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# Using translation to chart the early spread of GAY terminology

*La traduction comme outil pour retracer les débuts de la diffusion de la terminologie GAY*

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## NOTES DE L'AUTEUR

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## TEXTE

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### 1. Introduction

- <sup>1</sup> This article presents a case study of how translation analysis helps to situate the transfer of GAY<sup>1</sup> as it began to spread from U.S. English to

some Spanish-, French-, and German-language communities starting in the 1950s. The important role that translations play in lexical development has been described, notably for scientific or technical terminologies in Romance in relation to classical languages or across vernaculars (Lépinette, 1998; Bertrand, Gerner & Stumpf, 2007; Duris, 2008; Ducos, 2013; Thibault and Lo Vecchio, 2020; Lo Vecchio, 2024). Closer to the current day, translation has also been integral to the internationalization of popular terminologies, and the ideas and power relations they convey.

- 2 GAY terminology represents the linguistic manifestation of what was arguably one of the most revolutionary social changes of the twentieth century: the discursive self-determination of queer people, going hand in hand with their visibilization and fight for equality and acceptance, however uneven the results have been. The translinguistic aspect of GAY terminological adoption, of course, cannot be separated from the larger globalist movement of activist solidarity, and this is a chief point of interest. Like any terminology that spreads beyond its group and function of origin, GAY lexis began in diastatically and diaphasically circumscribed conditions before gradual diffusion across particular diasystems, well beyond its U.S. English origin. In contrast to scientific or technical terminology, though, the discursive power relations are disrupted. The innovating social group was a stigmatized minoritized population whose semantic neologism served precisely to index in-group solidarity and dissimulate among the uninitiated. The sociopragmatic element takes on greater import in investigating not just how the queer was named, but who was doing the naming and from what ideological stance. For the social meaning of words does not reside in the denotative referentiality of linguistic signs, but in how lexical practices reflect, and enact, the complex multiplicity of extralinguistic power relations (Bourdieu, 1982; Boutet, 2016 [2010]).
- 3 By studying the translation of an influential source text, Donald Webster Cory's *The Homosexual in America*, and its resonance in print media, it is possible to trace the cross-linguistic spread of GAY at the earliest moment observable in the 1950s. In the broadest sense, translation establishes points of cultural contact between speakers (as writers) and their respective linguistic communities. It is from these points of contact in the written documentation that we can

observe cultural and linguistic transfers in operation, the starting point for categorial convergence that is coded into lexical terms.

- 4 As a work of variational lexical historiography, this paper insists on the role that lexicology can play in illuminating what we know about queer social history.

## 2. Toward linguistic self-determination in the twentieth century

- 5 In identifying points of cultural contact relevant for the transfer of modern LGBTQ terminologies, a crucial sociopragmatic question involves authorial subjectivity: who is innovating lexically at the source and who is translating to the target? Queer translational subjectivity evidently shifts over time, indicative of how extralinguistic factors play a role in the construction of queer lexis. Yet in no era does a queer (or any) lexis belong purely to an in-group or an out-group; the complex power relations and social hierarchies are reflected in who uses it, how, in what situations, including in the transfer from one language to another.
- 6 Starting in the twentieth century, cross-cultural flows start out from and center in-group discourse that explicitly asserts linguistic self-determination, although this is more a difference in degree than in kind. In the late nineteenth century, Karl Heinrich Ulrichs's activist terminology of URANISM was translated piecemeal and filtered through the pathologizing lens of the mainstream medical establishment. However, early in-group transfers are also known, such as in the writings of English activists John Addington Symonds (see Eribon, 2012 [1999], pp. 416–428; Brady, 2012; Lo Vecchio, 2020, p. 298; 2024) and Edward Carpenter (see Rowbotham, 2008, chaps. 10–11). Similarly, works like those of psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing's rife with first-person queer discourses always present these through the language of the investigator (see Oosterhuis, 2000, chap. 15); doubly so, where they are translated out of the German by specialists. The textual proximity is simply much closer to the queer subject in the sources available in the twentieth century – and the farther along we

get, the more we find queer translators themselves rendering queer texts, thus representative of in-group discursive practice at source and target level.

- 7 The extralinguistic media environment in the twentieth century altered the diffusion of discourse, minoritized ones among them. Even in the late nineteenth century, the flow of textual information was highly concentrated in Western societies, to such an extent that the trajectory of innovations such as SAPPHISM, URANISM, INVERSION, and HOMOSEXUALITY lead back to the same initial sources amid an international colingual dialogue (Lo Vecchio, 2024). With cross-linguistic transfers of GAY beginning in the 1950s and massively following Stonewall in the 1970s, or with QUEER in the 1990s, no monogenetic hypothesis of their export would hold up empirically or even intuitively. While speakers of many languages were adapting such words based on the same English pragmatic-semantic developments (thus it is not a case of so-called multiple etymology), obviously the transfer process occurred independently in multiple situations of contact, involving orality as much as written or audiovisual sources.
- 8 The polycentric nature of the diffusion process means that there is a real potential for a historical comparative sociolexicology, in which it would be possible to describe the discursive integration of GAY, like QUEER and many other internationalisms, in specific contact situations across the globe. Such variational research would have to engage with valuable sources currently unmediated electronically and requiring manual examination – all the more rewarding for that – such as activist archives at the local level. This historical comparative sociolexicology does not assume that word adoption in one place would necessarily have direct bearing on that in another – nor, though, does it naively pretend that each speech community was impervious to outside discourse: the fact that these became major internationalisms is the proof that the intercultural and colingual dialogue was pervasive and sustained.
- 9 Because GAY (like QUEER) spread globally among various communities of speakers who were not necessarily functionally bilingual or in any geographic situation of “contact”, its status as an internationalism must be explained outside the sociolinguistic framework that tends to view linguistic borrowing as primarily oral praxis within multilin-

gual speech communities (Thibault & Lo Vecchio, 2020). From that perspective, it is difficult to explain how spontaneous synchronous oral borrowing among contact bilinguals could lead to massive world-wide lexical developments in the era of mass media (and well before). Instead, the parsimonious explanation for the existence of internationalisms is that the written record and multimodal media play (and have always played) a decisive role in the spread of lexical innovations. In line with more recent theorizations prompted by the digital revolution, which has quickly demonstrated just how relevant – indispensable – mediated discourse is to language practice and change, here it is taken as fundamental that “[m]ediatized language is everyday language” and that “mediatisation is sociolinguistic change” (Coupland, 2016, p. 446; see also Androutsopoulos, 2016; Werner, 2022). As addressed in Wright (2023, chap. 1; cf. Schmid 2020, chap. 9), one way to problematize the role of mediatization in lexical spread is by calling upon social network theory: diffusion tends to occur among weak-tie uniplex networks (networks of speakers with less proximity, less frequency of contact, less overlap of contact) such as media arguably represents, rather than in strong-tie multiplex networks (the more close-knit networks typical of what could be considered speech communities) where innovations might originate.

- 10 One critical corollary, underpinning this paper along with other historical studies of queer language (e.g., Leap, 2020), is that activist in-group texts must not be seen as representing some ersatz simulacrum of queer discourse, as idealized vis-à-vis orality; they constitute queer discourse itself. The fact that candid speech about queer sexuality could have had violent and self-destructive consequences in public means that the sustained discourse in discreet publications may have been the sole medium of dialogue for many queer individuals at the time: a textual safe space, if you will. (Still today in many places, digital is for many people, closeted or otherwise, the only possible space in which to engage in queer-related dialogue, without ever needing to utter a single word.) Moreover, the intertextual queer (meta)discourse in the publications studied, or merely the fact of their translation, indicates that it was not inward-looking place-rootedness of geographically fixed speech communities then driving queer languaging practices (a “sedentarist” view; see Britain, 2016), but instead an outward-looking, globalist, translinguistic

impulse occurring in a context of international solidarity and seeking social change.

