

Speaking in Queer Tongues  
*Globalization and Gay Language*

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## Introduction: Globalization and "New" Articulations of Same-Sex Desire

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What do we mean when we say "gay" in a world where hybridity and syncretism provide the grist for cultural production, distribution and consumption?

—Martin Manalansan

The acquisition of new forms of language from the modern West—whether by forcible imposition, insidious insertion, or voluntary borrowing—is part of what makes for new possibilities of action in non-Western societies. Yet, although the outcome of these possibilities is never fully predictable, the language in which the possibilities are formulated is increasingly shared by Western and non-Western societies. And so, too, the specific forms of power and subjection.

—Talal Asad

This collection of essays discusses new (and not so new) ways of talking about same-sex desires, practices, and subjectivities that have emerged in various regions of the world. One way to refer to these "ways of talking" is as languages, invoking an argument that has been developed in some detail elsewhere (Leap 1995, 2002). Other scholars prefer to use terms like *fashions of speaking*, *codes*, *registers*, *varieties*, or "*genderlects*." Finding an appropriate label is certainly important to this collection's discussion, and we return to it elsewhere. Yet however one classifies text-making practices and the linguistic frameworks underlying them, the fact remains that ways of talking about the everyday experiences of same-sex desire have been caught up in the transnational interchange of material and intellectual commodities associated

with the condition of late modernity (Harvey 1989; Ong 1999). How ways of talking about same-sex desires, practices, and subjectivities become incorporated into transnational interchanges, and how they become affected by these relationships, are two central concerns of this collection.

## More Than Linguistic Description

Our interests, however, run deeper than these descriptive themes. Frequently, discussions of globalization assume a Western source, and a one-way movement of material and intellectual commodities from that source toward a recipient framed as “more distant,” often through the term *third world*. As the essays in this collection indicate, speech communities located “over there” and “away from” assumed centers of political, economic, and cultural domination are not the only groups of speakers affected by the global circulation of same-sex-related linguistic practices. Same-sex-identified women and men in Western Europe, Canada, and the United States engage in such circulation as well—as both recipients and sources. How they talk about same-sex desire is affected by these patterns of circulation.

It is important to note that the linguistic commodity in question includes the conceptual frameworks, images, and textual products emerging from gay men’s experiences (and often, white, privileged gay men’s experiences) in the urban United States. Many ways of talking that figure prominently in these transnational interchanges are languages that several contributors to this volume identify as “gay men’s English.” That term—and the very existence of the linguistic material it claims to identify—have been criticized in several publications (Campbell-Kibbler et al. eds. 2002; Kulick 2000). Although mindful of those objections, we find it ethnographically and linguistically justified to refer to the global circulation of a gay men’s English that originates in the United States. Doing so allows us to investigate what happens when this code interacts with already-existing ways of talking about same-sex desire outside of and within the North Atlantic domain.

Using the term, for example, invites consideration of how the so-called globalization of gay men’s English coincides with the selective transformation of other components of North American, urban gay culture: the politics and symbolics of the Stonewall riots, the imperatives of the coming-out experience, and ideas of gay community and gay ghetto as well as rainbow flags, pink triangles, and other material markers of gay presence and gay pride. Using the term *gay men’s English* draws attention to tensions between ways of speaking about same-sex desire that are closely tied to gay men’s experiences on the one hand and ways of speaking that address the identi-

ties and experiences of same-sex-identified women on the other. It thereby raises questions about the adaptability of gay men’s English to women’s linguistic worlds. Finally, using—however flexibly and provisionally—a concept of gay men’s English compels the determination of which men (and, in some settings, which women) provide the authoritative models for these globally circulating codes. Which individuals, that is, become fluent and proficient in the codes within settings construed as local and which individuals find themselves excluded from fluency and proficiency (and for what reasons).

## Specific Sites, Broader Visions

Although the individual essays in this volume share the broad problematic just described, their theoretical perspectives are anything but uniform. Contributors come from a diverse set of academic backgrounds: anthropology, cultural studies, French studies, history, lesbian/gay studies, linguistics, literary studies, performance studies, and sociology. What they have to say about language, same-sex desire, “gay English,” and other languages of same-sex desire reflects the interests of their respective academic disciplines in language, culture, and sexuality as well as each author’s research agenda.

