Language and Sexuality
(through and) beyond Gender

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Edited by

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and Kostas Yannakopoulos

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INTRODUCTION

OF LANGUAGE, SEXUALITY, AND OTHER CREATURES

COSTAS CANAKIS

> I grew up in a country where *brotherhood* and *unity* were *the apple of your eye*, but at the same time the culture encouraged stereotypes about all the members of the brotherhood. I lived surrounded by Slovenes who were *penny pinchers*, Slovenian women who, of all the women in our brotherhood, were the *easiest lays*, Montenegrins who were *lazy*, Croats who were *fags* and *nitpickers*, Serbs, who were *yokels*, Macedonians who were *vegetable-growing hicks*, Bosnians, who were *dense*, Albanians, who somehow weren't even human, Muslims who instead of five had six toes, the minority Italians who ate cats and the Gypsies, as mentioned above, who stole little children. All in all, it was a colorful community.
> —Dubravka Ugrešić (2007: 25), *Nobody's Home*

The idea behind this volume was to bring together people working on language-and-sexuality issues from within linguistics and anthropology,[1] given that linguistic research on this topic is, more often than not, fieldwork-related and anthropological research characteristically focuses on issues of sexual onomasiology and semasiology, a concomitant of its preoccupation with social categories and categorization. This state of affairs is amply demonstrated in this volume as well. Nevertheless, as readers will have a chance to realize for themselves, the preceding concise description may not necessarily be the whole story. Although anthropologists would concede that linguists in language-and-sexuality research do mostly fieldwork-related work and linguists would readily recognize the linguistic concerns voiced by their colleagues in anthropology,

[1] My use of terms such as anthropology/anthropologists and linguistics/linguists is not meant as a way of erasing the many (and poignant) differences within these broad and diverse fields some of which are observable in contributions by linguists and anthropologists in this very volume.

this has never been a match made in heaven—and the reasons go back to the very split of linguistics from anthropology and the creation of two distinct disciplines about a century ago.[2] Linguists, including sociolinguists, tend to have a rather tenuous grasp of the social —especially of the dynamic character of social processes, even when manifesting interest beyond run-of-the-mill essentials such as age, sex, and (an admittedly fuzzy) notion of "social class". On the other hand, anthropologists tend to adhere to notions of language-as-*discours* of the "language-is-a-social-phenomenon" variety that are easily assailable and leave linguists uneasy, for they not only summarily erase most of (socially relevant) linguistic work to date, but fly to the face of (anthropologically relevant) evidence regarding linguistic categorization as a cognitive process (cf. Rosch 1978, Rosch and Mervis 1975, Lakoff 1982, 1987, 1988, Taylor 1991, to name just a few) as well as language socialization (e.g., Ochs 1992, Ochs and Schieffelin 1987, Kulick 1990, 1998) in culturally relevant categories and, eventually, stereotypes as well. The tradition of socially relevant work on language and linguistically relevant work on society is only sparingly evoked. There is no use in issuing false promissory notes: this volume shall not rectify this situation, for it could not possibly do so. Each and every one of us, editor and contributors, comes from a scholarly environment that has specifically discouraged this kind of contact while, simultaneously, paying more lip service to it than ever. Thus, in many and important ways, the very endeavor is out in left field as it is. And if it bears visible marks of the agonizing dialogue between linguistics and anthropology this could hardly be otherwise; for all of us, as contributors to this volume, inadvertently brought with us competing orthodoxies, theoretically and methodologically. Linguists, like me, have struggled with the vagaries of rhetorical apodeixis, while our fellow colleagues from anthropology have had to bear with circumscribed conceptualizations of "the social", often formed outside the realm of social theorizing (cf. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992: 485-486).

I do not intend to say that my colleagues in linguistics and anthropology have failed to notice what I have: rather, I am explicitly stating my experience as a linguist in a working environment largely shaped by anthropologists and historians;[3] the experience that informed this volume, in the first place. The uneasiness with one another's

[2] A close reading of Bloomfield (1925) and Sapir (1929) bears testimony to this, if only between the lines. Cf. also Darnell (2001).

[3] I work in a Department which, when I got hired was known as the Department of Social Anthropology and later became the Department of Social Anthropology and History.

conceptualization of language is mutual and palpable—but so is the vital interest in language (long before the "linguistic turn" was ever in sight). These are both worth considering.

