

La traduction dans une perspective de genre

Enjeux politiques, éditoriaux
et professionnels

Édité par

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Queering the Gender Binary

American Trans-Themed YA Literature and Its Translation into Italian

Beatrice Spallaccia

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ABSTRACT

After experiencing a long-lasting erasure, transgender identities have lately become a core issue in the political and cultural debates of many Western societies (Stryker 2017). For this reason, the present contribution focuses on trans visibility in YA literature between the US and Italy. First, it maps out the evolution of American trans-themed novels and explains how the Italian publishing has reacted to them. Second, it presents two case studies to discuss the main ethical and professional challenges in translating books which feature trans protagonists and gender-neutral language. In the first case study, the paper analyzes the strategies found in the Italian translation of the novel *Cemetery Boys* (Thomas 2020). Later, it focuses on a book which has not been translated into Italian yet, i.e., *Gender Queer* (Kobabe 2019a). In doing so, the contribution demonstrates that the translation of these texts implies navigating through innovation and linguistic compromise. In conclusion, it argues that, thanks to translation, teen readers can discover new possibility models, which are vital resources to understand themselves and the complex society they live in.

Keywords: YA literature; queer translation; trans identities; nonbinary; gender-neutral language.

Mots-clés: littérature jeunes adultes; traduction queer; transidentité; non binaire; langage neutre du point de vue du genre.

Educating young people about transgender identities is a highly debated issue in many Western countries, where two opposing views on trans rights have emerged. On the one hand, intersectional transfeminism seeks to deconstruct the rigid gender binary, on the other, transphobic views are often expressed by conservative social groups (Stryker 2017). This debate also encompasses other viewpoints on trans identities, such

as the beliefs expressed by the so-called Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminists (i.e., TERF). Contrary to intersectional feminists, TERF theorists and activists express a reactionary position on gender identity: in fact, they reject the assertion that trans women are women and thus focus exclusively on the oppression of cisgender women¹.

The present contribution focuses on trans-themed young adult (YA) literature between the US and Italy, that is, books targeted to readers between 12 and 18 years old. More specifically, in this paper, I first retrace the diachronic evolution of trans-centered literature for young readers in the US, and second, I discuss how the Italian publishing has reacted to it. Then, my focus shifts to the gender-neutral language often found in these books and I discuss the main problems it poses when translated from English into Italian. As the paper shows, this process is particularly challenging because English and Italian have two different grammatical gender systems: the former is a natural gender language and distinguishes gender through pronouns, while most nouns have no grammatical marking of gender (Prewitt-Freilino, Caswell, and Laakso 2012, 269). Conversely, the latter is a gendered language, and it lacks gender-neutral pronouns. As for nouns,

[they] are always assigned a feminine or masculine (or sometimes neuter) gender. When said nouns refer to people, they generally reflect the gender of the individual in question, and other dependant forms, such as adjectives and pronouns carry the same gender markers as the nouns to which they refer. (*Ibidem*)

To show the translation challenges posed by the literature here under analysis, I provide two case studies: first, I present one of the most recent Italian translations of a trans-centered American novel, i.e., *Cemetery Boys* (Thomas 2020), to discuss the strategies employed to maintain a gender inclusive narrative. Second, I focus on a graphic memoir that makes extensive use of gender-neutral language and pronouns, i.e., *Gender Queer*, by nonbinary and asexual author Maia Kobabe (2019a). As this text has not been translated into Italian yet, the contribution discusses the main challenges of translating a nonbinary-themed book into Italian². Before starting this analysis, below I provide a terminological note to clarify how I use some terms related to sexual minorities.

¹ A cis(gender) person is someone whose gender identity matches their assigned birth sex.

² The present contribution was completed and sent for submission in June 2022. Only months later an Italian translation of Maia Kobabe's *Gender Queer: A Memoir* was released by BeccoGiallo publishing house (translation by Antonia Mattiello).

1. TERMINOLOGY

In this article, I employ the acronym LGBTQ+ to refer to all people who do not identify as heterosexual and/or cis(gender). Here, the symbol + is intended as an expansion of the acronym to include all possible identities related to gender, sex, and sexual orientation (e.g., intersex, pansexual, asexual, etc.).