- 11 Already beginning in the 1950s, a number of sources indicate points of cultural contact in the early history of GAY lexis as it spread to languages other than U.S. English, the site of its semantic evolution. The timing is quite significant, because *gay* 'homosexual' had only just recently, since the late 1940s, begun to filter out of in-group use to be understood by larger swaths of the U.S. public. Playing on ambiguity with its then prototypical meaning ('merry, lively, joyful, spirited'), gay people initially used *gay* as a code word to recognize and express solidarity with other community members while dissimulating among the uninitiated (Simes, 1996, 2005; Butters, 1998; Lo Vecchio, 2020, chap. 11; Leap, 2020, pp. 14-15). As English *gay* spread among various subgroups in North America, its use is also then documented in translation or broader translational context. Following the intertextuality emerging from one momentous in-group source text makes it possible to chart out, however schematically, early instances of GAY consciousness among speakers of other languages.

### **3. Cory in translation: Cultural contact through a seminal gay text**

- 12 Exemplary of the early transfer process are the 1952 monographic translations into Spanish (Mexico) and French (France) of *The Homosexual in America: A Subjective Approach* (1951), by the pseudonymous Donald Webster Cory, actually Edward Sagarin. Considered groundbreaking in its time, this candid first-person account by a once politically engaged gay man also has considerable lexical value for the in-group argot it presents, enriched with metadiscourse about how *gay* functioned cryptically in its social context. The attention paid to Cory by the growing queer movement at the time, as recoverable in the textual documentation (including both the activist and generalist press, discussed in Section 4) and now historiography, indicates that his book and its translations did not stand alone but informed an international cultural dialogue (see Duberman, 2013 [1997]; on Cory's

influential book service and its Latin American reach, see Waters, 2021)<sup>2</sup>.

- 13 From a macro-cultural perspective, it is remarkable that the book was translated at all, and so quickly at that, indicative of interest and even openness toward the concerns of gay people – including gay women<sup>3</sup> and gay people of color, but it may go without saying that the author’s titular “subjective approach” centers, and extrapolates out from, the experience of a white gay man. While the content of *The Homosexual in America*, partial as it is, should not be taken to be broadly representative of queer experiences at that time, the book nevertheless had a demonstrable influence as a vector of lexical transmission both in English and in translation. It cannot be stated with certainty that the translators of this monograph were necessarily themselves from the out-group, yet nor do their discursive choices explicitly situate the translations in an in-group framework – thus blurring in translation the image of what, at its source, was a militant act of linguistic self-assertion. In hindsight, *The Homosexual in America* is also a sad testament to the complicated journey of self-acceptance and uneasy liberation of that era, with Sagarin renouncing the emancipatory spirit of the work in a later phase of his life characterized by an evidently tortured relationship with his sexual orientation (Duberman, 2013 [1997]).
- 14 In the lexicological perspective that is the focus here, the interest of *The Homosexual in America* resides not specifically in the individual choices the translators made for each lexical token in its discursive context; an extensive monographic analysis would be necessary to do justice to the several thousand LGBTQ-related tokens found across all three versions. Instead, the value lies in how the lexical types relate to the larger internal lexical structure of each language. This involves an onomasiological approach that situates the lexical types within their semantic field, establishing a chronology and geography of use from the earliest identifiable stage, comparing translational choices against other lexemes already lexicalized in the language including genetically related cognate forms, and constantly comparing the translated terms against the lexicography (and corpora) to determine whether or how they have already been described.

### 3.1. Lexical structure in the text and at the language level

- 15 The mere textual presence of *GAY* in translation already begins to establish a chronology and geography of *GAY* ‘homosexual’ history in Spanish and French, as extremely valuable early attested uses heretofore undescribed in the historical lexicography<sup>4</sup>. It is important to note the places of publication of the translations, Mexico and France, even as it would be an oversimplification to restrict the scope to Mexican Spanish and Hexagonal French, since the works could have been read anywhere; contextualizing the book’s reception via the activist and generalist press (Section 4) helps to situate its influence within more specific communities. Also fundamental is the diastratic parameter, in that the book describes the language practices of gay people from an in-group perspective (what might be considered a “community of practice” per Wright, 2023, chap. 2).
- 16 Among the many queer-related lexical items used or discussed in Cory’s book, *gay* is qualitatively the most consequential. Two chapters are devoted to the metalexical description of this semantic neologism: Chapter 9 provides an overview of numerous LGBTQ-related terms including argot, with *gay* chief among them (examples (2)-(4) below and lines 36-72 in Appendix A); Chapter 10 describes its use as a code word in a concrete example of two men cruising on “the Gayest Street in Town” (example (5) below and lines 73-87 in Appendix A). Significantly, the book also introduces readers to *straight* as the antonym of *gay*, as used in gay speech (see page locations in Appendix B).
- 17 Quantitatively, *gay* and *straight* are not the most frequent LGBTQ-related lexical types in the original work in English. In fact, the *homosexual* and *heterosexual* families<sup>5</sup> yield many more tokens overall: 1000+ for the *homosexual* family, 100+ for the *heterosexual* family vs. 200+ for *gay* and around 40 for *straight*. To be more precise, the original English work contains 224 tokens in the *gay* family, of which 212 are translatable; 12 occur in paratextual elements (index and chapter running heads) which were not reproduced in either translation. Here is a breakdown of these 212 translatable tokens in English:

| English text                                               |                                | Tokens |
|------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------|
| Grammatical breakdown                                      |                                |        |
| <i>gay</i> (adjective)                                     |                                | 182    |
| <i>gay</i> (undefined grammatical function; see below)     |                                | 16     |
| <i>gay</i> (noun plural, in invariable “the gay”)          |                                | 7      |
| <i>gaiety</i> (noun)                                       |                                | 4      |
| <i>gae, gaie</i> spelling variants (adjective)             |                                | 3      |
| Total                                                      |                                | 212    |
| Metadiscursive breakdown                                   |                                |        |
| Non-metadiscursive <i>gay</i>                              |                                | 172    |
| Metadiscursive <i>gay</i><br>(i.e. “the word <i>gay</i> ”) | adjective                      | 24     |
|                                                            | undefined grammatical function | 16     |
| Total                                                      |                                | 212    |

Table 1. Breakdown of *gay* tokens in Cory (1951)

- 18 And here is a breakdown of how all of those instances are translated into Spanish (Table 2) and French (Table 3) (necessarily simplifying)<sup>6</sup>:

| Spanish translation                                                                      | Tokens |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| <i>alegre</i> (adjective, noun, or metadiscursive use)                                   | 174    |
| <i>homosexual</i> (adjective or noun)                                                    | 12     |
| <i>gay</i> (metadiscursive use, including 2 with gloss: “ <i>gay</i> ( <i>alegre</i> )”) | 10     |
| <i>invertido</i> (adjective or noun)                                                     | 5      |
| adaptation with no lexematic transfer <sup>7</sup>                                       | 5      |
| <i>alegría</i> (noun)                                                                    | 4      |
| <i>gae/gaie</i> spelling variants (adjective)                                            | 3      |
| Total                                                                                    | 213    |

Table 2. Breakdown of translations of *gay* in Spanish

| French translation                                           | Tokens |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| <i>gay</i> (adjective, noun, or metadiscursive use)          | 135    |
| adaptation with no lexematic transfer                        | 25     |
| <i>homosexuel</i> (adjective or noun)                        | 23     |
| <i>spécial</i> (adjective, only collocates with <i>bar</i> ) | 11     |
| <i>en être</i> (verb phrase)                                 | 6      |
| <i>inverti</i> (adjective or noun)                           | 4      |

|                                              |     |
|----------------------------------------------|-----|
| <i>pédéraste</i> (noun)                      | 4   |
| <i>gai</i> (adjective or metadiscursive use) | 3   |
| <i>gaieté</i> (noun)                         | 2   |
| <i>homosexualité</i> (noun)                  | 2   |
| <i>gae</i> spelling variant (adjective)      | 1   |
| Total                                        | 216 |