Anthropologists are interested in language to the extent that it provides information on culture-specific social processes. Thus, their view of the dynamic nature of society makes them impatient with the characteristic persistence of linguists on form and a concomitant adherence to more or less formal methods for tackling their material. Moreover, work on language *qua* categorization and the cognitive basis thereof, hardly debatable in linguistics today, meets with suspicion in anthropology for it is understood as giving in to biologism (which it hardly need be). From a linguist's point of view, anthropologists tend to disregard the form of signifiers concentrating instead on the signified, as if the two were separable. This predilection leads to a veritable impasse when anthropologists employ the term *discourse,* which they intend in the sense made popular by Foucault while never quite dissociating it (as Foucault did not dissociate his *discours* either) from what linguists would call discourse, presupposing Saussurean *parole*. When anthropologists talk of discourse they intend the ideas or "meanings" forwarded via language use, notably its inescapable categorizing (and stereotyping) function. This testifies to the dominant meaning-oriented approach to language within the field of anthropology, an approach also espoused by various strands of post-structuralist linguistics (notably the usage-based model advocated by cognitive linguistics, cf., Langacker 1988, 2008). On the other hand, for many linguists discourse can be seen as (yet another) bottom up process and it is only very recently that a conceptualization of discourse as predominantly "circulating in society" has made its way into the field (cf., e.g., Fairclough 1989, 1992). Social approaches to language have gained unprecedented popularity in the past 20 years, especially since structuralist approaches gave hardly any answers to vital questions regarding language use (and thus, partly, even to language as a code, despite their proclamations). Robin Tolmach Lakoff (2004) is not being unfair when she claims that the window to the mind promised by Chomskyan linguistics was a promise unkept. On the other hand, doing away with the peculiarities of the linguistic code for the sake of, a rather ill-defined, Foucauldian *discours* does not seem as a viable alternative for most people in my trade.

This volume resulted from a one-day event jointly organized by the editors of the volume in June 2008 under the auspices of the Graduate Program on "Women and Genders: Anthropological and Historical Approaches" at the Department of Social Anthropology and History of the

University of the Aegean. Despite visualizing an one-day event, on open call for papers was issued and the reaction (over 40 abstracts) was well above our expectations. The speakers were more or less evenly distributed between linguistics and anthropology, as reflected in this volume which comprises significantly elaborated versions of most of the presented papers as well as three contributions not originally presented at the conference. The volume represents just an example of convergence of specialists from two broadly defined fields at a time when language-and-sexuality research seems to be at a turning point. The study of sexuality as desire advocated by Kulick (2000) and Cameron and Kulick (2003, 2005, 2006) doubtlessly worked as a catalyst for the field, but not because it gave answers: rather, it had a hand in prying open old unanswered questions and in posing new ones. For one, it was operative in polarizing research between desire and identity as if they were sharply distinguishable (cf. Sauntson and Kyratzis 2007, Morrish and Leap 2007, Canakis this volume) by promoting, indeed provoking, the identity backlash (cf., e.g., the work of Bucholtz and Hall 2004a, 2004b, 2005), at a time when "identity" was already seriously questioned, beyond essentialist charges, cogently countered in Fuss (1989),[4] —and for good reasons (expounded, e.g., in Brubaker and Cooper 2000, Valentine 2006a, 2006b, 2007, 2008). In the heat of the debate, earlier work on the matter was largely disregarded, which gave an erroneous impression of novelty and urgency to an issue that is as vexed as it is tired. Bersani, already in 1995, writes insightfully on this issue in the prologue of his unduly neglected book *Homos*, from which I take the liberty of quoting extensively below:

> Noone wants to be called a homosexual. […] Much more mystifying is the aversion to "homosexuality" on the part of self-identified homosexual activists and theorists. Not only that: those I have in mind, far from proposing merely lexical substitutions (gay or queer, say, instead of homosexual), are also insisting that their chosen self-designations no longer designate the reality we might assume to be indissolubly connected to whatever term is used. For the interested but theoretically uninitiated observer of today's cultural scene, it may come as something of an epistemological shock to learn from Monique Wittig, that "it would be incorrect to say that lesbians associate, make love, live with women"; or, from Judith Butler, that the only thing lesbians have in common is a

[4] Moreover, identity issues are harder to bypass, and more resistant to the anti-essentialist theorizing of the self-styled avant-garde, in societies recovering from crisis, like the Balkans, effectively renamed "Southeastern Europe" (cf. Blagojevic, Kolozova, and Slapsak 2006), or Central America (cf. Lancaster 1999).

