Borrowing and the historical LGBTQ lexicon

Profile of a pragmatically marked field

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Unlike most areas involving taboo, where language-internal innovations tend to dominate, homosexuality is characterized by a basic international vocabulary shared across multiple languages, notably English, French, Italian, Spanish and German. Historically, the lexis of nonnormative gender identity has shared space with that of sexual orientation. This lexicon includes (inexhaustively) the following series of internationalisms: *sodomite, bugger, bardash, berdache, tribade, pederast, sapphist, lesbian, uranist, invert, homosexual, bisexual, trans, gay, queer*. This common terminology has resulted from language contact in a broad sense, and more specifically from lexical borrowing (loanwords). Several framing devices are expressed through the lexicon: religious censure, distancing in time and space, othering, medicalization or pathologizing, but also in recent decades LGBTQ self-assertion and demands for equality. Rather than necessarily being subject to taboo, then, queerness represents a pragmatically marked semantic field in which the lexicon is highly dependent upon social factors and the communicative context.

Keywords: lexicology, borrowing, loanwords, LGBTQ, gender, homosexuality, pragmatics, taboo

1. Introduction

The historical LGBTQ lexicon[1] amply demonstrates the paradoxical nature of taboo, whereby social pressures to avoid speaking about a certain topic are actually an extremely rich source of lexical creation. Beyond the extensive LGBTQ-

1. *LGBTQ lexicon* is used here as a means of focusing on the continuities now ascribed to concepts that historically may be categorized or conceived of differently.

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related vocabularies unique to each individual language, there exists a historical core common to major European languages – and in some cases beyond – made up of *internationalisms* (see Table 1), which ultimately represent loanwords (on borrowing, see Lo Vecchio 2018, 2020: 1–10; Thibault & Lo Vecchio 2020). While lexical borrowing is a well-known recourse for speakers when faced with taboo – notably for the euphemistic or otherwise expressive connotation loans may confer, often due to semantic demotivation relative to the target language – the unusually internationalized lexicon of queerness sets it apart from other semantic fields involving taboo, where internal innovations seem to dominate overall.

The outsized role borrowing has played in the construction of the international LGBTQ lexicon is reflective of the cross-cultural processes by which HOMOSEXUALITY – and various historical words used to refer to the concept – came to be conceived of over time and across space. The dominant word family employed at any given time also points to the cultural influence of particular societies and/or languages. Biblical allusions (Latinisms) reveal coded religious censure, while references to ancient civilizations (Hellenisms, often via French) or to seemingly far-off ones (various origins, notably French and Italian) help to distance the concept in time and space. Late-nineteenth-century innovations (mostly Germanisms) offer the sterile, technical allure of scientific words, even where their origin was otherwise. Meanwhile, recent loans from English to other languages have resulted from activist assertion as part of popular movements for self-determination and equality.

When examined in the aggregate, then, the term *taboo* itself proves insufficient here, when we consider that the most recent lexical innovations were adopted first and foremost by members of LGBTQ communities, using them openly and proudly in their fight for acceptance and visibility. Instead, it seems more relevant to refer to the *pragmatically marked* nature of this lexis, since what links the various terms, synchronically and diachronically, are the socially bound pragmatic effects in discourse that each may express, specific to each linguistic community. Starting out from the more general standpoint of pragmatic markedness, the 'taboo' manifests not at the lexeme level, but at the level of semantic field or concept (Casas Gómez (2012: 47) speaks of "conceptual categories or forbidden realities"). Such a perspective has several heuristic benefits for linguistic study. For one thing, it places the lexicon on an equal plane with other communicative strategies used in discourse to address the concept evoked, which could also include syntactic or phonetic (prosody, tone, volume) means, as well as related multimodal ones such as facial expressions or gestures or, in media, visual techniques.

Specifically with respect to the lexicon, this perspective also facilitates reassessment of the nature of euphemism and dysphemism, going beyond an

Table 1. Historical LGBTQ lexicon

French	**Italian**	**Spanish**	**English**	**German**
sodomite *sodomie*	*sodomita* *sodomia*	*sodomita* *sodomía*	*sodomite* *sodomy*	*Sodomit* *Sodomie*
bougre *bougrerie*	*buggerone* *buggeria*	*bujarrón*	*bugger* *buggery*	*Puseron, Buseron* *Ketzer, Ketzerei*
bardache	*bardassa*	*bardaja, bardaje*	*bardass(e), bardash* *berdache, berdash*	*Bardasso, Bardasch*
tribade *tribadisme*	*tribade, tribada* *tribadismo*	*tríbade, tríbada* *tribadismo*	*tribade* *tribadism*	*Tribade* *Tribadismus*
pédéraste, pédé *pédérastie*	*pederasta* *pederastia*	*pederasta* *pederastia*	*pederast* *pederasty*	*Päderast* *Päderastie* *Knabenschänder* *Knabenliebe*
saphique *saphiste* *saphisme*	*saffica/o* *saffista* *saffismo*	*sáfica/o* *safista* *safismo*	*sapphic* *sapphist* *sapphism*	*sapphisch* *Sapphiste* *Sapphismus*
lesbienne *lesbianisme*	*lesbica* *lesbismo*	*lesbiana* *lesbianismo*	*lesbian* *lesbianism*	*Lesbierin, Lesbe* *lesbische Liebe*
uraniste *uranisme*	*uranista* *uranismo*	*uranista* *uranismo*	*uranist, uranian* *uranism*	*Urning, Uranist* *Uranismus*
inverti·e *inversion*	*invertito/a* *inversione*	*invertido/a* *inversión*	*invert, inverted* *inversion*	*konträre Sexualempfindung* *invertiert* *Invertierte(r)* *Inversion*
homosexuel·le *homosexualité* *hétérosexualité* *bisexualité* *transsexualité*	*omosessuale* *omosessualità* *eterosessualità* *bisessualità* *transessualità*	*homosexual* *homosexualidad* *heterosexualidad* *bisexualidad* *transexualidad*	*homosexual* *homosexuality* *heterosexuality* *bisexuality* *transsexuality*	*Homosexuelle(r)* *Homosexualität* *Heterosexualität* *Bisexualität* *Transsexualität*
gay, gai	*gay*	*gay, gai*	*gay*	*gay, Gay*
queer	*queer*	*queer*	*queer*	*queer, Queer*