Table 3. Breakdown of translations of *gay* in French

- 19 Looking at the above grids alongside Appendix B, if we compare the (inexhaustive) inventories of translations of words like *homosexual*, *invert*, *pederast*, *sodomist*, *lesbian* to the (exhaustive) inventories of terms like *gay* and *straight* as well as *fag*, *fairy*, *queen*, *queer*, we see that the former group is where the greatest lexical cohesion is found across the three languages: genetically related cognate forms used relatively consistently in the three versions (observable beyond what is inventoried in the appendix). For the argotic or neologistic terms, which are not constructed using Greco-Latin combining morphemes, more heterogeneous practices are observed in the process of translation.
- 20 In a queer and/or sociolexicological reading, the interest of the quantitative element is actually inverted in comparison to more traditional corpus analysis<sup>8</sup>. The highest numbers of queer-related lexical tokens (such as *HOMOSEXUAL* and *INVERT*) indicate the most widely established terms already in use across the diasystem, whereas lower-token items may indicate neologistic novelty or diastatic or diaphasic markedness. The author's and translators' treatments explicitly and metadiscursively indicate the novelty of *GAY* and *STRAIGHT*, in contrast to others already lexicalized: *GAY* stands out compared to *HOMOSEXUAL*, *INVERT*, and so on because the latter were no longer undergoing any particular integration process in each language (they had long been recorded in dictionaries, for one thing) and their use here is, in terms of lexical structure, largely unremarkable. This should not be taken to mean that any queer-related terminology is banal or unproblematic; indeed, lexical discord and renewal is constant in this field, as Cory himself notes (1951, p. 104): "even the [scientific] authorities cannot agree on the meanings that should be assigned to such words as *homosexual*, *invert*, *pederast*, and *sodomist*." Yet it is at the margins, indicated quantitatively by the lower token counts and qual-

itatively by metadiscourse and by translational heterogeneity, where comparative sociolexicological investigation may have the most interesting things to say.

### 3.2. Metadiscursivity as key insight into the social meaning of words

- 21 Much more than quantitative corpus analysis that makes abstraction of the individual language user and communicative situation, close qualitative attention to metadiscourse is a key to interpreting the social meaning of words in context. Focusing on metadiscourse centers speakers/writers as the agentive language users they are, actively engaged in their own naming practices or lexical choices. Metadiscursivity appears in varied ways in both texts and speech, inviting nuanced readings of all individual tokens to ascertain where and how social meaning is consciously ascribed by users (see Rey-Debove, 1997 for a thorough taxonomy). Metadiscursivity is “where the social is embedded into linguistic practice, and how language use comes to be a socially constituted practice” (Coupland, 2016, p. 448); its study is integral to establishing higher-order indexicality in meta-pragmatic theorizations (see Wright, 2023, chap. 7, for a lexicological application).
- 22 Cory metadiscursively presents *GAY* as an in-group lexical innovation and this presentation is transferred in the translations into Spanish and French. In the preface, readers are already introduced to the neological use of *gay* along with antonymic *straight*, the occasion also for the translators to announce their preferred renderings of the terminology in Spanish and French. As in the following examples, we see the terminology of in-group *GAY* and *STRAIGHT* cooccurs alongside more widespread *HOMOSEXUAL* and *HETEROSEXUAL*.
- (1) a. As an acknowledged homosexual writing for a general audience, I have felt compelled to use the language which I would employ were I speaking to other homosexuals. [...] The uninitiated reader will therefore find that homosexuals are called *gay*, heterosexuals *straight*—words in common usage in the world in which I move. (Cory, 1951, p. xiv)
- b. Como homosexual manifiesto que escribe para un público general, me he sentido impulsado a emplear el lenguaje que usaría si hablase a otros homosexuales. [...] El lector no iniciado encontrará que los homosexuales se llaman *gay* (alegres), y los heterosexuales *straight* (*derechos*), palabras de uso común en el mundo en que yo me muevo. (Cory, 1952a, p. 12)

- c. En tant qu'homosexuel écrivant ès-qualités une étude destinée à un vaste public, j'ai cru devoir employer le langage dont nous usons entre homosexuels. [...] Que le lecteur non initié sache donc que les homosexuels s'appellent *gay* et les hétérosexuels, *straight* ; ces appellations sont couramment employées dans le cercle où j'évolue. (Cory, 1952b, p. 2)
- 
- 23 The choices presented here in the preface are those generally favored by the translators throughout the work, though with significant variation, as seen in the quantitative breakdown in Tables 2 and 3 and in the appendices.
  - 24 Sánchez Luna's Spanish-language edition most often translates *gay* via semantic calque as *alegre* ('merry, cheerful, lighthearted', i.e. *gay* in its earlier sense) and *straight* as *derecho*, both adjectivally and nominally, but in some cases (as in (1b) and (3b)) presents the italicized *gay* in metalinguistic commentary as belonging to English (see also chap. 9). Throughout, calqued *alegre* appears unitalicized, presented as semiotically integrated into Spanish (though contrasting *derecho* is usually italicized). Other terms are used on occasion, with some syntactic reformulation, including *homosexual* or *invertido* (adj. or n. in both cases).
  - 25 Rosenthal's French renderings of *gay* are globally more heterogeneous, with even greater syntactic reformulation (and lexical elision), including the terms *homosexuel*, *inverti*, *pédéraste*, and the verb phrase *en être* (for the latter, see Courouve, 1985, pp. 102-104). *Gay* is frequent overall and is marked autonymically with italics as an English foreignism in the French text, as is explained in a translator's footnote in the main queer argot chapter (corresponding to chap. 9 in the original), noting that no equivalent exists in France:  
  
(2) Les cercles homosexuels français ne disposant pas d'un terme équivalent à *gay*, celui-ci sera donc utilisé ici dans son orthographe anglaise. (N. d. T.). (Cory, 1952b, p. 133)  
  
[Since French homosexual circles do not have a term equivalent to *gay*, the latter will thus be used here in its English spelling. (Translator's note)<sup>9</sup>]
  - 26 Whether of the English or its translations, readers would be left with little doubt as to the significance of this little word, celebrated repetitively by Cory across multiple metalinguistic commentaries. The positive connotation and preferred in-group status of *gay* are made explicit:

- (3) a. Needed for years was an ordinary, everyday, matter-of-fact word, that could express the concept of homosexuality without glorification or condemnation. It must have no odium of the effeminate stereotype about it. Such a word has long been in existence, and in recent years has grown in popularity. The word is *gay*. (Cory, 1951, p. 107)
- b. Durante años se sintió la necesidad de una palabra corriente, habitual, que correspondiese a la realidad y expresase el concepto de homosexualidad sin glorificarlo ni condenarlo, y que no suscitase el odio del afeminado estereotípico. Esa palabra existe hace mucho tiempo, y en los últimos años ha ganado mucha popularidad. Es la palabra *gay* (alegre). (Cory, 1952a, p. 155)
- c. On recherchait donc depuis des années un mot simple, courant, qui exprimât sans la glorifier ni la condamner l'idée d'homosexualité. Cela fait assez longtemps que ce mot existe mais il n'est vraiment populaire que depuis quelques années. C'est le mot *gay*<sup>10</sup>. (Cory, 1952b, p. 133)

27 Here, in hypothetical snippets of conversation and a personals ad, the word is applied as a qualifying and relational adjective to describe people, abstract concepts, and inanimate objects:

- (4) a. Gay . . . gay . . . gay! Life is gay, the party is gay, the bar is gay, the book is gay, the young man is gay—very gay—or, alas! he is not gay! “Look up my friend—he’s gay” . . . “youth, gay and witty, seeks correspondent” . . . “did we have a gay weekend!” Gay! The word serves many purposes. (Cory, 1951, p. 108)
- b. ¡Alegre . . . alegre . . . alegre! La vida es alegre, la reunión es alegre, el bar es alegre, el libro es alegre, el joven es alegre —muy alegre— o, ¡ay!, no lo es. “Busco [sic] a mi amigo; es alegre” . . . “Joven alegre e ingenioso desea un corresponsal” . . . “Me hizo pasar unas vacaciones alegres.” ¡Alegre! La palabra sirve para muchos fines. (Cory, 1952a, p. 156)
- c. Gay . . . gay . . . gay ! La vie est gay, la soirée est gay, c’est un bar gay, un livre gay, ce jeune homme est gay — très gay — ou, hélas ! il n’est pas gay ! « Allez voir mon ami . . . Il est gay » . . . « jeune homme gay et spirituel cherche correspondant » . . . « quel gay weekend ! » Gay ! Ce mot a divers avantages. (Cory, 1952b, p. 134)

28 This set of examples gives a sense of how prevalent and versatile its use is, both in Cory’s work and as presented in the discourse of gay people.