> knowledge of how homophobia works against women; or, from Michael Warner, that queerness is characterized by a determined "resistance to regimes of the normal." These assertions, made by three of the most original writers working today on questions of sexuality and gender, suggest a definitional crisis. Is the "homophobic lesbian" an oxymoron? And since we have all known men who lust for other men while otherwise feeling quite comfortable with "regimes of the normal," is *queer* now to be taken as delineating political rather than erotic tendencies? No longer would a boy discover that, whether he likes it or not, he is queer; indeed, all of us—even after decades of what we thought of as extravagant sexual confirmation of our queerness—would have to earn the right to that designation and to the dignity it now confers.
>
> In much of this book I will be arguing that these formulations should be both welcomed and resisted. Although it would be easy to discuss them as evidence of a paranoid distrust to all self-identifying moves, there are excellent historical reasons for such distrust. The elaborating of certain erotic preferences into a "character"—into a kind of erotically determined essence—can never be a disinterested scientific enterprise. The attempted stabilizing of identity is inherently a disciplinary project. Panoptic vision depends on a successful immobilizing of the human objects it surveys, and, in an argument made familiar by Michel Foucault, sexuality now provides the principal categories for a strategic transformation of behavior into manipulatable characterological types. Once "the homosexual" *and* "the heterosexual" were seen as primary examples of such types, it was perhaps inevitable that any effort to enclose human subjects within clearly delimited and coherent identities would become suspect. (1995: 1-3)

Considering this excerpt vis-à-vis much more recent work on "identity" vs. "desire" the debate seems revamped.[5] Nevertheless, the ferocity of this dispute did have at least one positive outcome: research started trying to prove that both concepts are manifestly relevant to the subject matter at hand. Still, this much would have been justifiably presupposed, had it not been for this theoretical interlude. An outcome of this feud was the gradual repudiation of "identity" as an analytical tool (cf. Valentine 2007, 2008) and its, admittedly makeshift, substitution with terms such as subjectivity (cf. Canakis in this volume). Identity, of course, also came under fire from individuals who, albeit self-identifying as homosexual or gay, would hardly see themselves aligning with the sexual identity politics forwarded by the, progressively mainstreamed, indeed *homonormative*, gay movement. On the other hand, the "desire-turn", pushing for a "sexy linguistics" (Kulick 2000, Cameron and Kulick 2003) left, *volente nolente*,

[5] That Bersani did not self-identify as a language-and-sexuality theorist is irrelevant.

an open door to both criticisms of witty triviality (Bucholtz and Hall 2004a) and to psychoanalysis without being able to do anything much about it (then or afterwards), given the theoretical, methodological, and rhetorical gap that separates most work in linguistics and the social sciences from psychoanalysis. Language-and-sexuality research to this date has shown that the "desire" vs. "identity" debate cannot be used as a theoretical platform for future research. But does that mean that it can flourish based on a conjunction of the two? Although, in the long run, viable analyses of sexually relevant language cannot afford to disregard either, the fuzziness of both as analytical tools does not guarantee a success story. "Desire" and "identity", like "intentions", have a tendency to crack open at the seams, unable to withstand the burden of rigorous theoretical investigation. It goes without saying that they can be fruitfully used for purposes of descriptive work. Yet, if descriptions ideally go through theoretical frameworks, it is hard to imagine how "desire", "identity", or "desire-cum-identity" could play that role, given the aforementioned caveats. If, on top of this, we are ready to concede that activist discourse and philosophical commentary are not viable substitutes for theoretical frameworks we are left with an experimental field.

Nevertheless, howsoever experimental work on language-and-sexuality may be, it can and does draw on work on language in society and language socialization, notably language and gender research, which it has come to complement in significant ways. In my understanding work on language-and-gender started fading into language-and-sexuality already through the pioneering work of Ochs (1992) and Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992), to name just a couple of well-known examples to both anthropologists and linguists. If heteronormativity became more explicit through language-and-sexuality research it was not necessarily invented or discovered by it. Research on sexuality is in a very important respect a continuation of work on gender; one which sets out to do what was already surfacing as important aspect of language-and-gender research in the early 1990s:

> [R]elatively little progress has been made in explaining how social practices relate to linguistic structures and systems. With only few exceptions […], linguists have ignored recent work in social theory that might eventually deepen our understanding of the *social dimensions of cognition (and of the cognitive dimensions of social practice)*. Even less attention has been paid to the social (including the linguistic) construction of gender categories […]. Nor has much attention been given to the variety of ways gender relations and privilege are constructed. Dominance is often seen as either a matter of deference and/or coercion; other aspects of gender relations—e.g. *sexual attraction*—are typically ignored. (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992: 484-485, my emphasis)

In my view, the crux of the matter is our understanding of the cognitive dimension of social practice and "the social" and the social dimension of cognition and "the cognitive". These two aspects of language are still in considerable tension in linguistics as, I dare say, they are in anthropology—and little shall be achieved before we address it. But addressing it is not going to be easy: for it is a false dichotomy we have struggled to establish, and our work thrives on (and suffers from) it. The Chomskyan superciliousness vis-à-vis social issues in language and the bio-phobia defining most of current sociolinguistics and social anthropology are but the most poignant reflexes of this tension (cf. also Sapir 1929).[6]

