGES ÉLÉGANTS DANS LA SOCIÉTÉ FRANÇAISE: Le trousseau de *la femme élégante* évoque un conte de fées, et quelques cadeaux se rapportent au voyage en automobile.
- (24) NEW LINES IN LITTLE AND LARGE FURS: Sable, Ermine, and Kolinski from the Siberian Forests, the American Mink, and the Tiny Subterranean Mode Offer Their Fur for the Cape Manteaux and the Shorter Shawls That Swathe the *Parisienne's* Slim Shoulders.
POUR LES FRILEUSES ÉPAULES FÉMININES: La zibeline, la loutre, le kolinsky des forêts sibériennes, le vison d'Amérique et la minuscule taupe souterraine, dépouillées par l'habile fourreur feront des écharpes et de somptueux manteaux capes.
- (25) FLOWERS AS THE *PARISIENNE* WEARS THEM
COMMENT *ELLES* PORTENT LES FLEURS
- (26) THE *PARISIENNE* CALLS HER TASTE HER OWN: A New Individuality Begins to Rival the Uniformity of Past Seasons.
L'UNIFORME A VÉCU. VIVE LA FANTAISIE: Chaque *femme* semble affirmer davantage son goût personnel.
- (27) PARIS TURNS ITS FACE TOWARD SAINT MORITZ: While Snow Is Still a Novelty, *the Parisienne* Hies Her to Saint Moritz, and the Other Winter Resorts, to Don the Engaging Sports Costumes and the Evening Gowns Which the Couturiers Have Prepared for Her.
PÈRE NOËL, "TEDDY BEAR" OU BIEN FEMME: En traineau ou à pied, après les exercices violents du jour, *les femmes*, à Saint-Moritz, vont danser, leur robe de bal sous les fourrures, guêtrées et gantées de grosse laine, en bottes de caoutchouc.

In examples (28)-(31), both *Parisienne* and the agency she conveys in performing material actions related to the fashion world (*dresses, sets, introduces, brings*) are removed by omitting

predicates and reducing the titles or subtitles to noun phrases with inanimate entities as heads:

- (28) THE *PARISIENNE* DRESSES FOR CHÂTEAU LIFE
BELLES ROBES DE SOIE ET DE DENTELLE
- (29) *PARISIENNES* WHOSE CHIC SETS A STANDARD FOR ALL THE SMART
WORLD
COUP D'ŒIL GÉNÉRAL SUR LA MODE
- (30) FASHIONS THAT BLOOM IN THE RIVIERA SUN: On the Côte d'Azur, the
Parisienne Introduces the Modes That All the Smart World Will Wear This Summer.
SUR LA MER COULEUR DE SAPHIRS, DES VOILES ÉBLOUISSANTES
PASSENT...: La Riviera et sa vie intense.
- (31) A JEWEL SONG FROM PARIS: The Wearing of the Gem Is an Ancient Art to Which
the *Parisienne* Brings Modern Interpretations.
LE CHOIX HARMONIEUX DES BIJOUX: Complément d'un bel ensemble.

Notably, in (32)-(35), the French (sub)titles adopt entirely different formulations. Consequently, the agency conveyed by the predicates for which *Parisienne* serves as subject in the English texts (*finds, incarnates, places, takes, moulds*) – all implying distinction, discernment, and control – is neutralised through impersonal constructions in the French versions, such as *il est amusant d'étudier, on part*, and *il ne faut point parler*:

- (32) THE CUBIST LENDS AID TO THE COSTUMER: The *Parisienne* Finds in the New
Art a Clever and Modern Way to Decorate the Frocks of the Winter Season.
LE CUBISME DANS LE COSTUME: Après l'échec total du cubisme dans l'art il est
amusant d'étudier ses possibilités décoratives sur le costume féminin.
- (33) THE *PARISIENNE* INCARNATES DISTINCTION EN ROUTE: Clad in Harmonies
of Grey or Beige or Brown, Impeccable to the Least Accessory, Smart at Journey's End
As at Its Beginning, the *Parisienne* Places Travelling among the Fine Arts.
TOUT EST PRÉTEXTE À VOYAGES: Pour quarante-huit heures ou une semaine,
pour une randonnée en auto ou en chemin de fer, on part sans cesse, avant le départ
définitif de l'été.
- (34) THE *PARISIENNE* TAKES AGE BY THE FORELOCK
QUAND LA JEUNESSE NOUS QUITTE
- (35) THE OPENING OF THE "GRANDE SAISON": The *Parisienne* of Social Prominence,
by Her Choice of Costume and Accessory, Moulds the Mode That All the World Will
Wear.