29 The following, final set of examples demonstrates how *gay* evolved semantically in English as a code word (a description that aligns with other metadiscourse from the era), playing on ambiguity with its earlier prototypical meanings. This exchange occurs among two men cruising in public, performing what Leap has called “linguistic discretion” (2020, ch. 2, specifically pp. 102-104):

- (5) a. "I'm from out of town. Massachusetts. I'm stopping at a place near here."  
 "Whereabouts?"  
 "Just down the street and around the corner."  
 "I wouldn't know. I don't get around to those spots very much."  
 "You should. It's quite a gay place."  
*The word has been uttered, and the rapport has now been established. From that moment on, there is no doubt as to the direction of the evening. (Cory, 1951, pp. 117-118)*
- b. —No soy de la ciudad. Soy de Massachusetts. Paro en un lugar que no está lejos.  
 —¿Hacia dónde?  
 —Precisamente al final de la calle, a la vuelta de la esquina.  
 —No lo conozco. No ando mucho por estos sitios.  
 —Debieras conocerlo. Es un lugar muy alegre.  
*La palabra ha sido pronunciada, y la relación queda establecida. Desde aquel momento, ya no hay duda de cómo se pasará la noche. (Cory, 1952a, pp. 169-170)*
- c. « Je ne suis pas d'ici. Du Massachusetts. Je suis descendu à un hôtel pas loin. »  
 « Où ça ? »  
 « En bas de la rue, au coin. »  
 « Tiens, je ne savais pas qu'il y avait un hôtel par là. Je ne viens pas très souvent dans ce coin. »  
 « Vous devriez. C'est très *gay* par ici. »  
*Et voilà. Le mot a été dit et le contact est maintenant établi. Dès lors l'issue de la soirée n'est plus douteuse. (Cory, 1952b, p. 146)*

- 30 Presenting this information to a general readership weakened the cryptic value of its use, a process which had already by then begun. Of course, the metadiscursive commentary describes *gay* English usage, not usage in Spanish or French. Yet, looking forward to the future internationalized adoption of *GAY*, its public mediatization in print, precisely outing its cryptic use to the world such as done here, was a crucial step in the wider generalization of the terminology.
- 31 Overall, even though *gay* is italicized as a foreign body in both translations (again, Spanish *alegre* is not), the various uses, involving syntactic integration – but not morphological: *gay* is invariable with respect to number, without plural -s – represent important early reference points in the public construction of *GAY* vocabularies in both Spanish and French. Conceptually, parallel nominalizations such as “the gay”<sup>11</sup>, “los alegres”, or “les *gay*”; collocations such as “gay love”, “amor alegre”, or “amour *gay*”; or predications such as “be(ing) *gay*”, “ser alegre”, or “être *gay*” can be seen as linguistically encoding a class of people or an identity. Not that this, in itself, is an eminently new thing (similar processes occurred for earlier terminologies), but the important point is that it was now being articulated on the basis of affirmative in-group terminology explicitly devoid of the charged connotational history of, say, *homosexual*, *invertido*, or *pédéraste* – a

fact the analyst need not delve too deeply to uncover, as the author (like many others then and later) tells us so himself.

### 3.3. Comparisons against related cognate forms

- 32 It is significant that neither translation made use of genetically related terms, French *gai* or Spanish *gayo*. Different hypotheses have to be posited to attempt to explain this. It is not the attested “existence” in the historical lexical structure of the language, but awareness of or availability to speakers in the sociopragmatic context at the moment of use that conditions whether or how speakers adapt a loanword using a related cognate form.
- 33 French *gai*, long ago the source of English *gay*, generally coincided on prototypical meaning with the English at the moment of transfer in the 1950s. A semantic calque could have been, in theory, coined to align the English with a French paronymic cognate. Yet no such use of French *gai* is made in the book, other than with its conventional meaning, particularly in one line – “bien des homosexuels ne sont pas gais au sens traditionnel du mot” [many homosexuals are not gay in the traditional sense of the word] – that indeed shows how the two languages aligned then on prototypical meaning<sup>12</sup>. A decade later, in the 1965 French translation of a British book on homosexuality<sup>13</sup>, a similar situation is observed, with metalinguistic use of English *gay* translated with French adjective *joyeux*, alongside uncommented use of *pédé*, *homosexuel*, or again *en être* (see Lo Vecchio, 2020, pp. 413–414). In the late 1960s and early 1970s, gay French speakers began enriching French *gai* with the new ‘gay’ meaning, playing on the semantic ambiguity much as in-group English speakers had begun doing decades before. We can’t know whether language purist impulses were necessarily behind the 1952 and 1965 translation choices to avoid calquing French *gai* on English *gay* ‘homosexual’, but it does seem suggestive that the earliest such examples I have found were in in-group use, some involving playful metadiscourse, and especially post-Stonewall (see Lo Vecchio, 2020, pp. 412–422), among queer people who were making an exogenous innovation their own rather than presenting it as the speech practices of the other. The social complexity of purist ideologies on loanwords must be acknow-

ledged, though. Resistance to changing meaning can be very strong, documented extensively for this particular lexical item (Lo Vecchio, 2020, p. 408); on the other hand, for a borrowing that has been irreversibly accepted as part of the lexicon, nativization into the historical cognate form can be seen as orthographically preferable, such as is the case with *gai* in Canadian use vs. the predominant spelling *gay* in France (see Cajolet-Laganière et al.; *Clés de la rédaction*).

- 34 The cognate *gayo* is attested historically in the Spanish lexicon, but infrequently in the modern era, such that Sánchez Luna's *alegre* would have been a more fluent and understandable way to calque the English in the twentieth century (Lo Vecchio, 2020, pp. 434-435). After Stonewall, some examples of Spanish *gayo* 'gay' are found, notably in this private in-group correspondence commenting in a postscript that Spanish speakers in Puerto Rico were unfamiliar with the term but planned to start using it:

(6) P.D. Desconocíamos la palabra Gayo, vamos a tratar de usarla<sup>14</sup>.  
[P.S. We didn't know the word Gayo, we're going to try to use it.]

- 35 Another hypothesis would explain modern *gayo* 'homosexual' as an independent Hispanicization of the English, with the addition of prototypical masculine ending -o (see Rodríguez González, 2008, p. 172; cf. Lo Vecchio, 2020, pp. 434-435). Either way, the metalinguistic commentary in example (6), and the relative textual infrequency of Spanish *gayo* overall, suggests system-wide unfamiliarity with the historical cognate form – most certainly so compared to French *gai* or English *gay*. This may also help to contextualize why the lexematic adaptation *gay* has become the most common established orthography in Spanish. The pluralized forms *gais/gaies* have been interpreted as resulting from purist pressures from the Real Academia Española, the base *gai*- facilitating agreement with grammatical number and gender (see, e.g., Real Academia Española, 2005; 2010, pp. 602-604; cf. a critique in Lo Vecchio, 2020, pp. 436-437). However, from a purist perspective, the Spanish *gai* forms remain highly problematic since they do not correspond to the widespread pronunciation [gei] any more than the form *gay* (reflective of obvious oral contact in the process of transfer), with graphemic-phonemic

correspondence being of fundamental importance in the relatively coherent Spanish orthographic system.