So far, language-and-sexuality research has managed to legitimize its subject matter and to claim visibility for a field that goes against both social and academic "respectability". What it has not accomplished is the cultivation of a necessary distance from activism and solicitation of subcultural endorsement which is, in my view, a prerequisite for seriously dealing with heterosexuality as an orientation and, hence, with heteronormativity in its own ballpark. Given its largely experimental character, research in this field is still in the process of manufacturing and sharpening the necessary tools for the treatment of phenomena amenable to *bona fide* linguistic inquiry (cf. Zwicky 1997, Queen 2007). One such move could be the rehabilitation—indeed the re-appropriation—of the notion of categories and categorization, both necessary in language research of any kind, and distinct from categorization-as-stigma (read: categorization on the basis of a preconceived social master-plan). Mixing up the two is a textbook case of throwing out the baby with the bath water and currently very common in language-and-sexuality research. Finally, the oft-mentioned lack of prestige is probably mostly due to palpable theoretical failures and not to an "inherent", as it were, "non-respectability" of the field.[7]

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[6] As early as 1925, Leonard Bloomfield, writing in first issue of *Language*, on the occasion of the establishment of the Linguistic Society of America, voices an opinion manifesting an old understanding of linguistics as presupposing both the social and the cognitive/biological:

> Linguistics differs from the natural sciences in that its object depends upon those small and constantly altering groups of individuals, the speech-communities. Thus linguistics introduces into the order of the sciences the peculiar rate of change known as history—a rate of change more rapid than the biologic, and therefore more subject to observation. (1925: 3)

[7] In February 2009, during a lecture on Greek sociolinguistics I delivered at Al-Farabi University in Almaty, I mentioned, among a number of many other topics,

Like every similar endeavor, this volume has its strengths and weaknesses. Among the former I would include that it covers a wide range of sexualities from a variety of perspectives and is manifestly conscious that work on language-and-sexuality is part and parcel of language and politics. It gives heterosexuality a voice, if not the center stage it actually has in real life—no matter where one lives. Since most papers approach their subject matter ethnographically, they thickly contextualize the phenomena which they purport to describe and/or analyze. Moreover, the authors do not shy away from categorizing (i.e., analyzing) for fear of "stereotyping"—as such fear did, does, and, certainly, will continue to exist; and yet, categorization is inescapable when talking about language: a categorization of the most laborious and pervasive kind. And while not categorizing may well be not unworthy as an enterprise, it is (for obvious reasons) not the way language-and-sexuality research could purport to develop (cf. also Livia and Hall 1997). Still, the papers in this volume, approach their subject matter rather testily, for lack of a solid research tradition. Yet, making peace with such shortcomings as we continue to refine our tools is necessary, for the moment, if we are to exit the "phase" of sexuality as *homo*sexuality, *bi*sexuality as a great obtrusive absence,[8] and queerness as a "groupie" and empty catch-all term; if we are to come to a point where language-and-sexuality research will not have to take its cues from and be answerable to the opinions of mainstream or underdog activism (and activism will stop soliciting its confirmation). Looking back at more recent developments in language and gender research can be sobering to this effect.

To say of a field that it is experimental may be taken as a way of saying that shortcomings should be expected. This is certainly not the intention of this writer. Rather, by repeatedly invoking its experimental character, I intend to say that language-and-sexuality research is at a crossroads where it has an opportunity to rethink both the, admittedly few,

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that some of us work on language and sexuality. The colleague who did me courtesy of interpreting in Russian faltered, looked at me and the audience, and only proceeded to translate when a senior colleague gave her audible consent, by actually saying *seksual'nost'* herself. I never stopped thinking that she was, politely, trying to protect me—only not from social but from professional outcry: people are not being necessarily callous when wondering about what we, "sexy linguistics" types, (aspire to) do and in what way, even when acquainted, as my audience certainly were, with language-and-gender research. The fact that the well-mannered colleague asked me to forgive her, made me feel even more awkward, as there was nothing to forgive.

[8] This palpable absence may warrant revisions in Rubin's (1999) sexual hierarchy.

certainties and the, doubtlessly many, uncertainties and anxieties and take advantage of this opportunity for critical self-appraisal, a prerequisite for decisive future steps—and breakthroughs.