+ variants, derivatives, compounds, associated terms and/or other translations (calques, periphrasis, etc.)

older framework that viewed these simply as lexical processes of 'substitution', and instead moving toward a more dynamic cognitive framework that focuses on speakers and the communicative situation within a specific culturally bound context (see Casas Gómez 2009, 2012). At the abstract level of the diasystem, even asking which lexemes are euphemistic or dysphemistic, or alternatively neutral (compare the notion of *orthophemism* "straight talking", within the overall *X-phemism* schema; Allan & Burridge 2006: 29–35), might not be quite the appropriate question to ask when such status may vary so widely from one context to another or from one speaker to another. In a pragmatically marked field, in fact, there may be no globally neutral or unproblematic terms: any word that might be suitable in one situation could be viewed as problematic when transposed to a different communicative situation, or simply when seen from a different point of view. This is one reason why there is a tremendous amount of – unresolved, and indeed unresolvable – metalexical discourse in this field as well as in other socially significant ones, such as the terminology of race, ethnicity, disability, etc. More broadly speaking than the X-phemism framework, there are very clear lexical consequences – both discursive and highly conventionalized – to the strong social pressures that have always defined queerness, whether those are negative out-group ones or positive in-group ones.

The onomasiological approach, far from being an ontological affirmation of some supposed 'essential' nature of any given abstract category, is a practical method that allows linguists to study the diverse ways in which a particular phenomenon – defined by a set of more or less prototypical features – has been coded in the lexicon. Studying the most significant terms related to this semantic field, over such a long stretch of time and in a cross-linguistic perspective, only reinforces the differences in how HOMOSEXUALITY or HOMOSEXUALS have been conceived of throughout history; it also demonstrates that the lexicon itself is simultaneously reflective and generative of those very conceptions. Since all lexical categories are socially constructed (although not all are pragmatically marked), it is necessary to apply the same epistemological standard to historical queerness as to any other concept, notwithstanding long-running discussions about whether HOMOSEXUALITY represents an 'essential' or a 'constructed' category.

Grounded in the principles of historical comparative lexicology, and informed by some tenets of cognitive linguistics such as prototype theory and the centrality of metaphor and metonymy, this paper will broadly profile some of the ways in which HOMOSEXUALITY has been coded via lexical expression in major European languages – French, Italian, Spanish, German, English – in the modern era. Semantic links to GENDER IDENTITY will also emerge in discussions of certain words, revelatory of how the concepts of sexuality and gender have often overlapped. This presentation draws on the data from my recent multilingual dictionary that aimed to fill a gap in the lexicographic treatment of this semantic field (Lo Vecchio 2020); many supporting textual examples may be found in the corresponding chapters in this source.

2. Lexical analysis

2.1 Religious censure

Religious censure is the earliest and most pervasive framing device for homosexual acts, via biblical or ecclesiastical Latinisms which, in most cases, were adapted into the modern languages directly from Latin.

The most obvious of these are onomastic adaptations of Latin *sodomia, sodomita, sodomitana, sodomiticus*, in reference to the biblical city of Sodom, destroyed by God for the sinful behavior of its inhabitants, without those behaviors ever being described (Genesis 19: 4–5, 24–25). This terminology was adapted into modern languages through three main derivational bases: *sodom-, sodomit-* and *sodomitic-* (with formal variants across languages; see Lo Vecchio 2020: Chapter 1; 2021: 143–146). As the misdeeds of the Sodomites are never described in the Bible, the metonymy linking them with one salient trait results from a complex set of exegetical interpretations emerging over time.

It is widely and accurately acknowledged that, as described in early texts, the category of SODOMY was not limited to homosexual acts, or specifically to anal sex between men. More generally, the category could include any sex act not leading to procreation, including oral or anal sex, masturbation, and bestiality – a broad view that is indeed attested in the modern languages for centuries to come (for useful overviews of the elastic category SODOMY in medieval times, see, e.g., Boswell 1980, Jordan 1997, Olsen 2011). However, it would be an exceedingly credulous reading to infer that sodomy starting in the Middle Ages was prototypically a catchall category for all manner of sexual sin. The restricted 'homosexual' sense is already attested in major exegetical texts in Latin, for example by Albertus Magnus or Thomas Aquinas. Here, it is necessary to account indeed for the effect of taboo: while the terminology of sodomy could technically refer to all non-procreational sex acts, whether hetero- or homosexual, the textual documentation – most significantly in the earliest attested uses in the modern languages, as well as their lexicographical treatment – shows that the restriction to male homosexual acts, especially anal sex, is quite clearly prototypical throughout much of history and across societies. The expansive technical term thus provided euphemistic/dysphemistic cover for what was otherwise explicitly described as the most heinous of sexual sins: anal sex between males (see McFarlane 1997: 3; McEnery & Baker 2017: 206, 214). Later developments caused a shift, as other words largely replaced the lexicon of sodomy, which now in most languages, especially in verbal derivatives (Eng. *sodomize*, Sp. *sodomizar*, etc.), tends to refer more generally to the act of anal penetration, regardless of whether performed on a man or woman.

As an interesting counterexample, German is unique in that *Sodomie* now refers to sex acts between people and animals. While this lexeme shares a common etymon and sense history with the corresponding terms in all the other European languages, German *Sodomie* had consolidated a semantic restriction to 'bestiality' by the mid-nineteenth century. At that point in time, the restricted sense was adopted, by semantic calque, in the field of forensic medicine in the Romance languages and English: Fr. *sodomie*, Eng. *sodomy*, etc. thus came to mean 'bestiality (to the exclusion of other prohibited sex acts)', due in large part to the influence of German forensic pathologists such as Johann Casper (most notably Casper (1858: 180), then translated into Italian, French and English shortly thereafter). Even though this restricted sense was entirely at odds with the attested prototypical meaning of the word in those languages ('male-male anal penetration'), the formal resemblance to the German was apparently decisive – but only in a technical register, and for a few decades. Overall, this situation shows that identical origins can lead to quite divergent outcomes, depending on the factors surrounding the conception of a given lexical category in a specific linguistic community.