As for the “T” in the acronym, I prefer using the term *transgender* instead of *transsexual*, as today the latter only refers to “a person who has had gender affirmation surgery” (Jenkins and Cart 2018, 162) and is perceived by many as having a pathologizing connotation (Bernini 2017, 83). I follow Susan Stryker’s use of the adjective *transgender* (or simply *trans*) as a broad umbrella term, “to refer to people who move away from the gender they were assigned at birth, people who cross over (trans-) the boundaries constructed by their culture to define and contain that gender” (2017, 1). This usage of the term was first theorized by Leslie Feinberg, who employed *transgender* to refer to all people “who cross the cultural boundaries of sex and gender” (1996, xii) and to call “for a political alliance between all individuals who were marginalized or oppressed due to their difference from social norms of gendered embodiment” (Stryker 2006, 4).

I also make specific reference to different identities that are commonly grouped under the transgender umbrella. More specifically, as my interest in this contribution is to investigate identities that fall out of the gender binary, I use adjectives like *genderqueer*, *gender nonconforming*, and *nonbinary*. As Stryker explains (2017, 24),

The[se] terms all refer to people who do not conform to binary notions of the alignment of sex, gender, gender identity, gender role, gender expression, or gender presentation. [...] *Gender nonconforming* (or *gender variant*) is more neutrally descriptive of behavior; *genderqueer* (or *gender queer*) is associated more with particular subcultural forms of gender expression that have emerged in LGBT communities [...]; and *nonbinary* is an emerging terminological preference among younger generations.

Finally, in some passages of this contribution, to respect nonbinary authors’ choice, I employ two sets of gender-neutral pronouns, i.e., the singular they (*they/them*) and the Spivak pronouns (*el/em/eir*). Although both sets of pronouns are present in today queer communities, their usage has evolved through different paths. In fact, the ‘singular they’ dates back to the 14th century (Baron 2020, 149), but became widely used as a nonbinary pronoun only in late 2010s (Merriam-Webster

2019). Conversely, Spivak pronouns “were promoted as gender-neutral alternatives by the mathematician Michael Spivak in the 1980s and thereafter on LambdaMoo and other online discussion groups” (Baron 2020, 128).

In the section below I provide an overview of the evolution of trans-themed books in the US.

2. TRANS-THEMED YA LITERATURE IN THE US³

Trans protagonists made a late appearance in YA literature, if compared to other LGBTQ+ identities⁴. In fact, they were not represented up until the early 2000s (Jenkins and Cart 2018). Talya Sokoll has labeled this prolonged trans absence “the forgotten T”, to underline that in LGBT Young Adult literature “most books published [...] only focused on the first three letters” (2013, 23). According to Katherine Cramer and Jill Adams (2016, 123), the first YA trans novel is *What Happened to Lani Garver* (Plum-Ucci 2002), which portrays a gender non-conforming character. In the following years, only three other books were published: *Parrotfish* (Wittlinger 2007), which introduced YA audience to the first representation of a trans boy, *Luna* (Peters 2004), and *Almost Perfect* (Katcher 2009), both featuring trans girls as major characters.

Although these texts are often celebrated as milestones for trans visibility, they still fall into the category of “problem novels” (i.e., books which portray transness as the primary aspect of the protagonist’s identity), and present several heteronormative tropes, such as family rejection, violence, disgust, and the notion of being ‘trapped in the wrong body’. Different researchers (cf. Cramer and Adams 2016; Pini, Keys, and Riggs 2018; Butler 2020; Corbett 2020) have interpreted these tropes as the unintentional results of a ubiquitous “cis gaze”: this expression designates the systemic stereotyped representation of trans identities from a cisgender point of view, which have dominated not only the publishing industry but also mass media and popular culture (cf. Mitchell 2017).

³ For a complete list of titles see the Appendix. Each entry of this bibliography also indicates the character’s gender identity, e.g., *trans girl*, *trans boy*, *nonbinary*.

⁴ The first gay YA book was published in 1969 (i.e., Donovan’s *I’ll Get There: It Better Be Worth the Trip*) and the first lesbian novel appeared in 1978 (i.e., Scoppettone’s *Happy Endings Are All Alike*).