Many contributors share an association with the American University Conference on Lavender Languages and Linguistics, an annual meeting of researchers and activists interested in exploring the significance of language, broadly defined, in lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer life. “Globalizations of Gay English” was the topic for the plenary session at the seventh Lavender Languages Conference in 1999, and chapters in this volume by Denis M. Provencher, Liora Moriel, and Ross Higgins are adapted from their presentations in that session. Audience discussion following these presentations indicated that the emergence of local alternatives to gay English was as important to panel interests as the transfigurations of gay English taking place in differing cultural contexts and indicated that gay language research had yet to pay attention to these alternatives.

Accordingly, we have worked to include, within the limits posed by any one volume, a diverse set of geographic, historical, and linguistic circumstances. In some cases the sites in question are part of the North Atlantic milieu and connected (albeit in varying ways) to the epicenters of urban gay culture that have emerged there: France, francophone Canada, urban and rural African America, and urban Hispanic America. Other settings (Indonesia, Israel, New Zealand, South Africa, and Thailand) are at an ostensibly greater distance from that milieu but remain connected to its authority because of travel and tourism, global media, trade agreements, political alliances, and other ties—

neocolonial, anticolonial, and postcolonial. In some of these cases, English is a well-established component of the local verbal repertoire although often regarded as a foreign tongue, a language of outsiders. Gay English mediates this uneven terrain in different ways in urban France than in urban Quebec or in black America rather than black South Africa. The tensions between gay English and locally or nationally identified ways of talking about same-sex desire take unique forms in each case.

Of course, there are other locations not included here where a globalizing gay English actively engages apparently local ways of talking about same-sex desire, subjectivity, and community—in Eastern Europe, for example, and in the Islamic Mideast, India, Central and Eastern Africa, and Latin America. Our intent in designing this collection was not to be exhaustive in our choice of sites; it is, after all, an edited volume not an encyclopedia. Our goal was to use a more modestly selected series of essays to show how persons who have same-sex desires, subjectivities, and/or communities mediate and renegotiate linguistic process and product under conditions of the ostensible “globalization of gay English.” We hope the essays can thereby anticipate and push toward better understanding of what processes and products might be under construction elsewhere.

### Treating “Gay” as Polyvalent and Contingent

The particular forms of same-sex desires, subjectivities, and communities under discussion in each chapter vary greatly. In some instances they are not named in local discourse. In others the desires, subjectivities, and communities might be more meaningfully described as bisexuality (or curiosity). There is no single term that completely embraces the wide range of sexual and gender diversities under discussion. For that reason, although we use the term *gay English* as a reminder of the apparent “source” language’s linguistic and social location, we also use the word *gay* as a referential shorthand for a broad range of same-sex desires, practices, and subjectivities. We do so without presuming that this usage establishes a universal ethnographic referent and without implying that we only address the same-sex-related linguistic practices of male-bodied persons.

At the same time, although several chapters examine language use by same-sex-identified women, the linguistics of male-centered, same-sex desires and identities remain the dominant focus of the collection. In part, that reflects the enduring preference of researchers in language and sexuality studies to work with heterosexual women or homosexual men and for academic publications to be inventoried accordingly. The same-sex male focus of the col-

lection also reflects Birch Moonwomon’s (1995) argument that the differences between lesbian language and women’s language, inclusively, are not drawn nearly as sharply as are those differences separating gay men’s English from hetero-masculinist English codes. Recalling Blackwood’s (1998) discussion of female masculinity (see also Halberstam 1998), it may be that the distinction between masculine and feminine women (e.g., “butch” versus “femme”) will have more linguistic consequences than a generic contrast between lesbian versus straight women’s speech, regardless of sexual orientation. Butch women can, after all, be homosexual, heterosexual, or bisexual and identify, or not, as transgendered in some respect. Peter Jackson’s discussion this volume of gay adaptation, *tom-dee* resistance, and *kathoe*y indifference in Thailand positions one such set of issues within a larger context of global/local linguistic change. It is our hope that the issues raised in this collection will encourage more researchers to examine women’s experiences with gay English globalization and trace the linguistic consequences of those experiences in site-specific terms.

### Understanding Globalization

Although a certain academic fatigue has set in around the topic of globalization, the need to understand the range of phenomena grouped under the term has not subsided. Like it or not, globalization is not going away, and social theorists—including language and sexuality scholars—must be prepared to explore its effects on everyday life in all their research settings.