Religious condemnation is also expressed through several other important Latinisms, adapted from *contra naturam, abominatio* and *nefandus* – all of which appear in the Vulgate and in countless medieval ecclesiastical texts.[2] Romance languages calqued *contra naturam* (cited for example in Romans 1:26 and Judges 19:24) in genetically related locutions (Fr. *contre nature*, It. *contro natura*, Sp. *contra natura*), while English and German resorted to hybrids of both Germanic and Latin origin (Eng. *unnatural, against nature*; Germ. *unnatürlich, widernatürlich, gegen die Natur*). The language of *abomination* (see Leviticus 18:22, 20:13) is also widespread in this semantic field; though vague, due to its polysemic nature, it refers to same-sex behavior in many cases. Adaptations of *nefandus*, while appearing in the Vulgate (for example, 2 Peter 2:7, in reference to the Sodomites), were

2. For treatments of the medieval categories *nefandum* and *contra naturam*, see Chiffoleau (1990, 1996). For treatments of related categories in the modern languages, see Lo Vecchio (2020: 18–21; 2021: 104–105, 115–116, 142–143) as well as Courouve (1985: 35–38, 55–59, 86–90, 139–142), Skinner (1999: 79–80, 237, 358–360), Puff (2003, 2004), Rodríguez-González (2008: 97, 324, 348), Walter (2012: 245), Hennig (2014: 17–23, 59–64, 143–167, 333–341).

widely adopted only in Spanish and Italian *nefando*, but in those two languages were part of the basic homosexual lexicon for many centuries (It. *peccato nefando* or Sp. *pecado nefando* being synonymous with *sodomia/sodomía*). These latter constructions are particularly eloquent in their explicit expression of same-sex sexuality as the ultimate taboo: Latin *nefandus* glosses as 'not to be spoken of', making 'unnatural' same-sex acts so 'abominable' that they cannot even be mentioned – a very old concept with a long life indeed.

2.2 Distancing in time and space

Attributing homosexual behavior to THE OTHER is another fundamental framing device widely used across languages. Whether by associating it with ancient Greece or with foreign cultures nearer ('Italian vice', 'German vice') or farther ('the Bulgarians'), distancing strategies are frequently coded directly into the lexicon.[3]

2.2.1 *Medieval innovations in Romance languages*

The origin of the lexicon of buggery goes back to both French *bougre* and Italian *buggerone* (see TLF; LEI; Lo Vecchio 2020: Chapter 2, 2021: 111–112). While the French (Gallo-Romance) series is attested first, in the mid-1100s, followed by the Italian (Italo-Romance) a century later, the extralinguistic context and formal elements point to a dual linguistic origin arising from a shared conception about the Cathars, or Bulgarian 'heretics', who'd migrated to the area now covered by southern France and northern Italy. Through its association with heresy, this word family does express religious disapprobation in addition to cultural alterity; however, it is unambiguously a vernacular innovation and far less attested in medieval religious texts than the *sodomy* series (see Zerner 1989). In French, the earliest examples of *bougre* have a simple demonymic function, to refer to people from Bulgaria; as concerns the figurative use, dominant thereafter, it is often impossible to separate the 'heretic' and 'sodomite' senses, such that the semantic relation between the two is unclear – i.e., whether the metonymic shift went from 'Bulgarian' to 'heretic' to 'sodomite', or whether the latter two senses were conflated from the start, both being viewed as prototypical traits of the Bulgarians. Whatever the case may be, it involved a partial-aspect metonymy (Blank 1997: 256) linking the Bulgarian people with one salient trait, if not two, as perceived by a particular language community.

3. See McEnery and Baker (2017) for valuable corpus-based insights for early modern English, corresponding to the religious, othering and classicizing strategies described here alongside other discursive representations.

Both French and Italian served as models for the corresponding adaptations in other European languages. English *buggery* and *bugger*, initially attested with the 'heresy' and 'heretic' senses, came from French or Anglo-Norman, followed later by the 'sodomite' sense and, later still, by the rare *bougeron*, an Italianism taken up via French (see OED; Lo Vecchio 2021: 111). Spanish *bujarrón* was adapted either directly from Italian or via the French Italianism *bougeron* (see Rodríguez-González 2008: 58–62; Lo Vecchio 2020: 70–73). German *Buseron, Puseron* and other variants were adapted from a northern Italian dialect, but these are far less frequent than the much earlier series *Ketzer, Ketzerei*, again from a northern Italian dialect in reference to the also heretical Cathars (perhaps *gazaro*; see Öhmann 1974: 372, 377, 392). The latter series was very widespread in German and likely far more common than the corresponding lexicon of *Sodomie* in medieval times (see Skinner 1999: 183–184; Walter 2012: 261; Lo Vecchio 2020: 80–83).

In English, French and Italian, this series experienced massive semantic and axiological change, with conversion into insults, interjections, even terms of endearment (see TLF, LEI, OED). Remarkably, these many changes appear to be entirely independent from one language to the next, but careful study is needed to follow such developments in a comparative perspective. Among the five languages under study, English *bugger* has surely proved the most long-lasting, although even here its 'homosexual' sense is largely restricted to British varieties and may be increasingly perceived as archaic.

The origin of Italian *bardassa* 'passive male partner' is unknown (first attested ca. 1340),[4] but in its adapted forms in other languages (starting in the 1500s; see Lo Vecchio 2020: Chapter 3, 2021: 106–108), it is clearly perceived as an Italianism at a time when male sodomy was seen as a typically Italian vice. In fact, of all the words under study, the adaptations of *bardassa* were likely those that most evidently, in their day, reflected a euphemistic value precisely for their perceived foreignness, and therefore semantic opacity.

The French adaptation *bardache* played a role alongside the Italian in the spread of this word family to other languages (English, Spanish, German), initially with the same meaning as the Italian, starting in the 1600s. Later, in North America, French *bardache* would be transformed, due to regional phonological variation, into *berdache* to refer to institutional nonbinary gender roles or iden-

4. The supposed Arabic-Persian etymology (glossed as 'slave', 'prisoner of war') proposed by many sources is highly problematic and should no longer be included in dictionaries (see Masson 2015; OED; Lo Vecchio 2020: 86–87). However, this spurious etymology was retrospectively interpreted as underpinning the trope of alterity in the later development of *berdache* relating to nonbinary Native American gender roles.

tities among Native Americans. As an anthropological term, resulting from a translinguistic process largely between French and English (and also involving German) in the nineteenth century, it was then adopted by other languages. Now obsolete and replaced by *Two Spirit* or *Two-Spirited* (see Thomas & Jacobs 1999), the term and concept of *berdache*, as seen through the racist and hetero-cisnormative lens of early Western anthropology, was itself emblematic of the linguistic expression of othering (see a monographic treatment in Lo Vecchio forthcoming).