However, since the early 2010s, trans representations in YA literature have increased dramatically, reaching an overall number of 52 titles available today⁵. In qualitative terms, a radical change occurred in 2012: this year saw the publication of Rachel Gold's *Being Emily*, which made Gold the first openly trans author to have a trans-themed book published in the US. Since then, genderqueer, nonbinary, and other trans writers have started to author an increasing number of books, published by independent publishers as well as by imprints of the so-called 'big 5'⁶. Their success must be considered a revolution in an industry where non-cis authors had long been rejected and their stories considered not marketable enough (Stoeve 2020).

As noted by Cramer and Adams (2016), Jenkins and Cart (2018), and Corbett (2020), trans visibility in YA literature has developed in conjunction with two trends in pop culture. On the one hand, in the mid-2010s, campaigns like *We Need Diverse Books* and *Own Voice* were launched online to call for "diversity in the characters, authors, and publishers of children's and young adult literature, with widespread attention and support" (Corbett 2020, 5). On the other, the same period saw the creation of TV and web series with trans protagonists (e.g., *I Am Jazz*, *Transparent*, *Pose*), as well as an increased fame of trans and nonbinary public figures, such as Laverne Cox, Elliot Page, and Demi Lovato.

Also thanks to these cultural shifts, YA literature has become more and more diverse. In terms of formats, several trans authors have produced memoirs, providing queer teens with inspiring positive models. In terms of themes, most recent books have featured a range of intersectional queer identities, thus celebrating protagonists who are genderqueer or nonbinary, as well as black or of different cultural heritage, such as *Jaya and Rasa* (Patel 2017), *Pet* (Emezi 2019), *Cemetery Boys* (Thomas 2020), and *Felix ever after* (Callender 2020).

The following section attempts to explain how the Italian publishing industry has reacted to American trans-centered YA books.

⁵ Although this number is the result of extensive research, it is extremely difficult to provide the exact amount of books published in this field, especially due to the recent increase in self-published literature (Bittner, Ingrey, and Stamper 2016).

⁶ 'Big 5' refers to Western major publishing companies, i.e., Penguin Random House, Hachette, HarperCollins, Simon & Schuster, and Macmillan.

3. ITALIAN TRANSLATION OF TRANS-THEMED YA BOOKS

Until the late 2010s Italian publishing did not show interest in trans YA literature coming from the US. This may respond to a prejudiced attitude that has considered LGBTQ+ visibility dangerous for teen readers (Salvi 2015). Therefore, it can be interpreted as an example of what Julie Tarif calls “translatorship” (2018, 394), i.e., censorship carried out at various moments of the translation process. More specifically, non-translation can be considered “censorship prior to publication” (*ibid.*, 402): by preventing the publication of the text in the target language, it preemptively blocks the circulation of its message in a new cultural context. Given the late appearance of trans-themed books translated from English into Italian and their scarce number, Italian publishing seems to have long applied this type of censorship to trans literature for young adults.

As the bibliography in Appendix shows, only five out of the 52 trans titles have been translated into Italian so far. The first timid approach to these books came in 2010, when Giunti published Sara Reggiani’s translation of *Luna*, six years after the American text came out. Then, between 2017 and 2020, two novels authored by Meredith Russo were translated into Italian, i.e., *If I Was Your Girl* and *Birthday*. The former was translated by Silvia D’Ovidio and published in 2017 by Newtown Compton as *Volevo essere la tua ragazza*, while the latter was translated by Maddalena Mendolicchio and published in 2020 by Hope as *Un compleanno ancora*. In the early 2020s, the interest in translating trans YA books has grown: in fact, 2021 and 2022 respectively saw the translation of *Cemetery Boys* (Thomas 2020) and *Felix Ever After* (Callender 2020), both by Martina del Romano for Mondadori.

When I asked her to comment on the translation strategies she used for these books, Del Romano (2022) said that translating *Felix Ever After* was relatively easy in terms of gendered language: in fact, Callender always uses male third-person pronouns for the protagonist, who first identifies as a trans boy and later as demiboy (i.e., a partial variation of a nonbinary identity). Conversely, the translation of *Cemetery Boys* was more complex, as I discuss below.

3.1. “*Cemetery Boys*”: translation challenges

Published in 2020 by Swoon Reads, *Cemetery Boys* is the debut novel of Aiden Thomas, a trans author of Latin American heritage. It is the first

trans-centered novel by an openly trans author to become a *New York Times* bestseller. The novel tells the adventures of a trans boy named Yadiel, who summons a ghost with the help of his friend Maritza to prove himself in front of his community.