- 36 This confused situation can be explained more convincingly by taking account of the extralinguistic environment in which *gay* was adapted to Peninsular Spanish, where gay activism was particularly strong in the Catalan context in the final years of and after the fascist Franco regime (see Llamas, 1998, p. 365; Fluvià, 2003; Lo Vecchio, 2020, pp. 427-437). The Spanish *gai* form, in diachrony, did not respond originally to purist pressures but likely reflects the influence of Catalan *gai* (historical cognate with the whole GAY family, far more established in Catalan than corresponding Spanish *gayo*) and only later were the purist interpretations superposed upon this form that actually arose from the particular sociopragmatic setting of its creation – a hypothesis that can only be gleaned from study of the 1970s activist written documentation<sup>15</sup>.
- 37 If we've gotten far from Sánchez Luna's 1952 use of *alegre*, the lexicologically significant point is that this translational choice can be (has to be, in my view) contextualized alongside the other languages with a genetically related historical form, and on the empirical basis of the textual and translational record. Upon doing so, we see that English is not the only relevant language in the transfer of *gay* to Spanish.

### 3.4. Comparisons against the lexicography and other lexicological resources

- 38 A lexicological reading also considers the translated lexical types in comparison to others in the semantic field and tests these against the lexicography, historical corpora, or other lexicological resources. In contrast to a context-based discourse analysis approach to translation study, a lexicological analysis must compare all lexical choices to larger language structure, going backward in time (what is the word history and what are current uses?) as well as forward (for neologisms or transcreations, are there intertextual echoes traceable to the translator's act of invention?). This may identify gaps in the dictionary treatment and raise questions that merit further investiga-

tion. The following are several that stand out; see other potential areas for further research in Appendix B.

–Spanish *alegre* ‘gay’: Is it attested elsewhere, in the 1950s or later, with the novel meaning first observed in Sánchez Luna’s semantic calquing? If so, can it be traced explicitly to this translator via citations or other kinds of intertextuality? (*Alegre* is absent from Rodríguez González, 2008; and it is only evidenced as a gloss in Lo Vecchio, 2020, pp. 428, 433, 435.)

–French *spécial* ‘gay’: Rosenthal’s translation of *gay bar* into French as “bar *spécial*” (see especially pp. 149–160) calls attention to itself, at times with *spécial* appearing between guillemets: at first sight this may seem to be the translator’s idiosyncrasy, but it turns out that *spécial* ‘gay’ is attested elsewhere in French with this sort of euphemistic coding, identified by Courouve (2013, pp. 378, 382, 429–430), for example both adjectivally and nominally in *pratiques spéciales*, *mœurs spéciales*, *les spéciaux* (absent from Courouve, 1985 and Lo Vecchio, 2020). It is particularly interesting from a cognitivist point of view in its othering framing, to be compared with many other lexemes in this field, notably French *particulier* (see Appendix B, s.v. *Greek*, *special friendship*; and again see examples throughout citations in Courouve, 2013; both *spécial* and *particulier* are also found throughout Servez, 1955).

–French *régulier* ‘straight’: In contrast to *spécial* and *particulier* above, Rosenthal translates *straight* as *régulier* in one passage (see Appendix B, s.v. *straight*), noting that “il est régulier” is French argot for “he is straight”. No lexicographic description is known; can the translator’s statement about argotic *régulier* be supported by other textual evidence?

–French *ambisexuel* ‘bisexual’ and *ambisexualité* ‘bisexuality’: Rosenthal translates English *bisexual* and *bisexuality* using French *ambisexuel* and *ambisexualité*; Sánchez Luna renders the terminology into Spanish as *bisexual* and *bisexualidad*. *Bisexuelle* and *bisexualité* had by the 1950s become established in French, adopted alongside corresponding forms in other European languages starting in the early twentieth century (though, congruent with societal bisexual erasure, only entered dictionaries much later) (Lo Vecchio, 2020, pp. 378–385). *AMBISEXUAL(ITY)* has been described in the lexicography,

with early attributions to the psychoanalyst Sándor Ferenczi; sporadic if semantically ambiguous use is observed through the twentieth century and now the formation has emerged as a renewed neologism (see OED among others for English; Rodríguez González, 2008 for Spanish). For French *ambisexuelle* ‘bisexual’ and *ambisexualité* ‘bisexuality’, I am unaware of historical lexicological treatments (but see brief psychoanalytic remarks s.v. in Lo Duca, 1962; Hermann, 1988; for recent neologistic use, see Elchacar, 2019, p. 181). Despite some occasional bibliographic indications as noted, the word family has not been studied in depth; Janssen (2023, pp. 1839-1840) suggests it was more widely used than has been noted. Compare also *ambisextrous*, in Appendix B.

Proper use of dictionaries always entails a critical metalexicographical stance, acknowledging their importance in empirical research while also keeping in mind any potential errors, distortions, or omissions and what circumstances may have caused them – of course applicable generally, but more particularly so in pragmatically marked fields due to ideological pressures (Nossem, 2018; Lo Vecchio, 2021; Turton, 2024). This is why independent consultation of all available historical corpora is also indispensable at this stage, to go beyond what might have been missed in the dictionaries; currently it is the untagged archives (Gallica, Biblioteca Digital Hispánica, Google Books, Hathi Trust, Archive.org, etc.) that yield the most lexicologically interesting results, for the sheer breadth of the collections.

- 39 An immense number of neologisms or cases of micro-lexicalization within particular communities have escaped historical lexicographical description, in many languages. Identifying them is a task for sociolexicology, much more feasible now due to the massive digitization of texts (Wright, 2023, pp. 4-5). Translations can play a useful role in describing and contextualizing them cross-linguistically, as argued here, since so much lexical creation is co-constructed internationally.

## 4. Multilingual translational echoes of Cory and beyond

- 40 Beyond Cory's *Homosexual in America* and its monographic translations, multiple instances of intertextuality are found in book reviews and references to Cory's work, which would have been other vectors for an international awareness of his ideas and, more specifically, the incipient GAY terminology. These attestations make it possible to contextualize the Cory work and its monographic translations within a larger public dialogue. Doing so, we see, first of all, that the book was widely commented upon in multiple sources outside the U.S., proof that people were actually reading and talking about Cory's ideas, in English and in translation. The fact that both generalist press (i.e. an implicitly out-group perspective, in the 1950s) and activist publications (an explicitly in-group perspective) engaged with Cory's work is indicative of the complexity of the linguistic marketplace, in Bourdieusian terms, at the earliest moment of introduction of GAY terminology to readers abroad. From one activist in-group text, filtered through an ambiguous translational stance, GAY and other terms were then introduced to readers, in some cases, from an affirmative perspective of solidarity but, in others, in virulently homophobic discourse. Thus, in studying the emergent GAY terminology we should situate its use candidly vis-à-vis the ideology of the individuals recirculating it, which may diverge considerably from its ultimate source.

### 4.1. The translational context of an early queer magazine

- 41 Looking to the nascent activist queer press serves as a test of the Cory translators' lexical choices and provides evidence that multiple vectors of transmission were in operation, beyond merely the monographic translations. Particularly significant in the 1950s was the pioneering journal *Der Kreis/Le Cercle/The Circle*, based in Zurich, originally monolingual in German before progressively adding texts in French and later English (see historical indications in Kennedy, 1999; Steinle, 1999). With translation as a foundational practice at the core

of the enterprise, this multilingual publication itself represents a kind of translational context with considerable methodological potential for lexicological detective work on neologisms informed by language contact. Even though each individual contribution to *Der Kreis* was not, in itself, a translation, when read chronologically, a cumulative multilingual intertextuality emerges in which the early use of *GAY* can be situated in a comparative framework.