The contributions to this volume address a variety of issues pertaining to the study of language-and-sexuality, ranging from the gendered and sexed materiality of the human voice and sex talk at work, to the significance of silence as a form of protest, and are organized in four parts (hardly the only eligible grouping). The papers in the first part deal with terms of recognition and categorization, terms bearing both self-identificatory and derogatory potential. Venetia Kantsa focuses on the meanings of "lesbian". In the Greek language *Lésvios* and *Lésvia/Lesvía* refer to the male and female inhabitant of the island of Lesvos, respectively. The wide diffusion of the meaning of the word *lesvía*, as a descriptive and self-identificatory term for same-sex desiring women, came into being under the influence of the feminist and lesbian movement which came to Greece from the Anglo-Saxon world, mainly the USA. Nowadays, the noun *lesvía* and the adjective *lesviakí* are widely used for the naming of groups, LGBT organizations, events, and websites. However, it is only hesitantly adopted by same-sex desiring women who argue that the term *lesvía* is not sufficiently supported by a lesbian culture in Greece as it is in the Anglo-Saxon world and is, therefore, still a highly contested and often a pejorative term (cf. Apostolidou, Canakis in this volume). Taking the above observation as her point of departure, the author discusses the "local" meanings of internationalisms. The Greek example is unique in that Greek women who are engaged in same-sex relations have at their disposal a word of native origin they can identify with, and which, nevertheless, gains its full meaning and significance only if applied to a non-native context and connected to a "western" tradition, which has developed these terms, in the first place.

Anna Apostolidou focuses on another aspect of linguistic categorization and investigates insult and verbal violence as parameters of subjectivity construction and community building among self-identified gay men in contemporary Greece. Drawing on original ethnographic data, she portrays the wider context of insult and analyzes the appropriation of derogatory discourse as a mechanism of identification and as a crucial factor in decisions of inclusion in and exclusion from certain social settings. Moving along several axes, the author examines how injurious speech becomes embedded, negated but also appropriated in the specific cultural context, while dealing with stigma management through the use of sub-culture specific language (cf. Canakis, Kantsa, Yannakopoulos in this volume). To this effect, she traces the routes of insulting words in the life

of a gay man, their communicative place in social interaction, their force as bonding and dividing mechanisms and their incorporation in the "community lingo", which brings out the dominant sexuality canon reflected by and constructed through native and foreign terms (the latter often functioning as liberating alternatives to native ones, heavily invested with negative connotations). Discourse strategies of appropriation of the insult are shown to be both subversive and politically salient in the discourse of gay men, an ideal locus for scrutinizing identity politics and self-perception in "marginal" and "stigmatized" groups.

The second part features three contributions dealing with the linguistic construction and performance of heterosexuality from the perspective of sociolinguistics, broadly construed. Argiris Archakis and Sofia Lampropoulou problematize the construction of heterosexual identities in the talk of Greek youths through storytelling, which has proved crucial for identity work, the "linguistic lens" through which narrators display aspects of their identities. They follow a dynamic approach according to which identities emerge through discourse, where they are dynamically recreated. The authors draw on data from 10 single-sex recorded conversations between 17-year old Greek adolescents and 20-year old researchers focusing on naturally occurring narratives produced by female and male informants as they deal with incidents in their everyday lives pertaining to adolescent perceptions of sexual affairs. Based on the way the narrators present themselves and others through their stories in relation to sexual affairs, they explore their positioning vis-à-vis the norm and their self presentation as heterosexual males and females in the given context, while arguing that, according to adolescent perceptions, these stories seem to deviate from the accepted moral norms (cf. Kosetzi in this volume). They conclude that, taking into consideration narrator perceptions towards sexuality in relation to purposefully selected aspects of their identity, narrators appear to both reflect and sustain heterosexual norms and stereotypes defining their everyday worlds outside their stories (cf. Polyzou in this volume).

Konstantia Kosetzi focuses on the discursive construction of female heterosexualities in the urban Greek context through an analysis of the Greek TV series *Schedón Poté* ('Almost Never') and its recontextualisations by focus groups of female viewers. Based on an adapted Faircloughian CDA framework, the author demonstrates how "progressive" construals of female heterosexualities are construed in *SP*, in contrast to more "conservative" ones by the viewers, who expect women to control their sexuality (cf. Archakis and Lampropoulou in this volume). If the heroines of *SP* actively construct an agentive sexuality, the focus groups are critical

of their Permissive discourse and practices, substituting them with a theme of Restraint (cf. women have to wait to have sex with a man). On the other hand, the occurrence of the theme of "Man as the Rightful Initiator" in the series is both criticised when recontextualised by the focus groups and, at the same time, sustained and reinforced by themes such as "Women's Reputation". Such contradictions are suggestive of an ongoing struggle in the Greek urban context drawing on (and shaping) discourses that circulate in it: a struggle involving revolt against firmly established double standards, gender essentialism, and sexism, at a time when women are making strides in a number of fields in contemporary Greece, all of which seems to be leading to changes in interpersonal heterosexual relationships (cf. Polyzou in this volume).