2.2.2 *Hellenisms from the early modern period onwards*

Allusions to ancient Greece are of course among the most important ways of framing same-sex behavior, yet the Greek language itself played only a very indirect role, intermediated via Latin and with their 'homosexual' meanings consolidated strictly, if not altogether invented in derivative form, in the modern languages. The association of same-sex love with the ancient Greeks presents a paradox: while it distanced the concept in time and space, thus reinforcing the trope of otherness, it simultaneously lent the subject a more classical, timeless, even acceptable allure and made it easier to talk about this unseemly topic.

Tribade is the oldest term to refer to lesbian women, first adapted in the modern languages in the sixteenth century from the Greek *τρίβειν* 'to rub' via Latin *tribas, tribades*: the tribade is thus a 'woman who rubs', expressing a metonymic relation by associating the lesbian woman with a specific sex act considered prototypical. Yet this underlying trope was only approximate from the very beginning, as among the earliest modern-era attested uses of the term in Latin the focus is clearly on oral sex between women, even in the presence of glosses making explicit the connection with rubbing (see Calderino's 1475 commentaries in Schachter 2015, 2017). Subsequently, the metonymic relation links female anatomy with female same-sex behavior via a range of acts centered mostly on the notion of an overdeveloped clitoris – including supposed clitoral-vaginal penetration – which some considered to be the cause or the result of female homosexuality. This discourse, pursued mainly in Latin and French (early 1600s; see Lo Vecchio 2020: Chapter 4, 2021: 148–152, 106, 131–132) and then in translation, served not only to defeminize lesbian women by equating the tribade with the hermaphrodite or androgyne, but also to reinforce the hierarchy between men and women by articulating female sexuality in terms of male sexuality: the clitoris being analogous to the penis, and therefore the culminating female same-sex act being clitoral-vaginal penetration (for in-depth discussions of the figure of the tribade, see Donoghue 1993: Chapter 1; Park 1997; Braunschneider 1999; Traub 2002: Chapter 5).

The onomastic series *sapphist* and *lesbian* must be addressed together, since they share the metonymic key of Sappho, the ancient poetess from the island of Lesbos who wrote poems about love between women (among other topics). Although Sappho and her fellow Lesbians now call to mind the prototypical case of female homosexuality, this is a rather late development, due to a process of conceptualization that emerged in modern societies and was consolidated only less than two centuries ago. In the modern era, the association of Sappho and Lesbians with love between women is attested in texts as early as the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, but, crucially, this 'homosexual' view was only one among many. For example, antonomastic use of *Sappho* in various languages could also refer to a passionate or loving heterosexual woman (positive connotation), to a lustful or debauched heterosexual woman (negative connotation), or to a female literary genius (see Lo Vecchio 2020: Chapter 6; 2021: 138–142). As concerns the latter, the adjective *Sapphic* and its equivalents, of course, originally referred primarily to the form of poetic meter employed by the Lesbian poet.

It is only in the mid-nineteenth century, starting with forensic medical discourse in Europe (and, to a far lesser extent, in literature, despite common misconceptions otherwise), that the 'homosexual' view of Sappho and Lesbians really began to eclipse all the others. This conceptualization was shared among several Western societies but, lexically speaking, French played a decisive role in the creation of onomastic derivatives, especially the innovations *saphisme* and *saphiste*. These spread from French to other European languages with the technical senses of 'oral sex between women' and 'woman who performs oral sex on another woman' based on the writings of the influential physician Louis Martineau, who himself was adapting an ancient trope that saw Lesbians as accomplished (heterosexual) fellatrices (see especially Martineau 1884, although he had begun this discourse several years earlier). The more general sense of *saphisme* 'female homosexuality' thus followed the initial technical sense in this field, representing yet another metonymic shift, and at times the two meanings appear side by side in the same text.

While it is sporadically attested in various languages starting in the 1600s (first in French; see Bonnet 1981, Lo Vecchio 2020: Chapter 7, 2021: 103–104, 130–131), the use of *lesbian* 'female homosexual' and equivalents as common adjectives or common nouns became widespread quite late. The partial-aspect metonymy (Blank 1997: 256) linking Lesbian women with this one salient trait may seem a given now, but prior to the twentieth century there were multiple competing paradigms in terms of how these people were viewed: the gentilic adjective *Lesbian* and its equivalents are found in many historical collocations bearing no relation to same-sex sexuality, such as in the fields of architecture, wine, music and poetry. In the image of Sappho, Lesbian women could be seen as passionate in love or lust, with men or with women. In late-nineteenth-century medical texts, this series was demonstrably subordinate to the lexis of *tribadism* and *sapphism*. In fact, it seems that the predominant self-referential use of *lesbian* dates to the second half of the twentieth century, and more specifically to the post-Stonewall era. It may come as a surprise that, in the early 1970s, many English-speaking lesbians referred to themselves as *gay* – the repartition of *gays and lesbians* as strictly gender-defined categories seems to have begun in the latter half of that decade, but this understudied aspect of the word's history remains to be addressed, again in a comparative perspective (see Lo Vecchio 2020: 262–263, 409–411; 2021: 117–119).

The lexicon of pederasty is apt to cause much confusion today because, to the extent that this now mostly obsolete terminology is used at all, it is essentially perceived, due to formal resemblance, as referring to pedophiles and pedophilia (sexual attraction to or sexual abuse of minors by adults). The modern concept and terminology of *pedophilia* is a quite recent development and can be traced back to the German in Krafft-Ebing (1896). For several centuries *pederasty* and equivalents were used precisely to refer to consensual adult male same-sex activity in a broad sense, and more specifically to anal sex between adult males; in this way it was seen as synonymous with *sodomy* (and from there even, periodically, referred to proscribed heterosexual acts involving women). The salient trait in Greek institutional *paiderastia* was age; in modern adaptations of the term, the salient trait was, initially, gender. The confusion is of course not innocent, though: equating homosexuality with pedophilia (including *avant la lettre*) is a longtime and evidently successful strategy of homophobic discourse (see Tin 2003: 308–309, 427), and the history of this loanword manifestly plays a part.