42 Various references are made over the years in *Der Kreis/Le Cercle* to Cory's work in English, French, and German. Specifically, the journal devoted two reviews to Cory's book, first on the original in English (H.S., 1952a), followed by one on Rosenthal's translation in French (Daniel, 1953). Neither one uses *gay* in its neological sense, though. It is interesting to note that in the French review *gai* (adj.) does appear once in its traditional sense (Daniel, 1953, p. 23), though ostensibly without any intended wordplay. Also, amid significant quoting from the Rosenthal translation, actual use of *gay* is curiously elided. The following text is drawn from the closing paragraph of the book, cited otherwise in its entirety to conclude the book review.

- (7) a. Je veux croire que toi, comme tant d'autres qui sont *gay*, tu sauras pleinement mettre à profit les années qui s'étendent devant toi. (Cory, 1952b, p. 331)  
[I am confident that you, like so many others who are gay, will utilize the years ahead to good advantage. (Cory, 1951, p. 266)]
- b. Je veux croire que tu sauras pleinement mettre à profit les années qui s'étendent devant toi. (Daniel, 1953, p. 24)  
[I am confident that you will utilize the years ahead to good advantage (My adaptation of the Cory text)]

43 Such a deletion could hardly have been accidental, yet we can only speculate as to why the phrase was edited out. Perhaps the author or editors felt that fellow Francophone readers would not understand its meaning out of context? At this early stage in *GAY* history, that seems the most obvious answer.

44 Yet readers of *Der Kreis/Le Cercle* had actually already been introduced to the English neologism *gay*, as we learn in a 1950 article in French about the expression *il en est* (*en être*, as previously noted).

- (8) Aux Etats-Unis, nous sommes « gays ». Ce qui provoque en France de désopilants quiproquos lorsqu'une vénérable douairière en veine d'amabilité déclare à un jeune et timide boy du Texas ou de l'Arizona, très soucieux de sa respectabilité comme tous ses jeunes compatriotes, qu'il est gai, très gai, et cela devant soixante personnes. Le malheureux qui se croit découvert rougit jusqu'au bout des oreilles et donne la visible impression de vouloir se glisser sous le tapis ou sous un fauteuil. (Saint-Loup, 1950, p. 18<sup>16</sup>)

[In the United States, we are called "gay". Which in France causes hilarious misunderstandings such as when a kindly old dowager declares to a shy youngster from Texas or Arizona, very mindful of his respectability like all his fellow young Americans, that he is gay, very gay, in front of sixty people. The poor boy who thinks he's been found out blushes to the ends of his ears and gives the visible impression of wanting to crawl under the carpet or an armchair.]

- 45 This humorous account about the ambiguity of *gay/gai* concretely (if hypothetically?) illustrates the potential not just for cross-cultural miscommunication but also for playful effects in French as in English, which are well documented in later sources using French *gai*.

- 46 The Swiss journal is also the site of early attested uses of *gay* in German texts. Several early pieces by the pseudonymous author Jack Argo<sup>17</sup> discuss the word in the American context. The first piece (ex. (9)) addresses the link between naming and homosexuality, noting the positive expression found in English, a situation not then found in German, according to the author.

- (9) Im Amerikanischen gibt es ein halb-internes Wort, die Bezeichnung «gay». [...] doch der Ausdruck gay spiegelt eine erfreuliche Wirklichkeit wieder: jene typisch-amerikanische Unkompliziertheit, jener auch dort wirksame Lebensoptimismus. (Argo, 1952, p. 5)

[In American English there is a semi-internal word, the term "gay". [...] but the term gay reflects a pleasant reality: that typically American uncomplicatedness, that optimism about life also operative there]

- 47 A dialogue in English ensued in the following issue, where the same "H.S." in New York who'd penned the English-language review of Cory's book earlier in the year (H.S., 1952a) remarks that *gay* is "so much en vogue today in America" but supposing that it will "lose its flavour" much in the way that the connotation of race-related terms was then rapidly in flux (H.S., 1952b). The collocation *gay bar* is found on several occasions in German texts, with autonymic marking to present it as belonging not to German but to English ("Gay Bar" in Argo's (1954) review of the U.S. gay magazine *One* including a reference to Cory; "gay bars" in Burkhardt's (1958) U.S. travelogue).

- 48 *Der Kreis* also commissioned excerpts of Cory’s work to be translated into German (Cory, 1954)<sup>18</sup>. Because this brief translation is based on the original Cory work, it provides insights into the German translator’s choices of lexical types, though on a vastly smaller scale than the full monographic translations (see all examples in Appendix A). Among the 13 translatable tokens in the *gay* family in the original, the *Der Kreis* excerpts translate using German *HOMO* forms in almost all cases, as is seen in Table 4:

| English                | German                     | Tokens |
|------------------------|----------------------------|--------|
| <i>gay</i> (adj.)      | <i>homosexuell</i> (adj.)  | 7      |
|                        | <i>Homosexueller</i> (n.)  | 3      |
|                        | <i>Homosexualität</i> (n.) | 1      |
|                        | no lexematic transfer      | 1      |
| <i>gaiety</i> (n.)     | <i>Fröhlichkeit</i> (n.)   | 1      |
| <i>straight</i> (adj.) | <i>normal</i> (adj.)       | 1      |

Table 4: Breakdown of translations in German

- 49 Unlike the Spanish and French monographs, none of the occurrences of *gay* here involve metalexic commentary about the novelty of the term, simplifying the transfer to the German. This piece was followed in subsequent issues by commentaries on Cory’s work by the translator (YX, 1954) and by a physician (Becker, 1954), both in German.
- 50 Read chronologically, the way surely some readers would then have done of the “world’s most important journal” for and by queer people at the time (Kennedy, 1999, p. 1), the various articles containing *GAY* attestations in English, French, and German cumulatively amount to evidence of concrete points of contact, and not just from English as the immediate source. They confirm the multiple vectors of introduction and integration of the lexical transfer. One practical takeaway of the discoveries in *Der Kreis/Le Cercle/The Circle* – now digitized and searchable<sup>19</sup> – along with the (undigitized) Cory monographic translations, is methodological: further, manual research in other less-known activist archives is likely to uncover similar evidence of cultural contact at the very early stages in the internationalization of this lexical family<sup>20</sup>. The many citations of Cory’s book/translation in other early queer French periodicals further support this supposition,

including in *Futur* (1952-1955), *Arcadie* (1954-1982), and *Juventus* (1959), although I have not as yet found related use of *gay* in examinations of 1950s issues of such sources<sup>21</sup>.

## 4.2. Lexical diffusion in generalist out-group publications

51 Early intertextual echoes with the Cory translation are also found in generalist out-group publications, starting in the spring of 1952. Here, only French sources were studied for practical reasons of availability, but Mexican sources would probably yield comparably interesting results. The following examples comprise all of the sources that I have found to date<sup>22</sup>.

52 Among the first and most telling treatments appeared in the French colonialist weekly *Climats*, which exemplifies the disconnect between queer subjectivity at source and straight subjectivity at target. In a starkly othering (if purportedly sympathetic) book review headlined “L’EFFROYABLE MONDE GAY” [The horrifying gay world], the writer Morvan Lebesque prefaces the subject (“scabreux” [indecent]) with “quelques précautions oratoires” [several oratory precautions] – a common way to address queer sexuality going back even to medieval texts. Noting his emotion at reading Cory’s factual account, Lebesque asserts that he is a “normal” (i.e. straight) man as he distances himself from what he hesitates between calling a “vice” or a “passion”:

- (10) En second lieu, je confierai au lecteur, tout uniment, que la Nature m’a donné une répulsion insurmontable pour le « vice » (ou la « passion ») dont ce livre nous entretient. *Répulsion* est peu dire : l’idée même de ce « vice » (ou de cette « passion ») est totalement étrangère à mon esprit. J’ai la chance d’être ce qu’on appelle « un homme normal ». (Lebesque, 1952)

[Secondly, I will confide to the reader, quite frankly, that Nature has endowed me with an insurmountable repulsion for the “vice” (or the “passion”) that this book discusses. *Repulsion* is putting it mildly: the mere idea of this “vice” (or of this “passion”) is totally foreign to my mind. I am lucky to be what is called “a normal man”.]