Alexandra Polyzou focuses on men's lifestyle magazines as a fruitful site of research on the interplay of language, gender, and sexuality, as they are not only explicitly gendered but draw heavily on (and reproduce) constructs of sexuality as one of the basic elements of gender. Her analysis is based on three texts, each sampled from one of the three major Greek men's magazines (*Status*, *Nitro*, and *Playboy*) and looks into gendered cognitive models and beliefs, as elements of social cognition (cf. ideologies), and how (and why) they surface in the texts as assertions, advice, commands, presuppositions, and presupposed assumptions. Apart from documenting the hardly surprising presupposed hegemonic assumption of heterosexuality in most of the data, Polyzou illustrates how hegemonic heterosexuality is constructed and how it is dealt with in relation to non-hegemonic constructs of masculinity (cf. Kosetzi in this volume). She concludes that although each of the texts takes a different slant towards masculine sexuality, heterosexuality is linked to attraction, desire, and sex, while homosexuality is desexualised and constructed mainly as a set of lifestyle choices. At the same time, she suggests that the "lifestyle" perception of male homosexuality and its representation in contrast to heterosexuality can be also seen as a strategy for the promotion of consumerism and reflexivity, stereotypically associated with femininity.

The contributions in the third part of the volume deal with language and sexuality through a variety of practices ranging from online profiles to ethnographic discourse and hostess bar talk. In all of these, language plays an auxiliary role. More specifically, Costas Canakis focuses on the language employed for self- and other-representation (cf. Kantsa in this volume) in online personal ads posted on www.gay.gr, a popular Greek site meant as a forum for "gay, lesbian, bi, and trans", with the intention of examining aspects of the indexical relation between language, gender, and sexuality among men who pursue same sex relations. Although these ads

provide limited information, as they lack the interactive character and thick contextualization of *viva voce* discourse, they nevertheless allow for highly condensed snapshots of stances and conceptualizations of masculinity and sexuality (cf. Polyzou, Archakis and Lampropoulou in this volume). The author revisits recent research which has focused specifically on the articulation of desire and documented that stereotypical predicates of masculinity, such as *manliness, seriousness, discretion,* etc., are eroticized and sought after in this particular context (cf. Abatzi). Revisiting the same pool of data (some 200 online personals), Canakis draws attention to the fact that subjectivity is often at the very core of desire: in describing themselves users talk of their desires while imparting information about who they are; and in explaining what they look for in others they tend to eroticize subjectivities rather than sexual acts alone.

Kostas Yannakopoulos argues that most studies on sexuality, and especially homosexuality, focus on sexual identities, desires, and practices, as objects of explicit verbal representation. Consequently, fieldwork focuses on subject discourse, on conscious verbal communication between ethnographer and "informants", which is usually realized in the context of predetermined interviews, typically on the initiative of the anthropologist. Although this approach became dominant through the establishment of fieldwork as a practice of data collection that could be directly observed by the ethnographer, it presents an obstacle to understanding and studying those male homosexual desires which are not determined by the actors as homoerotic. He argues that a potential verbal articulation of these emotions would lead to the cancellation of not only the erotic desire of the subjects, but to the cancellation of their very ethnographic research. Based on an ethnography of erotic desire and subjectivity in the context of male homosocial communication in Greece, Yannakopoulos focuses mainly on two issues. First, how does an anthropologist study a sexuality which does not constitute the object of conscious speech (cf. Athanasiou in this volume)? Second, how does the study of indigenous perceptions of the unconscious and of a psychoanalytically oriented anthropology contribute to the study of the linguistic and sensuous interactions of these men?

Liopi Abatzi looks into the world of hostess bars and the attendant practice of *konsomasión* in Greece. In this context, gendered economic and sexual exchanges merge and heterosexual male desire is cast in distinctive forms of talk. Abatzi explores the mediated relationship between participant discourse and hostess bar practices and attempts to show how the latter render discourse intelligible (cf. Archakis and Lampropoulou, Canakis in this volume). Although not specific to *konsomasión*, what people say is indicative of conceptions, practices, and feelings that are part

and parcel of issues of gender and sexuality at large. This form of talk may be seen as a process of co-constructing a discourse of desire in which the codification of desire and the performance of erotic communication are mediated by socially positioned "masculinities" and "femininities". *Konsomasión* constitutes a mode of realizing masculinity and femininity which imitates "the normative gender ideal" as well as "the naturalized heterosexuality" scrutinized by Judith Butler. Through data drawn from her fieldwork in hostess bars, the author shows the gendered and sexual organization of *konsomasión*. Yet, hostess bar talk is not merely a social ritual underwriting hegemonic models of heterosexuality; it also crucially exposes their instability. One cannot fail to notice the rifts and subversions in this glorification of normative heterosexuality where women may, nevertheless, manifest aggressive, "masculine" sexuality and men may assume "passive" roles.