While French, Italian, Spanish and English all opted for lexematic adaptations in *pédérastie, pederastia, pederasty*, etc. starting in the sixteenth century (see Lo Vecchio 2020: Chapter 5; 2021: 133–135), German saw two separate series: first, calques based on the Greek in *Knabenliebe, Knabenschänder*, etc., followed later by *Päderastie, Päderast* (see Derks 1990; Skinner 1999: 189–192, 243–245; Walter 2012: 261); the latter constructions were influenced by the predominance of the formations in the other modern languages. Despite the relative semantic motivation in the loan translations *Knabenliebe* ('boy love') or *Knabenschänderei* ('abuse of boys'), these terms were used in the more general sense of 'homosexuality', and thus can occasionally even be found applied to female same-sex behavior, notwithstanding the obvious semantic incongruity vis-à-vis their morphemic composition. One lexicographical example of this may be found in Meyer (1843), s.v. *Aselgotripsie* glossed as "Tribadismus (Knabenschänderei)". The French lexis of *pédérastie* and *pédéraste* was far more established than the corresponding terms in other languages (see a monographic treatment in Féray 2004; also Courouve

1985: 167–180, Hennig 2014: 429–436). This fact survives in the continued use of the clipped form *pédé*, which was reclaimed in France starting in the early 1970s as an in-group term of solidarity but which remains a vicious insult in out-group speech (see Eribon 2003: 355).

2.3 Nineteenth-century Germanisms and the allure of scientism

The 1860s in Germany were of fundamental importance for the construction of a lexicon of same-sex sexuality (see Beachy 2010, 2014): it is here that we find the inception of three major word series used from that point on – *uranism, inversion* and *homosexuality* – although it would take several more decades, following a cross-cultural and translinguistic process, before this terminology spread and took on a recognizable form in the languages under study.

The fact that most of the major representatives of these series were formed by composition or derivation using morphemes of Greek or Latin origin meant both that they were immediately translatable, using corresponding morphemes, to other European languages, and that, for that very reason, they had the allure of learned scientific words. Yet only one of these series began in the sciences: *inversion* (or, at that early stage, *conträre Sexualempfindung*). The series *Uranismus* and *Homosexualität* were in fact coined by or first attested in authors who openly embraced an activist spirit, promoting equal rights and acceptance for the people they described: Karl Heinrich Ulrichs was a self-proclaimed *Urning* (uranist), while Karl-Maria Benkert was a self-avowed *Normalsexualer* (heterosexual) who nevertheless took up the cause (see Ulrichs 1899 [1862]; Benkert 1869: 52; also generally Herzer 2000; Kennedy 2002). However, in the process of propagation first in German, and then in their adaptation to other languages (the latter occurring mostly in the 1880s and 1890s), all three of these series were swiftly appropriated by the medical sphere, at which point they were bereft of any sort of militant spirit and became instead deeply pathologizing. This is an extremely important point and needs to be broadened further to clarify that, even once adopted by the international medical sphere, none of these terms had one fixed meaning tied to a single dominant paradigm. Instead, they were used variously, frequently interchangeably or synonymously, in the cacophonic (pseudo-)scientific discourse as new conceptions – plural – of same-sex behavior and love were then being defined.

It is also important to note that, while the three series *uranism, inversion* and *homosexuality* were all coopted and spread starting in the medical sphere, they are all attested early on, to varying degrees in different languages, in self-referential or otherwise in-group discourse. Although the social dynamic was rather different than it is today, there is indeed evidence that a metalinguistic consciousness, with the desire for visibility and acceptance, was driving early manifestations of linguistic reappropriation or reclamation. In English, this is observed in authors such as John Addington Symonds, Edward Carpenter or Radclyffe Hall (see Lo Vecchio 2020: Chapters 9–10; Turton 2020: 226–227). For French, numerous examples are found in the activist journals *Akademos* (1909) and *Inversions* (1924–1925).

Beginning in the early 1860s, Ulrichs formulated a vast terminology subject to successive revisions, initially centered on the *Uranier* or *Urning*, a kind of third sex (*drittes Geschlecht*) representing the soul of a woman trapped in a man's body (Ulrichs 1864–1865, 1899 [1862]; see Kennedy 2002 on Ulrichs generally and Matzner 2010, 2015 on how classical Greece and Rome influenced his thinking). Here again is a set of classical allusions to Greek mythology as portrayed in Plato's *Symposium*, with Aphrodite Urania representing celestial love, upon which the *Uran-* and *Urn-* series were based. While the core of Ulrichs's lexicon was focused on men, he refined his thinking over time to account for female uranism (mostly using the same derivational bases as for men), and ultimately creating dozens of neologisms for male and female homosexuality, bisexuality and heterosexuality. Only a small portion of these many creations were adapted into other European languages (see Lo Vecchio 2020: Chapter 8; 2021: 155–159). In the process, the prototypical meaning of *Urning* 'male homosexual' or *Uranismus* 'male homosexuality' tended to weaken considerably, and thus the category URANISM could include both male and female same-sex love. French served as an important intermediary for the diffusion of these neologisms, as other European languages subsequently modeled their adaptations largely on French *uranisme* and *uraniste* (many starting from Moll trans. 1893).

The lexicon of *sexual inversion* represents a veritable translinguistic phenomenon, with the various steps of its creation legible in the significant metalinguistic documentation describing its emergence (see Lo Vecchio 2020: Chapter 9; 2021: 126–130, 142). German psychiatrist Carl Westphal's coining *conträre Sexualempfindung* (1869) was later translated into Italian as *inversione sessuale* by Arrigo Tamassia (1878, 1881), then subsequently into French as *inversion sexuelle* by Jean-Martin Charcot and Valentin Magnan (1882). From there, a complex process led to its adoption at an international scale, but Italian and even more so French served as important intermediaries. While numerous varied translations of Westphal's original expression are attested in different languages, it is possible to identify these lexical prime movers by following the intertextuality, commented upon in real time, in the scientific literature. With this series, an omnipresent metaphor in this semantic field is coded explicitly into the lexicon: the inverting of the 'normal' order of things. A French doctor prolific on the subject rendered the metaphor quite explicit: "Dans le monde de la pédérastie, tout est renversé, comme à rebours. Le pédéraste vit, sent, pense, veut, agit tout différemment que le reste des hommes: un abîme l'en sépare" [In the world of pederasty, everything is overturned, as if in reverse. The pederast lives, feels, thinks, desires, acts completely differently from the rest of mankind: a chasm separates them] (Chevalier 1891: 55).