The main translation challenges of this book concern two gender-neutral terms used to underline Yadiel's Cuban-Mexican heritage, i.e., the adjective *Latinx* and the noun *brujx*. The former is a relatively new term indicating people of Latin or Central American descent, while the latter is employed by Thomas to refer to the protagonist's community of mix-gendered people with supernatural powers. In both terms, the *-x* suffix is used to queer *-a* and *-o* endings, which are typical of gendered languages such as Spanish and Italian. It was thus important to maintain Thomas' inclusive approach.

While keeping both *Latinx* and *brujx*, Del Romano chose neutral linguistic expressions when the terms were used in the singular form. Conversely, when they were employed as plural, she resorted to an innovative translation strategy to stress the gender-varied nature of the community. In fact, as she explains in the translator's note at the beginning of the book (Del Romano 2021, 8), she created a combination of gender-neutral endings, using a new morpheme, that is *-3*, as a suffix for adjectives, verbs, articles, and nouns that concord with *brujx*. The following example shows the coexistence of these strategies:

When pierced into the hearts of four humans, the daggers used their spirits to feed the amulet, giving **the brujx** who wore it immense—but dark—power. Lita⁷ liked to pull the daggers out on special occasions—including Día de Muertos—to scare younger **brujx** and lecture them about the treachery of abusing their powers.

(Thomas 2020, 37)

Se conficcati nei cuori di quattro esseri umani, i pugnali ne intrappolavano gli spiriti per alimentare l'amuleto, donando immenso – seppur oscuro – potere a **qualsiasi brujx** lo indossasse. A Lita piaceva tirar fuori i pugnali nelle occasioni speciali – incluso il Día de Muertos – per spaventare **l3 giovani brujx e metterl3** in guardia dai pericoli insiti nell'abuso dei propri poteri.

(Thomas 2021, 52)

Del Romano's strategy must be put in the broader context of recent experiments to queer Italian. In fact, since the 2010s, feminist and LGBTQ+ activists have used orthographic conventions such as *-**, *-@*, *-x*, *-u* in the place of gendered suffixes to refer to nonbinary people and to avoid generic masculine forms (Comandini 2021, 43-44). More recently, activist and researcher Luca Boschetto has suggested integrating

⁷ Short for *abulelita*, affectionate term meaning *grandma*. Lita is Yadiel's grandmother.

the Italian language with two gender-neutral morphemes, that is, -ə (the so-called “schwa breve”) and -ɜ (the so-called “schwa lungo”), for singular and plural forms respectively (Gheno 2022). Since then, schwa, which is a symbol indicating a neutral vowel sound in the International Phonetic Alphabet, has become the protagonist of a linguistic culture war.

In fact, on the one hand, some Italian sociolinguists have welcomed schwa as an experimental device of inclusive language, useful both to overcome generic masculine and to refer to nonbinary people (cf. Gheno 2021; Manera 2021).

Conversely, other linguists have strongly criticized the use of schwa for three main reasons. First, according to them, it causes problems related to morphology, syntax, textuality, and pronunciation of nouns and determiners (Giusti 2022, 14-16). Second, it raises accessibility issues for those who have limited access to written and/or spoken Italian due to physical or other types of disabilities (cf. De Santis 2022). Third, being a tool for gender-neutral language, it contributes to the linguistic invisibility of women in a language system that has often ignored or discriminated against them (cf. Robustelli 2021).

Despite these criticisms, in very recent years schwa as a neutral morpheme has caught on among gender-sensitive youth, and it has been used regularly also by effequ publishing house in its non-fiction production (Di Paolo 2021).

In this context, *Cemetery Boys* is the first translated YA novel using schwa. However, as Del Romano notes (2021, 8), it is a daring device in a literary text, and it must be handled with care. For this reason, schwa endings appear in the novel only when it was impossible to find a more traditional linguistic solution (e.g., neutral collective nouns and verbal expressions, common-gender adjectives and nouns). I suggest interpreting Del Romano’s solution as an example of what B.J. Epstein defines *acqueering*. As Epstein (2017, 121) writes, by *acqueering* a text,

[translators] can focus on the queerness of a character or a situation, or they can push a reader to note how a queer character is treated by another character or by the author, or they can otherwise “hijack” a reader’s attention by bringing issues of sexuality and gender identity to the fore.

