The linguistic landscape of Stadiou Street in Athens:
An ethnographic approach to the linguistic appropriation of contested space

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Stadiou Street, one of three main routes connecting Omonoia and Syntagma Squares, and among the leafiest thoroughfares until 2010, bespeaks a story of urban de-gentrification (Author 2016). While the forbiddingly expensive jewelry and clothing stores and a couple of top hotels are still there, Stadiou maintains this character for only a block, beyond which it has been radically de-gentrified, and appropriated by “the others” of Greek society (cf. Yannakopoulos/Giannitsiotis 2010; Seals 2013) as suggested by the spray-canned messages on Stadiou’s prized national monuments and exclusive shops.

Spray-canned directives (1-2) and expressive assertions (3-5), along with a variety of oral and written discourses around the city, testify to a heightened awareness of exclusion, and constitute vociferous attempts at symbolically appropriating emblematic strongholds of the local status quo (symbolically located either on or in the immediate vicinity of Stadiou) which has been marked by a sharp right-wing turn in times of crisis (cf. Kitis & Milani 2015)

(1) ΝΑ ΖΗΣΟΥΜΕ ΣΕ ΚΟΣΜΟ ΑΝΑΡΧΙΚΟ
(2) Η ΑΘΗΝΑ ΛΕΣΒΙΑ Ο ΕΡΜΗΣ ΑΝΑΔΡΟΜΟΣ ΚΑΙ Η ΕΡΜΟΥ ΠΕΖΟΔΡΟΜΟΣ
(3) ΟΥΤΕ ΟΜΟΦΟΒΙΑ ΟΥΤΕ ΑΛΛΕΣ ΑΗΔΙΕΣ ΣΦΑΓΕΙΑ ΔΕΝ Θ’ ΑΦΗΣΟΥΜΕ ΝΑ ΓΙΝΟΥΝ ΟΙ ΠΛΑΤΕΙΕΣ
(4) ΑΠΟ ΤΟΝ ΠΕΙΡΑΙΑ ΩΣ ΣΕ ΠΑΓΚΡΑΤΙ ΜΕ ΣΒΑΣΤΙΚΑ Η ΧΩΡΙΣΗ Η ΟΜΟΦΟΒΙΑ Ο ΡΑΤΣΙΣΜΟΣ ΚΑΙ Η ΤΡΑΝΣΦΟΒΙΑ ΚΑΛΝ ΚΡΑΤΟΥΝ
(5) ΤΟ ΚΕΛΠΝΟ ΒΡΩΜΑΕΙ ΑΚΟΜΑ ΡΑΤΣΙΣΜΟ

Moreover, in Athens, counter-discourses often explicitly target “patriots,” “the nation,” and “national unity” (cf. 6-9).

(6) ΣΕ ΚΑΘΕ ΣΕΞΙΣΤΗ ΚΑΙ ΟΜΟΦΟΒΟΒΙΚΟ ΑΞΙΖΕΙ ΜΙΑ ΒΟΥΤΙΑ ΑΠ’ ΤΟ ΛΥΚΑΒΗΤΟ [sic]
(7) ΜΙΣΟΣ ΕΚΦΥΛΟ ΜΑΤΣΟ ΠΑΤΡΙΩΤΕΣ ΣΤΗΝ ΕΘΝΙΚΗ ΕΝΟΤΗΤΑ ΠΑΝΤΟΤΕ ΠΡΟΣΟΤΡΕΣ
(8) ΠΟΥΣΤΑΡΕΣ ΛΕΣΒΙΕΣ ΙΕΡΕΙΕΣ ΤΟΥ ΑΙΣΧΟΥΣ ΕΙΜΑΣΤΕ ΠΕΡΗΦΑΝΑ Η ΝΤΡΟΠΗ ΤΟΥ ΕΘΝΟΥΣ

Looking at gendered and sexed citizenship in Athens through the linguistic, indeed *semiotic*, landscape (Jaworski & Thurlow 2010; Blommaert 2013; Stroud & Jegels 2014) has to do with public literacy practices and, more specifically, counter-literacies (Pennycook 2009, 2010). Graffiti, as politically significant scribbled speech in public space, often goes against the grain of local conceptions of national propriety and respectability, especially when addressing gendered and sexual normalcy (cf. Mosse 1982, 1985a, 1985b; Pryke 1998) or masculinity (cf. Nagel 1998), which is indexically related to active, agentive sexuality in the Greek imaginary (Author 2015, 2016; cf. Milani 2014, 2015a, 2015b). The data constitute purposeful utterances addressing members of the author(s)’s in-group as well as members of out-groups and are informed by specific ideologies and national narratives (Author 2013, 2014; Johnston 2015; Radović 2013), as well as recently coined counter-narratives (cf. Author 2016, Kasanga 2014), of which these public signs are but one instantiation. Such a synthesis elucidates how gendered and sexually relevant language in the LL of Stadiou is crucial in claiming politically symbolic space, while arguing for current arguments (cf. Blommaert & Maly 2014, Barni & Bagna 2015, and Blommaert 2015, 2016) which capitalize on the merits of a qualitative, ethnographic approach to linguistic landscapes.
References
Author. 2016.
Author. 2015.
Author. 2014.
Author. 2013.