53 It is from this explicitly out-group point of view that the writer introduces Cory’s terminology, as drawn from the Rosenthal translation (ex. (11)-(12)). Both noun (“un *gay*”, “ces *gays*”) and adjective (“*gay*”, “spéciaux”) forms are presented using metalinguistic marking (commentary, guillemets, italics) to indicate the new terminology,

here described as New York gay argot, again in strikingly homophobic terms:

- (11) En argot new-yorkais, un inverti sexuel s'appelle un *gay*. Le mot est atroce quand on imagine la vie de ces *gays*, en marge de la société, en marge de l'existence normale. M. Webster Cory décrit cette vie effroyable en des pages hallucinantes [...]. (Lebesque, 1952)

[In New York argot, a sexual invert is called a *gay*. The word is appalling when we imagine the life of these *gays*, on the margin of society, on the margin of normal existence. Mr. Webster Cory describes this horrifying life in truly shocking pages]

- (12) On ne peut lire sans frémissements les récits vécus qui nous conduisent de rues mal famées en bars « spéciaux », royaumes de tendresses inavouables et de monstrueux accouplements. C'est l'enfer du monde *gay*, un enfer auprès duquel celui de Dante n'est qu'un purgatoire bénin. (Lebesque, 1952)

[One cannot read without shuddering the real-life accounts which take us from seedy streets to "special" bars, kingdoms of unspeakable affections and monstrous couplings. This is the hell of the *gay* world, a hell next to which Dante's is merely a benign purgatory.]

- 54 In example (11), note that *gays* is inflected in the plural, contrasting the presentation in the translation from which it was drawn (see also example (16) below). Despite the othering treatment in the Lebesque review, its stated sympathetic reading merited it a citation in an ad in *Arcadie* (no. 3, March 1954, p. 51).

- 55 Other generalist publications also served to report on Cory's terminology as presented by the Rosenthal translation<sup>23</sup>. A book review (less prejudicial in tone) in the resistance daily *Combat* does not use the word *gay* but does introduce Cory's coinage *Dorian*, rendered in the French translation (by calque or morpheme substitution, depending on the point of view adopted), as *dorien*. *Dorian* was Cory's proposal for a "male counterpart of *Lesbian*" with similar positive connotations inspired by ancient Greece (see Appendix B). It is used in the headline (13) and explained in the text (14):

- (13) LES "DORIENS" EN AMÉRIQUE  
[The "Dorians" in America]

- (14) On peut donc penser qu'il s'est institué parmi les homosexuels des Etats-Unis (que l'auteur appelle les « doriens » par analogie avec le terme de « lesbiennes » appliqué aux homosexuelles), plus que partout ailleurs sans doute, une conscience de groupe, un sentiment d'appartenance à une minorité persécutée. (Monclar, 1952)

[One may thus assume that among the homosexuals of the United States (which the author calls "Dorians" by analogy with the term "Lesbians" referring to homosexual women), probably more so than anywhere else, a group consciousness has taken hold, a feeling of belonging to a persecuted minority.]

- 56 Cory's coining can be inscribed in a long tradition, from John Addington Symonds's discussion of the ancient Dorians in his *A Problem in Greek Ethics* (1883; in Brady, 2012) to Oscar Wilde's use in the name Dorian Gray. While other attested uses of the detoponym appear more allusive, Cory's *Dorian* is antonomastic (see other indications of use in Dynes, 2008, s.v.; Eribon, 2012 [1999], pp. 244-254; Johnson, 2019). It merits further investigation in line with the argument above in Section 3.4.
- 57 The monograph *Le mal du siècle* by Pierre Servez (1955) is noteworthy because it reproduces a large sample of the gay terminology Cory presented, although without direct attribution. The Cory translation is cited only in the brief bibliography in the backmatter, not in the main text (and without the translator's name). However, because the terminology follows the Rosenthal translation almost identically (with errors in the process of transfer), there can be no doubt as to its provenance. This plagiarist scenario was also common in synthesizing legal medicine manuals in the nineteenth century (see examples in Lo Vecchio, 2024). Among the roughly 40 items presented metalinguistically (pp. 200-202 in Servez; see Appendix B), *gay* is identified as being the most important argotic term used, nominally and adjectivally, by American "homosexuals":
- (15) et surtout *gay* (gai) qui est le terme le plus employé, substantivement ou adjectivement, par les homosexuels américains. (Servez, 1955, p. 201)  
[and especially *gay*, which is the term most used, as a noun or adjective, by American homosexuals]
- 58 One time, the author uses the adjective in reference to the policing of gay areas in New York:
- (16) Vrais et faux policiers s'agitent ainsi, dans les quartiers « gays » à la recherche de « l'attentat aux mœurs ». (Servez, 1955, p. 180)  
[Real and fake cops thus prowl about in the "gay" neighborhoods in search of "offenses against morality".]
- 59 The author calls attention to the lexicogenetic tension created between gay in-group ("l'homosexuel", "l'inverti") and straight out-group ("ses adversaires") subjectivity: "D'où l'abondance et la variété de ce vocabulaire spécial" [Hence the abundance and variety of this

special vocabulary] (Servez, 1955, p. 202) – an apt observation amid otherwise dubiously sourced material.

## 5. Conclusion

- 60 Following one consequential source text through its monographic translation and the subsequent (or parallel) dissemination of its author's ideas through both in-group and out-group publications makes it possible to chart the early trajectory of GAY awareness outside of its place, language, and social group of lexical innovation. The methodological interest lies in the lexical genealogy that can be established between a source text and its independent recirculations, possible even for tracing what began as a code word in the discourse of a stigmatized minoritized population. Rather than indicating the vitality of the terminology in actual use in Spanish, French, or German, the echoes of Cory's oeuvre can at this stage more generally be seen as evidence of its major early influence in the internationalization of GAY consciousness. Importantly, in no 1950s example studied above is there yet evidence of a meaningful interlinguistic transfer – that is to say, the explicit self-conscious adoption of GAY as an in-group identity term in Spanish, French, or German, instead being metadiscursively attributed to gay U.S. English speakers.
- 61 The events surrounding Stonewall, set off in 1969 in New York due to the police repression evoked in example (16) above, had international resonance and this is the point at which, in English as in other languages, GAY began spreading in a much more public way, openly brandished in protests and in print and in other media (Lo Vecchio, 2020, p. 407). This is an example of where extralinguistic events become indissociable from activists' agentive language practices, and vice versa, with language change occurring in step with social change – to such an extent that the post-Stonewall attestations of exogenous GAY may be considered pivotal or “hinge” attestations (“attestations charnières” (Glessgen, 1993)) even where these were not strictly the earliest ones. The significance of this critical moment is less formal or semantic than it is sociopragmatic, in that these lexical innovations were now spreading quite publicly among in-group speakers asserting linguistic self-determination through the use of an identity label chosen by themselves – creatively and play-

fully as well as militantly or defiantly, in fascinating ways that belie the formal cross-linguistic orthographic uniformity of this tiny monosyllable, and recoverable only through engagement with the historical activist documentation.

- 62 There are many examples that demonstrate the role that material translation practices played in self-naming and GAY lexical spread in the post-Stonewall period (see examples in Lo Vecchio, 2020, pp. 395-440; also some pertinent discussion in Mira, 1999; Harvey, 2003). These lexical developments, and their translational basis – occurring in a global context of solidarity – can again be traced in the gay press, which begins to flourish in the early 1970s in many places. The well-known political value of such activist documents is matched by their – underexploited – lexical value, which in turn informs our grasp of social history. The conceptual translation of ideas across cultures begins in and passes through the coding of evolving inter-subjective meaning into individual lexical items: GAY, QUEER, many more. Focusing on that lexical history in a sociolinguistic rather than literary or cultural theoretical framework is one concrete application of translation analysis with social value.