In this case, Del Romano’s translation strategies succeed in strengthening the queer nature of the book. This text exemplifies that translating gender-neutral language is one of the most challenging aspects to make queer literature available for Italian readership. Along with the cultural backwardness of Italy on LGBTQ+ issues, this is probably one of the

reasons why many Italian publishers still refrain from translating American YA novels that make an extensive use of gender-neutral language.

Therefore, in the next section I turn my attention to one of the most interesting books of this kind, i.e., *Gender Queer: A Memoir*.

4. “GENDER QUEER” BY MAIA KOBABE

4.1. *Book and author*

Gender Queer is a graphic memoir which recounts the journey of self-discovery and coming out of its author, American cartoonist and illustrator Maia Kobabe, who identifies as nonbinary and asexual, and uses gender neutral Spivak pronouns *e/em/eir*. As Kobabe explains, although e grew up in a progressive and supportive family, such a journey has been complex and intricately, given the gender expectations deeply embedded in today’s society. The text was published in May 2019 by Oni Press, and it can be considered a crossover book. In fact, its primarily intended readers were Kobabe’s parents and extended family who were struggling to fully understand nonbinary identities and to use gender-neutral language (Kobabe 2021). Since its publication, however, the book has attracted a multigenerational audience of teens and adults. For this reason, it was included in many American school libraries and in 2020 it won the prestigious Alex Award Winner, that is given by the American Library Association (ALA) to books “written for adults that have special appeal to young adults” (ALA n.d.). Despite – or probably because of – its strong appeal to teen readers, *Gender Queer* has also attracted the attention of many conservative detractors: it became the most frequently challenged book of 2021, thus landing “at the center of the newest wave of book censorship in America public schools and libraries” (Kois 2022).

However, *Gender Queer* is a key text to understand the struggles experienced by nonbinary and asexual individuals today. Moreover, its readers can experience a journey through gender-neutral language, an issue that poses many difficulties when translating it into Italian. As discussed above, the different ways in which English and Italian express gender play a central role in translating queer books, because the translator must keep the characters’ fluid identity, while writing a text that is easily understandable in the target language (Fontanella 2019, 101).

This is particularly difficult for Kobabe's book. For constraints of space, below I focus on the element that I consider most challenging for a potential Italian translator, that is, the use of gender-neutral pronouns.

4.2. *Translating nonbinary identities*

In several passages of the memoir, the author employs two different sets of pronouns, i.e., *they/them* and the Spivak pronouns. First, Kobabe uses the singular *they* to present one of *eir* teachers, Melanie Gillman, but does not find comfortable employing this pronoun for *eirself*. Then, *e* is introduced to the Spivak pronouns by a peer cartoonist and decides *they* are more suitable to express *eir* own identity. As Italian has traditionally lacked a gender-neutral pronoun, this book presents a double translation challenge: on the one hand, the translator must find a way to refer to a nonbinary person, on the other, *they* must decide how to indicate the pronoun switch. Following Del Romano's approach discussed above, I suggest that here the translation should contemplate a mix of traditional and more innovative strategies.

First, the translator should identify the passages where the narrative structure may enable to ellipit pronouns and avoid other gendered markers to refer to a nonbinary person. Below I provide a short quote from a panel and a suggested translation:

Melanie Gillman. They are: a comic professor, author of *As The Crow Flies*, an all-around excellent person.
(Kobabe 2019a, 171)

Melanie Gillman: insegna fumetto, ha scritto *As The Crow Flies*, è una persona eccezionale in tutto e per tutto.
[suggested translation]

This solution, however, is not viable in other cases, namely when both gender-neutral pronouns are mentioned. This translation difficulty is exemplified in a panel on page 204, which includes four sets of pronouns, i.e., traditional female and male pronouns (*she/her* and *he/him*), *they/them*, and the Spivak pronouns. Here each set is graphically represented in the form of a pronoun patch that Kobabe and other authors can choose to wear during a queer comic exposition. In this case, a translator cannot avoid translating the text in the pins, for two main reasons. First, manipulating graphic elements in books like graphic novels and memoirs is strongly advised against (Zanettin 2018). Second, it would be ethically questionable because it would decrease the queerness of the text. Although this issue is very challenging for any gendered language, the Spanish and French translations of the memoir provide interesting

solutions. In fact, these texts employ pronouns which have been recently introduced in the languages at issue, i.e., the Spanish *elles* and *elle* (Kobabe 2019b, 204), and the French *iel/lea* and *ille/lo* (Kobabe 2022, 204), used for the singular they and the Spivak pronouns, respectively⁸.