NOTES PRISES ENTRE DEUX RÉUNIONS DE L'ÉTÉ: Il ne faut point parler à la vieille mode, le goût doit se faire à la nouvelle.

As these examples show, the English titles both presuppose and help construct the feminine ideal of the *Parisienne* as embodying such appealing qualities as smartness (23), slimness (24), personal taste (26), chic (29), and social prominence (35). However, only in one case do the translations employ an equivalent expression that retains similar presupposed meaning, namely *la femme élégante* for *the smart Parisienne* (23). Furthermore, when the French versions completely alter the English texts or consist only of noun phrases, the individuality and agency with which the *Parisienne* is endowed by performing specific actions – dressing, setting a standard, introducing the mode, bringing modern interpretations to art, finding a clever and modern way, placing travel among the fine arts, taking age by the forelock, and most importantly for *Vogue's* ideological agenda, moulding fashion – are lost in translation.

It is worth noting that, on rare occasions, the French titles add positive gendered connotations absent from the corresponding English versions. This mainly occurs through an emphasis on the stylish *Parisienne's* power to set trends by asserting her will, individualism, and discernment in selecting garments that most please her. In the following examples, *Parisienne* appears in the French translations without being mentioned in the English titles – though *Paris* does feature in (36) – and precisely as the head of definite noun phrases presupposing qualities such as influence (36), chic (37), and elegance (38):

(36) PARIS REVISES AN EARLIER EDITION OF THE MODE: The Coat-Frock of Velvet or Cloth in Black, Leather Colour, or Beige Is the Principal Item in the Restatement of the Mode.

LES COUTURIERS PROPOSENT, LA *PARISIENNE* DISPOSE: Les grandes collections lancent des thèmes divers. C'est seulement quand la *Parisienne* a opté que "les modes" deviennent "la mode."

(37) A TRAVELLER'S GUIDE TO SMARTNESS: Paris Sends Minute Directions for Reaching This Destination by Means of a Particularly New and Smart Trunk Line and Costumes Expressing Both Charm and Practicality.

MÊME EN VOYAGE, LA *PARISIENNE* VEUT RESTER CHIC: Un choix judicieux en matière de toilette et de bagage est nécessaire si l'on veut conserver en voyage toute son élégance; *Vogue* a résolu ce problème difficile.

(38) REBOUX MAKES THIRTEEN OF THE SMARTEST HATS IN PARIS

SEIZE CHAPEAUX CHOISIS PAR LA *PARISIENNE* ÉLÉGANTE CHEZ REBOUX

Despite such compensations, it can be concluded that, as a powerful strategy for naming the quintessence of femininity, the epithet *Parisienne* carries rich connotations in the American edition of *Vogue* that are often lost or attenuated in the French edition.

3.3 “Woman” and her attributes

Though less frequent than the lexical items previously analysed, it is important to consider the noun *woman* (17 occurrences) and its use in context within *Vogue_English*. The Word Sketch for this lemma shows that it appears as the head of noun phrases such as *the woman of society* and *the clever woman*, or as premodifier in expressions like *woman’s sweetness* and *dainty woman’s charm*. Despite being single occurrences, these definite noun phrases presuppose a conception of femininity associated with smartness, glamour, and social distinction – a view generally maintained in translation. The analysis of parallel concordances reveals that equivalent expressions were selected in French, namely *les femmes du monde*, *la femme la plus raisonnable*, *charme féminin*, and *charme délicat de la femme*, thereby preserving the positive connotations of the English versions. Other concordance lines, however, reveal instances of mismatch:

- (39) LOOKING BACKWARD AT THE MODE: The Art of the Couturier Is Now Often Devoted to the Back of the Costume, and the Charm of *Woman*, like the Might of the Parthians, Is Most Apparent As She Departs.
UNE MODE OÙ LE DOS EST GRAND FAVORI: Avec cette mode qui déploie surtout du raffinement dans le dos des robes, les *femmes*, modernes Parthes, ne lanceront-elles leurs flèches qu’au moment de fuir?
- (40) THE PERFUME OF THE COUTURE: The Great Dressmakers Are Now Creating Perfumes, For This Is a Complicated Era When a Fragrance, As Well As a Frock, Must Suit a *Woman’s* Individuality.
LES PARFUMS DES GRANDS COUTURIERS RENCONTRENT LA FAVEUR DES *FEMMES*
- (41) SMART GOLF CLOTHES TO THE FORE! In Order to Achieve Top Form on the Links, the *Woman* of Chic Dresses Just As Carefully for Tees and Clubs As for Clubs and Teas.
VÊTEMENTS DE GOLF PRATIQUES ET ÉLÉGANTS: Simple et pratique, telles sont les principales caractéristiques du costume adopté par les joueurs de golf soucieux avant tout de sport.
- (42) VOGUE SKETCHES THE BEAUTIFUL NEW JEWELS OF THE SMARTEST *WOMEN* IN PARIS
LA RENAISSANCE DES PIERRES PRÉCIEUSES DE COULEUR

As these examples show, when the phrase *the charm of woman* is replaced by the unmodified noun *les femmes* (39), or when *woman's individuality* becomes *la faveur des femmes* (40), the emphasis on female glamour and self-expression is diminished. Moreover, extracts (41) and (42) represent instances of creative adaptation or rewriting, which are frequent in the French edition of *Vogue* and may result in loss of positive gendered connotations, evoked in this case by noun phrases such as *the woman of chic* and *the smartest women in Paris*.

As a compensation strategy, however, French titles occasionally introduce evaluative meanings related to the noun *femme* that are absent from the English versions:

- (43) HATS FOR THE YEARS OF DISCRETION: Only by Dressing the Age One Looks, or a Wee Bit Older, Can One Be Sure of Looking As Young As One Feels.
LES CHAPEAUX DE LA SECONDE JEUNESSE: Rien ne fait plus valoir les charmes éternels de la *femme* qu'un chapeau choisi avec un goût sûr et une science précise de l'heure.
- (44) THE ENSEMBLE ENTERS THE BOUDOIR IN PARIS
DE L'HARMONIE D'UNE JOLIE *FEMME* ET DE SON DÉCOR
- (45) THE CHARM SCHOOL OF MILLINERY
LES CHAPEAUX D'AUTOMNE ACCENTUENT LE CHARME DE LA *FEMME*
- (46) VOGUE POINTS FOR THE SPRING WARDROBE: Important Advices of Recent Date from Paris That Include Many Matters of Interest, from the Shape of the Newest Hat to That of the Smartest Hand-Bag.
LE PRINTEMPS FAIT SURGIR DES PARURES NOUVELLES: En même temps qu'elle modifie sa silhouette, la *femme* renouvelle les détails de sa parure et la forme de ses accessoires préférés.

In these examples, the use of noun phrases such as *les charmes éternels de la femme* (43), *une jolie femme* (44), and *le charme de la femme* (45), which have no direct equivalents in the English titles, enhances the appeal typically associated with the female figure in *Vogue*. Moreover, the choice of a completely different construction and of verbs like *modifie* and *renouvelle* in (46) emphasises woman's agency, assertiveness, and active participation in modernity. Overall, these expressions articulate a view of femininity closely tied to an appealing sophistication and a sense of opulent allure that encompasses both clothing and the image of the adorned female body. At the same time, they portray women as active agents in shaping their own identities, engaging in physical and mental actions related to fashion and embodiment. Though with varying emphasis, both editions of *Vogue* consistently present the female subject as one who recognises her aspirations, embraces her desires, and actively

pursues their fulfilment through encounters with the fashion world as experiences that promote agential control, female independence, individuality, and sensory pleasure.

