

From the Closet to Television 'Barracks'; Examining Trans Related Discourse in Greek Trash TV

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Introducing Our Research

- Assumptions on gender identities, hostile or accepting attitudes towards trans people, are very much informed by the terms of the latter's representation in public discourse.
- with the emergence of private channels in Greece, a number of shows with a trash sensibility started to appear, especially in smaller stations and post-midnight time slots. Hence, the late 90s until the early 2010s mark a period of considerable popularization of cult programs largely featuring trans and queer people.
- there has been no research that attempts to examine these shows from a sociolinguistic perspective, despite their richness of representations, let alone an analysis of the language targeting trans individuals.
- The discourse analysis employed in our research presents linguistic patterns that shape specific narratives on the trans body, trans identification, sexualization and stigma.

Methodology

- For our research, we watched taped episodes from two major trash shows of the early 2000s Greek television; *Δεν Ήξερες, Δεν Ρώταγες* (2005-?) broadcasted by the channel Extra 3 and presented by Filippos Kampouris who was later succeeded by Tzina Ntroulis, and *Αποκάλυψη Τώρα* (2004-2006), broadcast by ANT1 and presented by Tatiana Stefanidou.
- The taped versions of the shows we found online, as uploaded by the YouTube channel Hell-TV.
- We employed discourse analysis in order to present and discuss our findings in relation to current linguistics theory on gender and sexuality.

Pronouns/Deadnaming

- Panelists appear to respect the pronouns of trans guests, regardless of their having gone through transitioning or not ;legendary crossdresser Aloma is usually referred to as “Mrs. Aloma”, similarly to trans women guests like Eva Koumarianou.
- Headings of the show refer to her in neutral gender accompanied with the word “transvestite”. An offensive tactic in the context of gendered Greek language (Η ΖΩΗ ΤΟΥ ΤΡΑΒΕΣΤΙ ΘΡΥΛΟΣ)
- time pre-transition; the male forms are almost always the ones employed, as in the case of Tzeni (Tzenara) whose molestation is reported as the molestation of a boy, regardless of her trying to use female pronouns (Ο ΠΑΤΕΡΑΣ ΜΟΥ ΜΕ ΚΑΚΟΠΟΙΗΣΕ ΣΕΞΟΥΑΛΙΚΑ ΟΤΑΝ ΗΜΟΥΝ ΜΙΚΡΟΣ)
- one’s pronouns are used incorrectly on purpose in order to offend the guest (“why let a lady/sir, whatever you are, get photographed naked [in front of the Acropolis]?”).

- in multiple disputes between cis and transgendered women, the former resort to addressing the latter with their given names, as a strategy to humiliate them;
- Vounelakou insists on calling Eva with her deadname Konstantinos (“I don’t think I forge anyone’s identity”).
- The question ‘how does your mother call you?’ comes up quite frequently (“Does your mother call you Tzeni or Thanasis?”).



The Trans Body & Medicalization of the Trans Condition

- The trans body/genital utilized to anger and shame trans guests by challenging the “true” nature of their womanhood; “Take off your clothes and the silicone and say that again!” (Vounelakou)
- The body of a trans woman, being an unconventional display of femininity, is considered to be acceptable only on the condition that she has undergone surgery. Panelist to Marianna Fratzi; “Has it been proved that you are a woman?” [...] “So have you has surgery?”
- “the cage narrative” linked with the medicalization of trans condition; Kranideli to Alikei “When you feel the need to change your body, something is definitely wrong with you”.
- trauma presented as the only reason for choosing gender transition; “;“If I had not been raped by my own father, I may have been just a different boy, like the rest” (Tzeni)

Identity Marking-The Gender Binary

- Women have learned to employ insult terms created by men to offend other women
- Multiple instances of fat-shaming during ‘catfights’ between cisgender and trans women; “Are you jealous because you don’t have the body to have a nude photoshoot?” (Marianna Fratzi to Vounelakou).
- Cisgender women struggle to conform to the gender binary, which results in them maintaining a very particular image of femininity and “gatekeeping” it from trans women; “Say that you used to be a boy and now you’re a transexual”.
- Trans women try to compete against cis women for the desire of cis men (“You’re jealous because men desire us and not you!”).
- In both cases, we conclude that even in discussions about femininity, the arguments emerge from the opinions and desires of men.

Sexualization/Slut-shaming/Sex Work

- The male gaze perspective that informs the media world, can account for the similarities in the discourse produced during quarrels between cis women ('catfights') and those amongst trans women.
- Sex work; a primal linguistic ground for offending interlocutors or causing shocking reactions.
- Women held accountable for choosing the “easy way” to make money, instead of finding a decent yet humbling job (“have you tried cleaning stairs?”)
- Phrases indicating experience in sex work; primal slurs
- “I don't engage in 'other jobs' like Mrs. Mpezantakou [...] why visit her house, to see the red lights on the outside?”
- Lack of virtue; sleeping with other married men (“homewrecker”).
- In return, trans women shame cis women for being the exact opposite; “too prude” (“κυρία παρθενοπιπίτσα μου”)

Offensive treatment from host/panelists

- Transness is viewed as the extreme of homosexuality, an unnecessary condition that accentuates social stigmatization, compared to the more easily closeted gay identity.
- *“Αντί να έρθετε στην αθήνα και να μείνετε απλά ένα ομοφυλόφιλο αγόρι, γιατί φτάσατε στο άκρο, στην αλλαγή φύλου;”*
- False sympathy; “for a boy it’s much worse, because the rape was anal [...] to a person like that you can forgive anything”.
- Certain topics appear staged and a phraseology with heavy connotations is employed; a heading reads “I will be photographed naked in the Acropolis”, a supposed statement by trans singer Marianna Frantzi
- An angry panelist responds; “the mere fact of your existence is deplorable”
- Explicitly transphobic/offensive utterances;
- *“τολμάει να μιλάει για σοβαρότητα, όταν εγώ ζω μια ήσυχη, νοικοκυρεμένη, και προπαντός πλην τίμια ζωή; Όταν εκείνη την παίρνουνε νουμεράδες κάθε βράδυ και έχει γίνει ο κώλος της σήραγγα του μετρό;”*

Conclusion

- Our aim; to examine the supposed attempts to include marginalized trans people in the public domain
- Through conflict and discussions between the trans quests and the hosts/panelists we were able to observe and report the construction of the trans identity in the Greek media
- Construction of trans identity with negative connotations
- Trans people are presented through the binary lens and viewed as the “Other”, while they are criticized and ridiculed because of their appearance and lifestyle
- Lack of trans representation in the media and therefore even this kind of representation is helpful
- However, there can be no substantial results because of their negative portrayal; ridiculing, humiliating, dehumanizing



Thank you for your time

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