We begin from the obvious point that there is no such thing as globalization in an abstract sense. Gathered under the rubric of globalization are a wide variety of economic, political, and cultural processes that not only cannot be reduced to each other but are also sometimes at cross purposes. We agree with Waters’s view that globalization can be roughly defined as “a social process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding” (1996, 3). Although circuits of migration, trade, and colonialism have linked the globe for millennia, we see globalization as more than a quantitative change, more than a simple ratcheting up or acceleration of these circuits. It is predicated on qualitative changes in technology and social relations that fundamentally transform the relationship between space and subjectivity. Contemporary globalizing processes open new “homoscapes”—to cite Parker’s clever extension of Appadurai (1999, 218–21)—that rework the relationship between same-sex desire and constitutions of the local.

Three elements of globalization debates are pertinent to the essays in this

volume. The first concerns the tendency to equate globalization with Westernization, that is, to see it in unilinear and teleological terms such that if *X* is impacted by globalization then *X* must be becoming more like the West. A large body of work on alternate modernities illustrates the utter falsity of that assumption (Appadurai 1996; Brenner 1996, 1998; Gaonkar ed. 1999; Hall 1991; Hannerz 1996, Miller 1995; Morris 2000; Rofel 1999). As the essays in this volume indicate, it is not only that many globalizing processes result in greater difference but also that the calculus of similitude and difference is always culturally constituted and thus caught up in the globalizing processes it seeks to describe. In other words, how we determine what counts as "the same" or "different," what counts as "change" or "continuity," is a product of globalizing processes. A second element of globalization debates, linked to the first, concerns the view that globalization is inevitably bad. As Tom Boellstorff notes in his chapter, "The possibility of a nonthreatening or nonantagonistic relationship to processes of cultural globalization is almost completely absent in the LGBT literature on globalization." Although there are indeed many negative effects of globalization, many of them predate contemporary globalizing processes or are due to parallel but distinct factors such as neo-colonialism (which need not be globalizing).

Of particular relevance to this volume, Gibson-Graham (1996) has shown how understandings of globalization on the contemporary Left draw from a Western "rape script" in which capitalism is gendered male, capitalism's other is gendered female, and globalization is metaphorically construed as rape itself. This normalizes a view of globalization as inevitable and of the local as doomed to penetration and violation by capitalism. Drawing from Sharon Marcus's critique of rape scripts (1992), Gibson-Graham asks how we might enable globalization to "lose its erection" by portraying it as vulnerable to re-appropriation and co-optation. Furthermore, Gibson-Graham considers it critical to question the heteronormative principles on which the globalization-as-rape script is based: "The global economy may have been opened up by international financial markets, but nothing 'other' comes into or out of this opening. It would seem that the homophobia that pervades economic theorizing places a taboo on such thinking" (1996, 137). Accordingly, Gibson-Graham concludes, "A queer perspective can help to unsettle the consonances and coherences of the narrative of global commodification" (144).

The essays in this collection demonstrate how the translocation (not globalization) of gay linguistic practices challenges not only received understandings of sexuality and language but also of globalization itself. The essays take issue not only with dystopic visions of globalization but also with triumphalist visions that assume that adopting gay linguistic practice in some

form moves speakers toward a unified global, gay-centered political movement (Adam, Duyvendak, and Krouwel eds. 1999). Although there can certainly be affinities, coalitions, and linkages among non-normative sexual subjectivities worldwide, that does not mean all these subjectivities are on a single trajectory or that the trajectory automatically ends in an Americanist vision of sexual life, sexual politics, or linguistic performance. Indeed, we argue (and the essays in this volume show) that discarding the modernist fantasy of convergence may prove helpful in forging a more inclusive, respectful, and decentered sexual politics.

A final element of globalization debates important to this volume is that of authenticity. Globalizing processes often bring about crises of authenticity because in the dominant Western cultural logic (and in some, but by no means all, other cultural logics) authenticity is founded in locality and immobility. Tradition is not supposed to come from somewhere else. When cultural logics move, then, a concern with authenticity can result, especially if part of what has moved is the Western obsession with authenticity. That is particularly true in many postcolonial states, where globalizing processes lend a new and troubling dimension to the paradox of nation-states that claim autochthonous cultural logics (in other words, traditions unique to that nation) even while citizens are keenly aware that the concept of nation has a Western provenance (Chatterjee 1986).