As mentioned, this level of linguistic experimentation has not been reached in Italian yet: as a result, this language still lacks gender-neutral pronouns. To partially fill this void, some publishers and authors have suggested recurring to schwa to create a new pronoun, that is, *lɔi* (Cavallo, Lugli, e Prearo 2021, 32). So far, this neologism has been used only in some online niches, while raising some issues in the speaking language (Gheno 2022). However, *lɔi* could be a useful device to translate Kobabe's text, also considering that many potential queer readers may be already familiar with inclusive language. In addition, to facilitate reading for a more general audience, the translator could also explain this strategy in the peritext, for example by adding a note at the beginning of the book, as in the case of *Cemetery Boys*. Therefore, in the panel at issue, a first provisional solution could consist in translating one set of pronouns as *lɔi*.

This device, however, does not solve the problem of translating both sets of neutral pronouns in the pins. Alternatively, the translator could replace all pronouns with a term indicating the job of the person wearing the patch, such as the Italian noun for *author*. This term could then be declined recurring to both traditional gendered forms and gender-neutral morphemes, such as *autor**, *autorə*, *autrice*, and *autore*, replacing respectively *they/them*, *elemleir*, *shelber*, *helhim*. Although this strategy can be a viable solution to translate the panel at issue, to some extent it may also be considered a mild form of *eradicalization*, which, according to Epstein (2017, 121) risks to downplay the queerness that characterizes the source text (i.e., the protagonist's struggle to find the right pronoun for herself).

Thus, the translation strategies suggested here are just partial attempts which do not solve the linguistic challenges brought on by Kobabe's book. Rather, these attempts show that a more extensive discussion is needed to keep gender fluidity alive when translating this book into gendered languages. Moreover, they signal that the highly polarized debate on Italian inclusive language between those who reject schwa and those who support it should further research the linguistic

⁸ For more information on gender-neutral pronouns in French and Spanish, see Swamy et Mackenzie 2022 and Papadopoulos 2022, respectively.

problems pointed out above, and should elaborate viable solutions not to lose genderqueer identities in translation.

These paragraphs have shown that today the translation of YA books featuring nonbinary protagonists sits at the intersection between linguistic compromise and innovation. This negotiation is important because it can create sites of possibility for diversity and inclusion. Such sites of possibility are vital resources for both queer and non-queer younger readers, to navigate the complex society they live in, as I conclude below.

5. CONCLUSION

This contribution has shown that, although the number of trans-themed books is still relatively small, the (previously) “forgotten T” of the LGBTQ+ acronym has gained more and more visibility in YA fiction and beyond. This revolution has come in a turbulent time: if, on the one hand, trans identities are gradually seen and valued, on the other, they have become a front issue in the culture wars on gender. In fact, while the US has witnessed an increase in anti-trans sentiments and legislation (Case 2019), Italy still lacks a legal measure to tackle anti-LGBTQ+ hate crimes, due to the strong homotransphobic prejudice of a vast part of Italian politics (Turano 2021).

While recent research shows that, in the US, nearly one in five trans and nonbinary youth attempted suicide in 2021, and more than three-quarters reported experiencing depression and anxiety (Trevor Project 2022), similar data are not even available for the Italian trans population. However, according to a 2022 report published by ILGA⁹, Italy is one of the most backward European countries in terms of LGBTQ+ rights. Furthermore, in June 2022 the suicide of an Italian trans teacher named Cloe Bianco lifted the veil on the rampant discrimination trans people still experience in their workplace, also in the public school system and under the watch of right-wing politicians (Accolla 2022).

In such a complex socio-cultural context, making queer text available for younger readers has become a key ethical issue in education. This literature, in fact, provides both queer and non-queer YAs with models to understand themselves and their peers. As Kobabe (2021)

⁹ Acronym for International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association.

writes, “removing or restricting queer books in libraries and schools is like cutting a lifeline for queer youth”, especially for more marginalized readers such as those who may lack financial means or those growing up in unsupportive families (Kobabe in Kois 2022).