The papers in the last part of the volume go beyond what might be possibly conceived as the spoken word, with Panopoulos's paper dealing with voice, not as the prerequisite for the inscription of phonated language, but as a gendered and sexed medium and Athanasiou's contribution explicitly focusing on silence, the very interval between stretches of speech which may however be imbued with complex meanings. More specifically, Panayotis Panopoulos focuses on the human voice, vehicle of speech as well as other bodily sound expressions, ranging from inarticulate screaming to crying, lamenting, and singing; the voice which is also widely used as a metaphor of the defining character of a social group or person ("the voice of the people", "the voice of conscience"). In various post-structural approaches and in disciplines ranging from Lacanian psycho-analysis and political philosophy to classics and cultural history, the notion of the voice has been implemented towards a reinterpretation of relations between language, subjectivity, and social experience (cf. Athanasiou in this volume). In the fields of anthropology and musicology, many recent studies also examine the complex connections of voice, gender, and sexuality. Of particular interest to the author's work are those studies which focus on ambiguous and liminal performances of gender and sexuality either in historical or contemporary forms of phonetic expressions and negotiations of heteronormativity and desire. In this paper, Panopoulos focuses on some of these studies and attempts to answer the following question: what is it that gives voice the power to negotiate rigid boundaries and express alterity, disguise, and ambiguity?

In the final paper of this volume, Athena Athanasiou focuses on the disquieting silence of women's mourning stretching the boundaries of the linguistic. She explores the performative uses of self-imposed silence

focusing on the politics of the international feminist and antimilitaristic movement *Women in Black* (*WiB*) with special reference to its Serbian chapter, *Žene u Crnom*. Athanasiou shows how the silent street action of these activists undermines the normative associations of mourning with the feminine and the patriotic and at the same time disrupts the normative silencing of injurious national histories. Rather than construing silence and mourning as incapacity to speak (or act), as the numbing state of victimhood, and the realm of the unutterable to which women are traditionally relegated, she suggests that the mournful silence of *WiB* opens spaces for challenging conventional divisions between the affective and the political, between the political and the performative, between speech and silence (cf. Panopoulos, Yannakopoulos in this volume), as well as between body and language (cf. Abatzi in this volume). In this work, the author draws on Michel Foucault's notion of silence in the *History of Sexuality*, Wendy Brown's treatment of silence as a force which is potentially subversive and yet discursively produced, and Veena Das's exploration of "the antiphony of language and silence", in the genre of women's public mourning.

A question that arises is where do we go from now? I recently came across the following pronouncement:

> We are approaching a time when boys will be provided their first contact with women through a doctor's prescription, and this solemn act will probably be witnessed by both parents and the on-duty psychologist. Then again, there was never a larger gay population. (Kapor 2010: 19)

Serbian writer Momo Kapor, in a delightful piece entitled "In my time" talks about the invention of adolescence and the sexual anxieties of our era. This is not meant as a research piece; however, the view that "there has never been a larger gay population" is of interest to all of us, enmeshed in the study of language-and-sexuality from whatever disciplinary angle, precisely because we would be hard pressed to find people disputing it or questioning its intended meaning. If for Jeffrey Weeks and Leo Bersani, indeed for most of us, *gay* is a category that has not existed from time immemorial, that "there has never been a larger gay population" is a truism (actually, a statement to be potentially recruited towards supporting the view that *gay* is a contemporary sexual category). I am pretty sure that most people would think the same of lesbian, transexual, and bisexual, all of which belong to the categorical legacy of our era. An era that reaped the benefits (and the disasters) of the exposure of compulsory heterosexuality which came as a side effect of questioning the gendered and political status quo as early as the 1960s; an era that saw

pornography dragged to court, in the name of feminism, just because it did not abide by the ethos of sexual gratification as a concomitant of courtly love, which feminism has had a decisive role in dismantling as oppressive;[9] an era where gay masculinity competes with hegemonic masculinity in celebrating and eroticizing toughness and assuming about as unaccommodating a stance to femininity and/or feminization as there has ever circulated in the Western World; an era where queerness refuses the rhetorical "immobilization" imposed by categorical terms while uncannily, yet relentlessly, competing for (non-rhetorical) category status in the sexual category market; an era where sexuality outside categories seems to be the desired end, whereas we have all undoubtedly had a hand in proliferating such categories; last, an era where research on language-and-sexuality, while exposing the structure of such categories is, simultaneously, operative in their immobilization.