Gay linguistic practices that seem to originate in the West can compound the dilemma of authenticity, a problem that several contributors to this volume explore in terms of sexual citizenship, transculturation, and belonging. What is needed is a processual approach that avoids defining ahead of time what will count as authentic in favor of investigating the cultural logics through which authenticity is shaped in particular settings—in the way that, for instance, gay men in Indonesia claim authenticity in urban parks (Boellstorff, this volume) or that French gay men attribute "gay French" authenticity to gay English discursive practices (Provencher, this volume).

## Gay Language, Speaker Subjectivity, and Desire

The interests in language, subjectivity, and same-sex desire addressed in these essays are also part of an ongoing debate over the existence of gay English and other varieties of gay language. We use two elements of Kulick's (2000) analysis of the debate as a touchstone for discussion in this section: his critique of circularity and his call for a shift from the study of language and sexuality to language and desire.

A central aspect of Kulick's critique of much contemporary work on gay

language is that a "circular argument emerges. If we ask 'What is Gay English,' the answer is 'English spoken by gay men.' What makes it gay? The fact that gay men speak it. Why do gay men speak it? Because they are gay men. And so on, round and round" (2000, 264). We agree with Kulick that where gay languages exist they are frequently neither necessary nor sufficient conditions for the subject positions with which they are believed to be connected. Yet in many cases such linguistic practices are indeed part of the speaker's sense of selfhood, can effect the broader social context, and thereby have impact on the subjectivities of other individuals—gay, straight, or otherwise—who are not competent in such linguistic practices. Furthermore, unless gay language is completely secreted within the speech community in question (a rare circumstance indeed), these linguistic practices can assume a critical role in interlocutors' reactions to a speaker as a gay person. They can also affect interlocutors' sexual and gendered assessments of persons not competent in these practices. Thus "an aspect of linguistic practice may legitimately be considered gay if gay people use it and perceive it as a 'gay marker,' even though it is used by others for the same or different purposes" (Wong, Roberts, and Campbell-Kibler 2002, 2). Moreover, "Certain linguistic features may become markers of different social groups, even if they are not used by all and only members of the groups which they symbolize" (Wong, Roberts, and Campbell-Kibler 2002, 3).

What is necessary at this stage of research, we believe, is openness to gay languages with unique linguistic features (as in the case of *gay* language in Indonesia) and to the gay linguistic practices characteristic of a community of practice wherein what is at issue is not a difference in language considered as a formal object but in contexts and details of use.<sup>1</sup> In the first case, Kulick's concerns about circularity are irrelevant because the presence of unique structural features provides an objective basis for identifying the code, for tracing which members of the local speech community speak it, and for assessing how use of the code coincides with sexual subjectivity. In the second case, we avoid Kulick's concerns about circularity by approaching the relationships between language and subjectivity as forms of reciprocity. As addressed in discussions in E. Patrick Johnson, David A. B. Murray, Susana Peña, and other essays in this collection, we see the subject positions in question as constituted in part through linguistic practices and the linguistic practices as constituted in part through assertions of speaker subjectivity.

Our concern in this regard is the relationship between identity categories and social analysis hinted at by Eckert (2002, 101). All emic analyses are circular in that they take people's categories as a starting point without imposing external criteria of validity. That kind of reciprocal constitution of sub-

jectivity appears in many other contexts as well, for example, confessional religions. An external evaluation of who counts as Christian could possibly ask whether they believe in the Trinity or whether they drink real wine at communion. An analysis aiming to understand the experience of being Christian in a particular community, however, is more likely to use an emic definition that, by virtue of its emic character, appears circular to an outsider. Who are Christians? People who say they are Christians. What makes them Christian? That they say they are Christian. And so on, round and round.

A key point in this regard is that linguistic analysis, while recognizing the emic character of cultural domains, argues strongly against accepting any culture's claim that those domains—like those of identity and language—are self-contained. Because subject positions are not simply schema held in the minds of individuals but processual logics emergent in social relationalities, over time gay language/linguistic practices can have impact on even individuals who do not know of them. Such attention to the diachronic effects of language on subjectivity is often deemphasized in the dominant linguistic paradigm. Gay men and lesbians in the United States can construe kinship in unique ways that have impact on gay/lesbian subjectivities although there are no distinguishing features of that kinship (for the most part it does not invent new kinship terms but transforms those at hand) and not all gay men and lesbians in the United States use or even know of these kinship forms (Weston 1991). Gay language can also have powerful effects on gay subjectivities, even in the absence of distinct linguistic forms or universal competence.