The lexicon of *Homosexualität* (see Lo Vecchio 2020: Chapter 10; 2021: 121–126), in due time completely supplanting the previous two series, was the first attempt to name the phenomenon in a more neutral way, devoid of colorful metaphors or metonymies, by using combining forms of Greek and Latin origin: Gr. *homo-* 'same' + Lat. *sexualis* 'sexual'. It is well-known that this terminology was first attested in 1868–1869 in the writings of Benkert (thus conventionally considered to be the coiner of the terms; see Herzer 1987, 2000), who used multiple noun and adjective forms pertaining to both homosexuality and heterosexuality, establishing the *homo/hetero* opposition that has been with us since. It is much less well-known that various morphological constructions in French prefigured the German formations by a few decades. For example, the French adjectives *homœo-sexuel* or *homéo-sexuel* are attested as early as 1839 with a clear 'homosexual' meaning (Broussais 1839: 427; Mutel 1843: 79), yet these precursors are found in minor sources of which few later textual traces exist (and none are known in other languages). Such discursive innovations reflect the morphological combinatory potential common to European languages, rather than serving as the model for later loanwords in this field.

Indeed, the philological documentation incontestably shows that the process of lexical borrowing – which is essentially a social process of adaptation and lexicalization – was driven by German in the final decade of the nineteenth century. Most of the lexical transfers to French, English and Italian were modeled directly on the original German terminology of *Homosexualität* and *Heterosexualität*, starting in the 1890s. They are attested in direct translations from the German or in reviews in scholarly journals, above all of works by Richard von Krafft-Ebing, whose publications were of utmost terminological importance to this field, especially the many editions and translations of his magnum opus *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886 and later editions). Again, French played an intermediary role in some cases, especially for Spanish. It is worth noting that in the early 1900s, during the much publicized Eulenburg affair involving a homosexual liaison in the German imperial family, French *homosexuel* and *homosexualité* were popularly viewed as German barbarisms at a time when homosexuality was also known in France as the *vice allemand* ('German vice'). *Vice allemand* even served as the subtitle of a popular French novel by Armand Dubarry: *Les invertis. Le vice allemand* (1896; see Lo Vecchio 2020: 356–360). In this, extralinguistic cultural prejudices (othering of same-sex behavior) mirrored concurrent linguistic trends (lexical borrowing), neither in line with the decorum of the day.

The terminology of bisexuality is also due primarily to the influence of German. Several early uses are found in the writings of Krafft-Ebing, Raffalovich and Freud in the 1890s, but the most important examples, in which *Bisexualität* is clearly contrasted with *Homosexualität* and *Heterosexualität* (along with other noun and adjective forms), date to the early 1900s in influential works by the German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld (1903, 1904), from which the words were adapted to other languages (see Lo Vecchio 2020: 378–385; 2021: 108–111). At that early stage, there was considerable confusion among distinct but related meanings: the original anatomical sense ('having features of both sexes'); a psychological sense used by some to explain homosexuality, and according to Freud extended to all human beings; the emergence of the sense referring to bisexual orientation. In other contexts at that time, English *bisexual* (along with Fr. *bisexuel*, Sp. *bisexual* and likely others; see OED, Lo Vecchio 2020: 339–343, 378–385) could refer to pairings or relations solely between men and women. That is, these lexemes could be used with a 'heterosexual' sense that was virtually antonymic compared to later use. This is one excellent illustration of how morphemes do not contain only one single 'original' or 'literal' meaning that would determine, according to the rules of logic, the sense of a word: an identical combination of identical morphemes can lead to very different meanings – even the opposite – depending on the point of view of the speakers who conceive it. Another fine example of this principle is found in English *heterosexuality* and Italian *eterosessualismo*, which for a period of time (1890s to early 1900s) could in some cases refer to heterosexual *pathology*, indicating an excessive or perverted sense of desire toward people of the opposite sex (see Lo Vecchio 2020: 366, 373–375, 2021: 121–123; Katz 2007: Chapter 5). As this outlier sense was in clear contrast to the source-language model (and the zeitgeist, so to say), it was eclipsed by the more common meaning known still today. Likewise, the other *bisexual* meanings gradually faded,[5] with the new, more pragmatically marked sense blocking the others – a common fate for older words that take on newer taboo senses (compare English *gay*; see Allan & Burridge 2006: 44–45).

The early lexis of transidentity followed a similar trajectory. Precursor constructions using the *trans-* morpheme may be found in several languages prior to

5. For the English terminology of *bisexuality*, the semantic shift in the first decade of the twentieth century stands out in a comparison of the various editions of Havelock Ellis's major sexological work, *Sexual Inversion*. The third edition (Ellis 1915) makes ample use of *bisexual* terminology with its now conventional meaning, whereas previous editions (in 1897 and 1901) did not.

semantic consolidation and lexicalization, with many sources conflating notions about sexuality and gender, largely based on pseudoscientific claims about physiology and sexual psychology. *Transsexual* and *transsexuality* were partially modeled after the terminology of *homosexuality*, initially in English, though rooted in earlier work done in German (see Lo Vecchio 2020: 385–390; 2021: 146–147). When Hirschfeld (1910) referred to *Transvestiten*, he was describing what would later be understood as transgender identity; he also once used the term "*seelischer Transsexualismus*" ('psychological transsexualism'; Hirschfeld 1923: 14), which he saw as a manifestation of homosexuality. The German sexologist thus established the use of the morphemic base *trans-* early on. In the first half of the twentieth century, English *transsexuality* is occasionally attested with the meaning 'homosexuality' (see Legman 1941: 1149). Later, David Cauldwell, Harry Benjamin and others, working in the United States in the 1950s, coined neologisms in English specifically to refer to transidentity, such as *transsexuality, transsexualism* and *transsexualist*, all then defined in pathological terms and in relation to homosexuality (see early examples in Cauldwell 1949, Benjamin 1953, 1954; and an overview in Meyerowitz 2002: Chapter 1). Other languages then primarily adapted this terminology from English, but a comparative chronology of the historical trans lexicon remains to be established.