In a non-trivial sense, the regulation of sexuality is routinely propagated via all relevant published research and, by the same token, this regulation has reached extraordinary heights in our era: for, ironically, there is no safer way to the regulation of sexuality than asking for institutional rights and state protection. In this sense, the "immobilization" presupposed by "panoptic vision" is already here just because we chose to scrutinize sexuality and oppose oppression. This, in itself, can be used to respond to the alleged charges of lack of seriousness and/or respectability in language-and-sexuality research. By conceding to study it we brought sexuality to the realm of the respectable, by default; and in so doing we had a hand in its regulation (and its sterilization). This is probably why the relevant research and activism are actually in cahoots and far from balancing an adversarial relation. In "theorizing" activism we have deprived it of its sting, even as (especially as?) we stand critically towards it; and activism, in craving scholarly confirmation, has conceded to be immobilized, panoptically viewed, and therefore neutralized—in much the same way as the transgression of non-normative sexual behavior was effectively neutralized by the orchestrated show of tolerance which went by the name of "political correctness", a show that the vast majority of the "trangressors" was, incidentally, quick to embrace (and who can blame them?).

At present, language-and-sexuality research in linguistics is moving towards recognition of heterosexuality as sexuality and problematizes the direction of further research in linguistics. According to Zwicky, two

[9] But cf. Moore (1994) for the many, widely divergent takes on feminism and rifts therein.

"lavender issues" that are of relevance to students of language are "the lexical items that are available for referring to sexual orientations and to people of various orientations" (1997: 21) and "the differences in the language and speech of people of different orientations" (ibid.). Queen, writing some ten years later, in the aftermath of the desire vs. identity debate, sets out to

> examine the current state of research on the connections between language and sexuality and argue that the time has arrived for such research to adopt a more vigorous use of the scientific method, which will allow for testing the predictions made by the various theoretical interventions that have been proposed since the 1990s. […] I conclude with a call for more integration of deductive and inductive approaches within the field. (Queen 2007: 314)

In concluding her article, she expresses a hope that makes good sense to scholars working within sociolinguistics

> My hope is that as research on language and sexuality continues to evolve, it, too, will make choices largely motivated by theoretical predictions and the testing of hypotheses and that those choices will lead to new methods of data collection and analysis. In the end, the study of language and sexuality, like the study of sociolinguistics more generally, has to be tied to the desire for an accurate model of language variation and its ties to cognitive, social, and historical landscapes. […] Finding ways to blend our theory building more concretely with scientific methods would thus go far toward reconciling one of the inherent problems of trying to study language, namely, that it is at once a property of individuals and a property of groups of individuals. (Queen 2007: 326)

At the same time, the reasonable hopes expressed above would probably leave colleagues in anthropology wondering about the possibility of common ventures with linguists. Whereas (at least some) degree of generalization and predictability seem perfectly laudable scholarly goals to most linguists, our colleagues in anthropology tend to read in such statement a tendency (if not a desire) for the erasure of the particular which is at the heart of their trade. The reason for this is twofold. On the one hand, it has to do with a different conceptualization of language: linguistics in dealing with social aspects of language systematically relates its findings regarding individuals and groups of speakers to the larger picture which necessarily involves cognitive issues. On the other hand, the anthropologist even when not manifestly oblivious to cognitive issues, associates a different set of goals with the study of language (notably the ones put forward in Foucauldian theorizing). Especially ever since the

"linguistic turn" in the social sciences, language has been used as a means for managing issues involving cognition or/and biology. Anthropology is by all means justified in studying language as social behavior; yet, linguistics has plenty of reasons to believe there is much more to it.

In other words, linguistics and anthropology today, to the extent that they share a common interest in some aspects of the study of language, have to countenance and reconcile differences that are anything but new and address criticisms that were voiced as early as 1929 (and have been brewing long before):

> It is precisely because language is a strictly socialized type of human behavior as anything else in culture and yet betrays in its outlines and tendencies such regularities as only the natural scientist is in the habit of formulating, that linguistics is of strategic importance for the methodology of social science. Behind the apparent lawlessness of social phenomena there is a regularity of configuration and tendency which is just as real as the regularity of physical processes in a mechanical world, though it is a regularity of an infinitely less apparent rigidity and of another mode of apprehension on our part. Language is primarily a cultural or social product and must be understood as such. Its regularity and formal development rest on considerations of a biological and psychological nature, to be sure. But this regularity and our underlying unconsciousness of its typical forms do not make of linguistics a mere adjunct to either biology or psychology. Better than any other social science, linguistics shows by its data and methods, necessarily more easily defined than the data and methods of any other type of discipline dealing with socialized behavior, the possibility of a truly scientific study of society which does not ape the methods nor attempt to adopt unrevised the concepts of the natural sciences. (Sapir 1929: 213-214)

Future work on language and sexuality will have to look closely into the past of both anthropology and linguistics for answers. It shall undoubtedly profit both from rigorous non-rhetorical argumentation that is the trademark of linguistics and from the in-depth and no-nonsense look into culture pioneered by anthropology. But this shall require a huge investment of effort and time.

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PART I:

THE LANGUAGE OF RECOGNITION AND CATEGORIZATION