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## NOTES

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1 Following Rainer (2018, p. 44), I apply small caps to mark internationalisms where the indicated form is an abstraction independent of "exact formal realization in individual European languages".

2 Work by Macías-González (2016, 2019) addresses the collaboration between U.S. and Mexican homophile groups, in particular the role Tony Segura played in getting the Spanish-language translation published. These materials were unavailable to me at the time of research.

3 In the preface to his later *The Lesbian in America*, Cory acknowledges it would be preferable for women to write about the lesbian experience while also stating that his outsider status as a man ensures the treatment will be "patently objective", thus contributing to its "strength, insight, and value" (Cory, 1965 [1964], p. 20).

- 4 This paper updates the chronology proposed in Lo Vecchio (2020, chap. 11).
- 5 By “family” is meant all inflected and derivative forms: *homosexual*, *homosexuals*, *homosexuality*, *homosexualism*, *homosexually*, etc.
- 6 The totals do not match the 212 English tokens for various reasons: several lexematic expansions in the translations, at the locations indicated, involved more than one token and are included here; also, the appendices, which include several tokens, were not translated in French. See Appendix A.
- 7 “Adaptation with no lexematic transfer” indicates that the translation adapted the text in such a way as to provide no corresponding lexical item for *gay*; see Appendix A for examples of this scenario.
- 8 See McEnery & Baker (2017) on the challenges of low-frequency data of queer-related naming in corpora; and Motschenbacher (2022, pp. 46-48) on the interest of low-frequency items in queer corpus studies.
- 9 My translation. Unless otherwise indicated, translations in brackets are my own.
- 10 This is where the footnote provided in example (2) is appended.
- 11 On the invariable plural of *gay* (as in “the gay”), see Lo Vecchio (2020, pp. 400-401, 412; 2021, pp. 119-120).
- 12 Cory (1952b, p. 136); Cory (1951, p. 109); cf. Spanish *alegre* in Cory (1952a, p. 157).
- 13 See, e.g., Hauser (1962, pp. 102, 103) and Guy’s translation of Hauser (1965, pp. 174, 176).
- 14 Rafael A. Cruet, letter to Armand de Fluvià, 13 November 1974; cited in Fluvià (2003, p. 254).
- 15 Also see the Barcelona-based *Ajoblanco* (no. 4, April 1975) for post-Stonewall instances of *GAY* in the translational context of a bilingual (Catalan-Spanish) publication, in line with the argument in Section 4.1.
- 16 This piece also includes a metadiscursive commentary on German *warm* ‘gay’, translating it into French as: “nous sommes « chauds »!” This interesting queer semantic development is described in Skinner (1999).
- 17 Actually Johannes Werres, a journalist who’d spent several months in the United States in 1950 (Kennedy, 1999, pp. 62-64). For the identity of Rudolf

Jung writing as Rudolf Burkhardt, see Kennedy (1999, pp. 29, 35–37); for “YX”, also see various references in Kennedy.

18 The piece cites the U.K. edition of the book (Cory, 1953), which was identical to the original (Cory, 1951) though with a different title.

19 On ETH Zürich’s E-Periodica site: [www.e-periodica.ch/digbib/volumes?UID=kre-003](http://www.e-periodica.ch/digbib/volumes?UID=kre-003).

20 Concretely, how was the Spanish-language edition received among gay circles in Mexico City, its place of publication? Was there metalexic discourse on *gay* or *alegre*? See Macías-González (2014, pp. 524–525) on 1950s homophile culture in that city, with reference to Cory’s work and *Der Kreis*.

21 Cory’s work is cited several times in *Futur*, most notably in “Avez-vous lu l’ouvrage de Webster Cory? Il doit faire date...” [Have you read Webster Cory’s book? It’s sure to mark a milestone], describing the French translation as “[u]n livre sympathique et du plus haut intérêt” [an enjoyable book and of the utmost interest] (*Futur*, 2(4), January 1953, p. 1). It is likewise recommended in a mention in *Juventus* (5, 15 October 1959, p. 15), which notes its applicability not only to America but elsewhere (“ailleurs”). I was surprised not to find a dedicated review of *L’homosexuel en Amérique* in *Arcadie* in the 1950s, considering the recurrent mentions of Cory’s book (in bibliographies, reading recommendations, ads, articles) in this journal attuned to worldly homophile developments. Overall, the force of international solidarity stands out starkly in *Arcadie*, which was inspired by *Der Kreis/Le Cercle* and similar organizations in Europe (André Baudry, *Arcadie*, 1(3), March 1954, pp. 13–16) and maintained a continuous dialogue with them month after month. There was also overlap of writers between the two journals (such as Jack Argo, cited above; see, e.g., “L’homophilie en Allemagne,” *Arcadie*, 3(26), February 1956, pp. 41–43).

22 I located the *Climats* examples via the ad appearing in *Arcadie* as cited; I found the other examples by searching keywords in Gallica and RetroNews (both online tools of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France).

23 While not of terminological interest, a number of other French-language reviews or mentions of the Cory translation were published, including a review by A. B.-D. in *Cahiers du sud*, 35(312), 1952, p. 341; review by M. R[odinson] in *L’Année sociologique*, 6 [third series], 1952, pp. 351–352; unsigned review in *Carrefour*, 403, 4 June 1952, p. 7; mention in *Tunis-Soir*, 8034, 31 May 1952, p. 3; mention in *Le Tell* (Algiers), 8298, 9 August 1952, p. 4.

## RÉSUMÉS

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### English

Translation analysis represents a useful tool for historical comparative lexicology, making it possible to establish concrete chronologies and geographies of contact in the process of lexical transfer between languages. This paper applies a lexicological analytical approach to a telling case study. Newly uncovered evidence from the 1950s helps map out the early trajectory of *GAY* as awareness of the word spread from U.S. English to some Spanish-, French-, and German-language communities. Extensive details are provided from monographic translations of Donald Webster Cory/Edward Sagarin's groundbreaking 1951 *The Homosexual in America*, as well as from a pioneering multilingual early queer magazine (*Der Kreis/Le Cercle/The Circle* in Switzerland) and from generalist publications, all of the latter linked intertextually to the Cory work. These now represent the earliest known attestations of *GAY* 'homosexual' outside of English, interesting in a sociopragmatic perspective as they reflect both in-group and out-group ideological stances. Two appendices systemize the relevant data from the Cory monograph and translations in the form of multilingual concordances and glossary.

### Français

L'analyse traductologique représente un puissant outil pour la lexicologie historique comparative, permettant d'établir des chronologies et des géographies de contact dans le processus de transfert lexical entre langues. En menant une approche lexicologique de l'analyse traductologique, cet article propose une étude de cas révélatrice. Des données textuelles des années 1950, récemment identifiées, permettent de retracer la trajectoire précoce du mot *GAY* à mesure que certaines communautés hispanophones, francophones et germanophones en prenaient conscience. Une exemplification détaillée en est proposée pour les traductions monographiques de l'ouvrage phare de Donald Webster Cory/Edward Sagarin, *The Homosexual in America* (1951), ainsi que pour une revue queer multilingue pionnière (*Der Kreis/Le Cercle/The Circle* en Suisse) et la presse généraliste, dont l'analyse montre des liens intertextuels avec le livre de Cory. Il s'agit des premières attestations connues de *GAY* 'homosexuelle' dans des langues autres que l'anglais, intéressantes du point de vue sociopragmatique en ce qu'elles reflètent les idéologies tant de l'endogroupe que de l'exogroupe. Deux annexes systématisent les données de la monographie de Cory et de ses traductions sous forme de concordances et d'un glossaire multilingue.

## INDEX

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### **Mots-clés**

traduction, sociolexicologie, historiographie lexicale, gay, Donald Webster Cory/Edward Sagarin

### **Keywords**

translation, sociolexicology, lexical historiography, gay, Donald Webster Cory/Edward Sagarin

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