This is equally true for translation. By translating American trans-centered books, Italian publishers can provide their young readers with “trans possibility models”, i.e., “examples of liveable trans lives in all their complexity and myriad forms” (Pearce, Gupta, and Moon 2020, 1). Undoubtedly, this cultural shift is also played on the ground of linguistic inclusion. As noted by Dennis Baron (2020, 121), using gender-inclusive language “is not a just matter of being polite to genderqueer persons, or guaranteeing them equal opportunity – it can also be a matter of their survival”. Despite the major linguistic challenges analyzed above, this contribution has attempted to show that translation can be a fertile ground for suggesting alternative strategies. Far from being dogmatic solutions, these strategies are better understood as ways to show that further investigation and experiments are much needed to create a truly open, inclusive society, where gender diversity is not feared and censored, but welcomed and celebrated.

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APPENDIX

List of trans-themed YA books

- Andrews, Arin. 2014. *Some Assembly Required*. New York: Simon & Schuster. [trans boy]
- Beam, Cris. 2011. *I Am J*. Boston: Little, Brown. [trans boy]
- Borinsky, Agnes. 2020. *Sasha Masha*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux. [trans girl]
- Bray, Libba. 2011. *Beauty Queens*. New York: Scholastic. [trans girl]
- Brewer, Z. 2020. *Into the Real*. New York: Quill Tree. [genderqueer]
- Brezenoff, Steve. 2011. *Brooklyn, Burning*. Minneapolis: Lerner. [gender non-conforming]
- Callender, Kacen. 2020. *Felix Ever After*. New York: Balzer + Bray. [demiboy]

- Callender, Kacen. 2022. *Felix Ever After*. Trad. it. Martina Del Romano. Milano: Mondadori. [demiboy]
- Capetta, Amy Rose. 2018. *The Brilliant Death*. New York: Penguin. [gender fluid]
- Capetta, Amy Rose. 2021. *The Heartbreak Bakery*. Somerville (MA): Candlewick. [gender fluid]
- Clark, Kirsten Elizabeth. 2013. *FreakBOY*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux. [Genderqueer + trans woman]
- Clark, Kristen Elizabeth. 2016. *Jess, Chunk, and the Road Trip to Infinity*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux. [trans girl]
- Cronn-Mills, Kirstin. 2012. *Beautiful Music for Ugly Children*. Woodbury (MN): Flux. [trans boy]
- Daniels, April. 2017. *Dreadnought*. New York: Diversion books. [trans girl]
- Daniels, April. 2017. *Sovereign*. New York: Diversion books. [trans girl]
- Davis, Tanita S. 2012. *Happy Families*. New York: Knopf. [trans woman]
- Deaver, Mason. 2019. *I Wish You All the Best*. New York: PUSH. [nonbinary]
- Deaver, Mason. 2021. *The Ghosts We Keep*. New York: PUSH. [nonbinary]
- Devine, Eric. 2016. *Look Past*. Philadelphia: Running. [trans boy]
- Emezi, Akwaeke. 2019. *Pet*. New York: Penguin. [trans girl]
- Fitzsimons, Isaac. 2021. *The Passing Playbook*. New York: Penguin. [trans boy]
- Fu, Kim. 2014. *For Today I Am a Boy*. Boston: Harcourt. [trans girl]
- Garvin, Jeff. 2016. *Symptoms of Being Human*. New York: Balzer + Bray. [gender fluid]
- Gino, Alex. 2022. *Alice Austen Lived Here*. New York: Scholastic. [nonbinary]
- Gold, Rachel. 2012. *Being Emily*. Tallahassee (FL): Bella Books. [trans girl]
- Gow, Robin. 2022. *A Million Quiet Revolutions*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux. [trans boys]
- Hill, Katie Rain. 2014. *Rethinking Normal*. New York: Simon & Schuster. [trans girl]
- Hyde, Catherine Ryan. 2010. *Jumpstart the World*. New York: Knopf. [trans boy]
- Katcher, Brian. 2009. *Almost Perfect*. New York: Delacorte. [trans girl]
- Kobabe, Maia. 2019. *Gender Queer: A Memoir*. Portland: Oni press. [genderqueer]
- Lee, Emery. 2021. *Meet Cute Diary*. New York: Quill Tree. [trans boy]
- Levithan, David. 2013. *Two Boys Kissing*. New York: Knopf. [trans boy]
- McLemore, Anna-Marie. 2016. *When the Moon Was Ours*. New York: St. Martin's. [trans boy]
- McSmith, Tobly. 2020. *Stay Gold*. New York: HarperTeen. [transboy]
- McSmith, Tobly. 2021. *Act Cool*. New York: Quill Tree. [trans boy]
- Metzger, Matthew J. 2016. *Spy stuff*. Glen Allen (VA): Jms books. [trans boy]