4. Concluding remarks

This essay has drawn attention to the reciprocal significance of the largely interdisciplinary domains of gender, periodical, and translation studies, highlighting the crucial role that language and translation play in the discursive representation of female identity across different periodical cultures. It has further emphasised the status of the woman's magazine as a distinctive cultural object that, among other functions, provides fertile ground for investigating how gender ideologies and ideals of femininity circulate and are received through translation conceived as cultural adaptation. Focusing on three representative examples – *Paris*, *Parisienne*, and *woman/femme* – the titles comprising the dataset for this study were primarily examined for their characteristic ways of naming and referring to the sphere of womanhood. Particular attention was devoted to the construction of noun phrases that either literally or metaphorically designate female subjects, as well as the connotations attached to such naming strategies, with the aim of exploring how a specific ideal of womanliness was construed by the language employed in the fashion features of *Vogue US* and *Vogue France* during the 1920s.

Notwithstanding differences in lexical selection, both editions of the magazine – which targeted the same ideal readership but were nonetheless embedded in distinct cultural contexts – consistently promoted an identical high standard of femininity. This ideal was linguistically construed in terms of elegance, fashionability, modernity, novelty, originality, and distinction – all qualities predominantly epitomised by French fashion culture. In *Vogue US*, these paradigms were conveyed as highly desirable traits embodied by *Paris*, personified as the modern woman of fashion, and by the *Parisienne*, presented as the archetype of fashionable femininity, alongside the positive attributes attached to the lemma *woman*. Though the allure of the smart and chic lady clearly persisted in *Vogue France*, the widespread use of creative and culturally adaptative strategies as well as rewriting in titles, subtitles, and article texts ultimately reduced emphasis on the identification of womanliness with French fashionability – an association that the target audience could easily take for granted. As evidenced by the examples previously discussed, not only do *Paris*, *Parisienne*, and *woman/femme* appear less frequently in the French titles, but their rich connotations are often toned down or lost in translation, particularly when these nouns are replaced by alternative lexical items that shift agency onto inanimate entities such as garments, or when

titles are rendered as noun phrases that remove the idea of female agency conveyed by certain predicates.

Despite inevitable linguistic and cultural variations, these texts nonetheless contributed to shaping the identity of modern Western women through their endorsement of consumerism. From the late 19th century onwards, the close connection between fashion, femininity, modernity, and pleasurable consumption became a defining feature of the woman's magazine, itself increasingly positioned as a commodity granting access to a universe of commodities. Beetham's (1996, 2) characterisation of feminine periodicals as texts "constructing an identity for the individual reader as gendered and sexual being" and operating "at the intersection of [...] money, public discourse and individual desire" is particularly illuminating in this respect. In interwar women's magazines, elements such as advertisements, illustrations, and fashion reportage emerged as spaces of sensory gratification, especially visual pleasure. In contrast with earlier ideals of modesty and deference to male desire, these publications redefined the figure of woman "both by the activity of looking – whether through plate-glass windows or at newspaper advertisements – and by how she looked herself" (1996, 8). This emergent paradigm of the assertive woman as both "object of desire and potential desiring self" (1996, 147) located femininity within a context of pleasurable sensuality largely facilitated by fashion culture, and came to symbolise the modernity of consumer culture.

Although the adaptation/transediting of magazines and the rewriting of periodical texts for linguistically and culturally diverse audiences might reinforce or diminish particular strands of meaning – including those associated with womanhood – the discursive and translational strategies employed to articulate the intricate relationship between fashion, femininity, and modernity in the early 20th century remain of considerable importance. They prove that language use is rarely neutral or exempt from bias, values, and perspectives, but is instead shaped by assumptions about its audience and consistently reflects specific worldviews. As this analysis has sought to demonstrate, the linguistic choices involved in naming or referencing particular entities may express a variety of discursive strategies, more or less consciously adopted by text producers to convey ideological meanings. When such strategies are subjected to processes of translation and adaptation into other languages, cross-cultural divergences are especially likely to emerge.

Bionote

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