The question of the impact of gay language/linguistic practices on gay subject positions leads us to Kulick's appeal for a conceptual retooling that would shift inquiry from language and sexuality to "language and desire" (2000, 272–77). Kulick defines this quite inclusively as "everything that arguably makes sexuality sexuality—namely, fantasy, desire, repression, pleasure, fear, and the unconscious" (270) and bases his appeal for a focus on desire on dissatisfaction with the superficial treatment of sexuality in much of the gay and lesbian language literature, particularly assumptions concerning community and identity.

We share Kulick's frustration but take issue with his claim that the missing theoretical agenda is "desire" (see also Eckert 2002). Kulick's psychoanalytic treatment of desire allows him to steer away from the essentialized focus on identity that dominates work on gay language. He does not make the link explicitly, but we see this position as a gesture toward the massive uncertainty about questions of agency and volition that has dominated sociolinguistics and anthropological linguistics for many years. It is addressed, for instance, in more recent scholarship on language ideology (Kroskrity ed. 2000; Schiffe-

lin, Woolard, and Kroskrity eds. 1998). Like so much work outside structuralist linguistics, this work on language ideology shows that language is at once fundamentally volitional (we choose when to speak, what to talk about, and even how to say it in many respects) but at the same time foundationally preconscious (we do not consciously engage in the process of grammar, for example, conjugating verbs, assigning cases to nouns, and syntactically arranging lexical items in an utterance, unless learning a language). Nor do we typically exercise conscious control over paragrammatical dimensions of language such as intonation. Hence, as Denis M. Provencher, Liora Moriel, William L. Leap, Peter A. Jackson, and E. Patrick Johnson show in this volume, it is possible for linguistic practices to indicate gay presence within a conversational moment yet remain within the constraints of local languages and speech traditions. Moriel, for example, suggests that the absence of grammaticalized means for indexing female versus male object reference in Israeli Hebrew has made globalizing forms of gay English linguistic practices into resources for Israeli Hebrew-based gay linguistic practices even though the details of the resulting linguistic code are anything but English-based.

Questions of volition are important because Kulick, in calling for a move from the study of sexuality to that of desire in gay language, shifts the debate over volition from language to gayness itself, suggesting that sexuality is (arguably) conscious but often repressed. In doing so, however, Kulick sidesteps Foucault's insight about such a suggestion invoking the "repressive hypothesis" that prevents understanding the dominant Western construction of homosexuality. It was in response to this position that Foucault proposed that the "rallying point for the counterattack against the deployment of sexuality ought not to be sex-desire, but bodies and pleasures" (1978, 157).

In raising Foucault's point we do not argue for the abolition of "desire" as a conceptual term; indeed, many contributors to this volume use it to great effect. We do, however, agree that understanding the relationship between language and subjectivity in terms of desire or sexuality cannot be predicated on assumptions that the psyche is a self-contained cultural domain that can then desire. Just as we argue that language cannot be effectively regarded as a self-contained domain, so we argue that desire cannot be understood as a self-contained domain. One of the most enduring contributions of anthropological work on sexuality is its demonstration of the intersectional character of sexuality. It does not originate in one domain (such as the psyche) and then come out to other aspects of life. Rather, sexuality comes into being at the conflicted conjunctures of cultural domains—and language frequently marks the domain within which these constructions of desire emerge (Herdt and Stoller 1990).

It is here that the particular focus on globalization addressed in this collection—specifically, the apparently global circulation of gay language/linguistic practices and the limits imposed on this apparent circulation by locally emerging linguistic practices—is of the greatest import. Cultural domains are not only intersectionally constituted within a single culture (despite claims they are self-contained) but also constituted at the articulation between cultures. That has been true throughout human history, but the character of this articulation is currently undergoing a sea change via globalizing processes, and the essays in this volume are concerned with the implications of that sea change. Yanagisako and Delaney remind us of the need "to ask how culturally-specific domains have been dialectically formed and transformed in relation with other cultural domains, how meanings migrate across domain boundaries, and how specific actions are multiply constituted" (1995, 11). In the context of the present volume, we extend this "productive question" to ask how culturally specific domains of homosexual subjectivity are created and transformed in relation with domains from other cultures—and what contributions gay language/linguistic practices make to these ends.