The semantic transformation of four morphemes of Greek and Latin origin, *homo-*, *hetero-*, *bi-*, *trans-*, remains the most durable legacy of the German lexical innovations, since *homosexual, heterosexual, bisexual* and *transsexual* (and equivalent forms in other languages) are all waning in importance if not already obsolete due to their many negative associations with medicine, pathology or especially sex (among any other problematic aspects). The derivational stock has been altered, as these four bound morphemes have been enriched with new meanings – without making any explicit reference to "sex" – and may now signify, respectively, 'homosexual', 'heterosexual', 'bisexual' and 'transgender'. *Homo, hetero, bi* and *trans* also exist as independent clipped forms – a separate grammatical category, but overlapping with the morphemic combining forms. These present interesting pragmatic differences within and across languages. In English, *bi* and *trans* are preferred self-referential terms among bi and trans folk, but *homo* is largely considered disparaging and offensive, and appears to be used only sparingly among gays and lesbians as a reclaimed term. The situation is not necessarily the same in other languages, though, such as in French, where in-group use of *homo* remains fairly well tolerated and pragmatically comparable to *gay* or *pédé*.

Finally, even if the lexicon of *homosexuality* appears 'neutral' due to its morphological composition expressing a fairly factual representation of meaning – 'same sex' – this does not mean that, as a linguistic sign, it is devoid of ideology. To the contrary, *homosexual* and its equivalents are deeply rooted in ideologies that can only be fully grasped when looked at from a macroscopic level, accounting for discourse-level effects (such as frequency or common collocations; see Motschenbacher 2021), sociolinguistic factors (gender, sexual orientation, age, race, social class, etc. of speakers) and other extralinguistic considerations. For example, *homosexual* and *heterosexual* are morphologically parallel and semantically dependent on each other, but pragmatically and conceptually incongruous. *Hetero-* forms are without question far less consequent in terms of discursive frequency and derivational productivity than *homo-* forms, a fact that translates an aspect of extralinguistic reality: that heterosexuality is perceived as the 'norm' and therefore goes un- or underspecified. This is also reflected in the fact that the *hetero-* forms, in almost all cases, appear in the textual documentation later than the *homo-* forms – especially true in their lexicographical treatment, where *hetero-* forms may follow many decades after their *homo-* counterparts. There is likewise a discrepancy in how this terminology is applied to men and women. While the *homosexual/heterosexual* opposition was conceived explicitly to designate both female and male sexuality, the discourse has been profoundly unequal: concretely, discussion of homosexuality has often been focused primarily or exclusively on men, rendering the lesbian experience invisible – an extralinguistic fact that is expressed, especially through absence, in the textual documentation.

So, despite the seeming *homo/hetero* and *male/female* parallelisms, the vast majority of discourse on homosexuality – indeed the very use of the terms *homosexual, homosexuality*, etc. – at least through the twentieth century, has been informed by heteronormative (when not openly homophobic) as well as sexist biases. Here, language falsely gives the impression of being neutral: such prejudices are not coded in the denotative meaning of *homosexuality* 'same-sex love', but, stemming from extralinguistic reality, from actual lived and socially conditioned experience, very well inform its connotation and contextual constraints. In a field as pragmatically marked as queerness, this is naturally of no less importance. Similarly, English *gay, lesbian* and *queer* have each at various points been criticized for being too white. Once again, such biases are not explicitly coded in the denotation of these terms, but would have resulted from the discursive context in which they were used, repetitively and over time. Corpus-assisted studies may provide useful insights into some underlying patterns.

2.4 Twentieth-century Anglicisms in the fight for self-determination

Contrary to the position of a number of dictionaries (and perhaps intuition), English played virtually no major role in the construction of the international LGBTQ lexicon before the middle of the twentieth century. From that point on, though, English became the source of a huge number of innovations in many languages and semantic fields, sexual orientation and gender identity being no exception. The most emblematic cases are *gay* and *queer*, tiny monosyllables of unknown (but probably Germanic; see OED) origin whose reach has by now extended far beyond the European languages. Unlike all the previous word families studied, which were driven if not initiated by straight discourse, the adaptation of these terms was initiated and sustained by members of LGBTQ communities themselves. The pragmatic motivation is therefore vastly different, and the effects have played out lexically in unique ways across societies.

Gay began as a code word among homosexual men in the United States in the 1930s and 1940s, playing on ambiguity with then prototypical meanings ('lively', 'joyful', 'carefree'; possibly also 'promiscuous', 'hedonistic') to describe, for example, "gay bars" or "gay parks" (see indications on the word's history in Lo Vecchio 2020: Chapter 11, 2021: 117–121; also OED; Chauncey 1994; Simes 1996; Butters 1998). Uttering the word was a key to inclusion among the initiated, while ensuring dissimulation in the presence of the uninitiated. The new meaning gradually became known to other segments of the population starting in the 1950s; then, after Stonewall, it was declared openly, in the names of organizations, in slogans, on the streets during *gay pride* (first attested in 1969, OED) and so forth. It was then, in the 1970s, that *gay* began to be adopted in other languages, precisely for the more positive connotation it offered compared to the old clinical-sounding terms still in use. But the bigger point was that it was a self-imposed denomination, since the connotation of the semantically demotivated foreignism *gay* would not in most cases have matched that of English *gay*. French *gai*, though, which was long ago the original source for English *gay*, did have a similar connotative effect, allowing for wordplay on ambiguity between the old and new senses.