- Nijkamp, Marieke. 2020. *Even If We Break*. Naperville (IL): Sourcebooks. [nonbinary]
- Patel, Sonia. 2017. *Jaya and Rasa: A Love Story*. El Paso (TX): Cinco Puntos Press. [trans boy]
- Peters, Julie Anne. 2004. *Luna*. Boston: Little, Brown. [trans girl]
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- Plum-Ucci, Carol. 2002. *What Happened to Lani Garver*. Orlando: Harcourt. [gender non-conforming]
- Russo, Meredith. 2016. *If I Was Your Girl*. New York: Flatiron. [trans girl]
- Russo, Meredith. 2017. *Volevo essere la tua ragazza*. Trad. it. Silvia D'Ovidio. Roma: Newton Compton. [trans girl]
- Russo, Meredith. 2019. *Birthday*. New York: Flatiron. [trans girl]
- Russo, Meredith. 2020. *Un compleanno ancora*. Trad. it. Maddalena Mendolicchio. Casalserugo: Hope. [trans girl]
- Salvatore, Steven. 2021. *Can't Take That Away*. New York: Bloomsbury. [gender-queer]
- Sanchez, Jasper. 2021. *The (Un)popular Vote*. New York: Katherine Tegen Books. [trans boy]
- Schmatz, Pat. 2015. *Lizard Radio*. Somerville (MA): Candlewick. [genderqueer]
- Schrieve, Hal. 2019. *Out of Salem*. New York: Triangle Square. [genderqueer]
- Siegert, Mia. 2020. *Somebody Told Me*. Minneapolis: Lerner. [bigender]
- Spangler, Brie. 2016. *Beast*. New York: Delacorte. [trans girl]
- Stoeve, Ray. 2021. *Between Perfect and Real*. New York: Abrams. [trans boy]
- Thomas, Aiden. 2020. *Cemetery Boys*. New York: Swoon Reads. [trans boy]
- Thomas, Aiden. 2021. *Cemetery boys*. Trad. it. Martina Del Romano. Milano: Mondadori. [trans boy]
- White, Andrew Joseph. 2022. *Hell Followed with Us*. Atlanta: Peachtree. [trans boy]
- Wittlinger, Ellen. 2007. *Parrotfish*. New York: Simon & Schuster. [trans boy]
- Wood, Jennie. 2014. *A Boy Like Me*. US: 215 INK. [trans boy]

RÉSUMÉ

Après avoir été longtemps invisibilisées, les identités transgenres sont devenues récemment l'objet de nombreux débats politiques et culturels dans les sociétés occidentales (Stryker 2017). Cette contribution se concentre dès lors sur la visibilité transgenre dans la littérature *Young Adults* entre les États-Unis et l'Italie. Elle retrace d'abord l'évolution des romans américains sur le thème de la transidentité et analyse la réception de ces ouvrages dans l'édition italienne. Elle

présente ensuite deux études de cas afin d'examiner les principaux défis éthiques et professionnels liés à la traduction de livres présentant des protagonistes trans et un langage neutre du point de vue du genre. Dans la première étude de cas, on analyse les stratégies adoptées dans la traduction italienne du roman *Cemetery Boys* (Thomas 2020). La seconde se focalise sur un livre qui n'a pas encore été traduit en italien, *Gender Queer* (Kobabe 2019a). L'étude montre ainsi que la traduction de ces textes implique de composer à la fois avec l'innovation et le compromis linguistique. L'article montre enfin que, grâce à la traduction, les jeunes lecteurs et lectrices peuvent découvrir de nouveaux modèles possibles, des ressources fondamentales pour se comprendre et comprendre la société complexe dans laquelle ils vivent.