In the comparative perspective, *gay* offers some useful lessons exemplifying how an identical graphic form across languages belies system-level semantic, pragmatic and distributional differences. Most significantly, the pragmatic value of German *gay* is quite different from *gay* in English or the Romance languages, where it is likely the most neutral and common term for naming homosexual men (and common for women too, in many cases). In German, while *gay/Gay* is widely attested, especially adjectivally in compounds, it remains rather infrequent with a self-referential function. Male German-speakers still favor the also reclaimed term *schwul, Schwuler*, i.e., *Ich bin schwul* (compare Skinner 1999: 125–127 with more recent remarks in Heine 2014). This is a good example of how it is the norms of the language community (pragmatic factors), rather than internal lexical structure, that determine whether or how a particular loan is accommodated into the lexicon. The elliptical form *friendly*, from *gay-friendly* and meaning the same thing, is quite common in Romance languages, but this usage is blocked (not to say impossible) in English because the bound-morpheme sense of *-friendly* clashes with the prototypical meaning of the very common adjective *friendly*, and so the English compound still depends semantically on *gay*. Another interesting curiosity is the case of Spanish *gay power* (see Lo Vecchio 2020: 432–434; Rodríguez-González 2008: 173–174, 177–178), which in early 1970s Spain referred both to LGBT solidarity in the name of social change (as its English model, in addition to adaptations in other languages) and a musical style ('glam rock'). The musical meaning could have arisen out of a misunderstanding of English *gay*, but it is more interesting to see a metonymic association between the stereotypical flashiness of some of its exponents and (in some cases) their gay leanings or at least sexual ambiguity. This exceptional sense proved too out of sync with its prototypical meaning elsewhere, in the international context of the gay rights movement, and so it disappeared after a few years. This example, too, shows how the adaptation of loanwords does not occur via a series of automatisms that are identical from one language to another, but involves an inherently social process leading to at times quite unpredictable results.

The 'homosexual' meaning of *queer* (originally 'odd, strange') actually originated in same-sex discourse in the early 1900s in the United States (Ullman 1995; Lo Vecchio 2020: Chapter 12, 2021: 135–137), but this term, too, was rapidly adopted in straight speech and was, for most of the twentieth century, connoted very negatively or functioned as an outright insult. Its reappropriation around 1990 occurred simultaneously among activists (*Queer Nation*) and academics (*queer theory*) (on activist reclamation, see, e.g., Warner 1993; Haggerty 2000: 725–726; for early discussion of queer theory, see notably Anzaldúa 1990; De Lauretis 1991). Its dual origin has probably contributed to its perception at times as a pretentious esotericism. Prototypically, *queer* no longer means 'homosexual' as in its earlier instantiation, though it is sometimes used as a synonym for *LGBT*; the concept now is more about rejecting heteronormativity and moving beyond traditional categories and binarisms in order to embrace a more fluid view of not only sexual orientation but also gender identity.

Queer was taken up by activists in other European languages right away in the early 1990s, but it took a decade or two before it achieved wider usage – and the right to entry in the major dictionaries (Zingarelli 2007; Duden 2011; Clave 2012; Petit Robert 2018). As a borrowed word, *queer* tends to lose the radical political force it originally had in English. So occasional neologisms have been created to reproduce the connotative effect of linguistic reclamation, such as French *transpédégouine* (roughly, 'transfagdyke') or, modeled after the latter, Spanish *transmaricabollo* (see, e.g., Bourcier 2011: 106; Wiesnerová 2012); in Italian, adaptations such as *femminiellə* and *frocia* have recently circulated with the same aim (Nossem 2019). Yet what *queer* in the Romance languages loses in connotative force compared to its English model, it may make up for in its foreign-seeming appearance, its written form incompatible with Romance sound-grapheme conventions and thus creating a sort of permanent foreignism whose graphic form conveniently aligns, in a way, with its meaning.

Beyond *gay* and *queer*, the ongoing evolution in attitudes about and conceptions of sexual orientation and gender identity is accompanied by constant lexical innovation, often occurring in a highly internationalized context – with English still exerting a leading but not exclusive influence. Social change brings lexical change, and rigorous, empirical study of the latter can help shed light on the former.

3. Conclusion

Thematically, this paper has described several common ways the lexicon has been used to frame same-sex sexuality, including overlap with nonnormative gender identity, in the millennium during which it has been arguably the taboo par excellence: religious condemnation in terms of sin, distancing in time and space, relegation to otherness (however defined), association with medicine and pathology – but also the shift toward visibility and acceptance. The latter aspect marks rupture, pulls us out of the 'taboo' paradigm, and situates queerness more accurately as a highly *pragmatically marked* semantic field, characterized by specific effects determined by the social context of the language community and a given communicative situation.

Methodologically, the framework of lexical borrowing applied here is one way to explain formal and semantic cohesion across languages, while also allowing for a consideration of pragmatics as motivation and determiner of language use. It is not languages that 'borrow' words, but speakers, who adapt lexemes of external origin by modulating them in their own way, under real conditions, in a specific social context. Morphosemantic integration, and subsequent evolution, is therefore in no way automatic, but follows a process of social coding, based on the particular, and often unpredictable, circumstances of the given language community in which it occurs. The resulting innovations ('borrowings' or 'loans') are in fact *adaptations* of an external model, which involve creativity within a dynamic process taking account of internal factors (language structure), pragmatic considerations (appropriateness vis-à-vis the situation and other speakers) and a calculation of cognitive yield (e.g., economy of a loan vs. creation of an internal neologism by translation or other means). In all cases, whether internal or exogenous, lexical innovations are subject to variation at all levels and at all times: while in some cases perfect, homogeneous morphosyntactic integration may be observed immediately upon the first instance(s) of a discursive innovation, in other cases a lexeme may continuously exhibit graphic, phonetic or morphological variation over the long term even after lexicalization (including cases of synonymy among various recognized forms). Semantic variation also may be observed at all stages. A more peripheral meaning – measured within the system, or against a source-language model – indicates neither a false use, nor necessarily a system-level semantic shift, but may reflect associations linked to a speaker's culturally mediated encyclopedic knowledge of the world. For all of these reasons, a sociolexicological approach, integrating both variationist and pragmatic principles, is advantageous not just for the analysis of loanwords, but for internal innovations as well.

Studying a highly pragmatically marked semantic field (i.e., a 'taboo' one), in a cross-linguistic perspective, merely underscores the socially bound, dynamic nature of all the lexicon. It also, perhaps unsurprisingly, reveals omissions and blind spots within linguistics and lexicography, far from immune to the historical taboo. The LGBTQ-related vocabulary, as only minimally sketched out here, abounds with countless other fascinating examples – both discursive and highly conventionalized – of conceptual framings that warrant linguistic scrutiny. While this paper has focused on points of convergence across several European languages, language-specific studies are needed to address, for instance, common colloquial terms or in-group argots. The highly unique metaphors or metonyms found in this semantic field, often expressive of societal homophobia or hateful intent, are particularly worthy of candid, methodical analysis – and represent an area ripe with potential, in particular, for cognitive sociolinguistics, which has so far had very little to say about queer topics. Whatever the type of corpus studied or the perspective adopted, the potential for further lexical study in this field is immense.

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