We proffer articulation as a concept for approaching the question of the dialectical relationship among gay subjectivities, globalizing cultural logics, and language. The term *articulation* has two meanings, roughly, "to utter" and "movement around a joint." Although the first meaning might appear more relevant to a discussion of language, it is the second that has been emphasized in social theory, given the association of the term with the work of Marx (and later Marxist theorists such as Balibar and Althusser) regarding the articulations between different aspects of a mode of production and the articulation of different modes of production in a society or on the world stage. In fact, the German *Gliederung* has only the second meaning, of motion around a joint. In developing that meaning of articulation, Stuart Hall summarizes, "The unity which [the articulated elements] form is thus not that of an identity, where one structure perfectly recapitulates or reproduces or even 'expresses' another; or where each is reducible to the other; or where each is defined by the same determinations. . . . The unity formed by this combination or articulation is always, necessarily, a 'complex structure': a structure in which things are related, as much through their differences as through their similarities" (1980, 325).

This notion of articulation can be used to capture the idea that cultural domains are not self-coherent realms of experience but articulate with other cultural domains both within and among cultures (and in the process play no small role in demarcating where one culture ends and another begins).

To this notion of articulation inflected by political economy we can then juxtapose the sense of articulation as utterance to underscore how gay languages/linguistic practices articulate (in both senses) gay subjectivities. Gay subjectivities are not isomorphic with gay languages/linguistic practices; some gay people do not engage in gay languages/linguistic practices and vice versa. In Hall's terms, they are not reducible to each other but articulate in a complex structure where difference can serve as a mode of connection. At the same time, through the utterance of gay languages/linguistic practices (not always or solely by gay individuals), gay subject positions are simultaneously reconstituted and transformed. The essays in this volume help articulate that complex, emerging convergence of language, sexuality, and globalizing processes.

### Sexual Cultures, Sexual Languages

The starting point for the explorations of language, globalization, and same-sex sexuality presented in this volume is the idea of sexual culture, which, building on work by Gilbert Herdt, we define as culturally based ideologies and practices related to sexual behavior: "[A] sexual culture is a consensual model of cultural ideal about sexual behavior in a group. [It] suggests a world view based on specific sexual and gender norms, emotions, beliefs, and symbolic meanings regarding the proper nature and purpose of sexual encounters. Sexual cultures thus function as power systems of moral and emotional control" (Herdt 1997, 17).

As Herdt suggests, sexual cultures are closely grounded in the everyday experience of particular groups of people and thus situated socially and historically. Their details are learned and shared, albeit unevenly, not only across divisions and boundaries within those domains but also among them through processes of intercultural articulation that include those of globalization. Sexual cultures are not seamless, organic, unified constructions but are closely tied to broader structures of power and inequality and to other components of political economy. Accordingly, participants in a sexual culture often show some level of agreement regarding the ideologies and practices of which that culture is composed, although disagreements are also common. Far from being static constructions, sexual cultures are as much products of ongoing debate as they are guardians of seemingly timeless values and mores.

If there are sexual cultures then there must be sexual languages, that is, modes of describing, expressing, and interrogating the ideologies and practices relevant to the sexual culture(s) to which speakers of that language be-

long and modes of communication through which they constitute agreement and disagreement. Gay English is one example of sexual language under this argument. So are the women's ways of talking examined by Tannen (1990) and Coates (1996), the hyper-masculinist conversational styles explored by Cameron (1997), and the culturally "impossible talk" about women who "share the blanket with" (have sex with) other women in Lesotho (Kendall 1999).

To foreground sexual languages in the study of sexual cultures, we need a theory of language that investigates text-making and broader constructions of intersubjective meaning while it attends to the linguistic and cultural knowledge that underlies and enables those textual and discursive practices (Leap 1996). Grammar, discourse, and text-making are not speaker-specific activities but shared—albeit unevenly—across divisions and boundaries within the social domain. These uneven circulations of linguistic knowledge and practice ensure that different ways of talking about sexuality will command different degrees of authority. Similarly, studying sexual languages in terms of grammar, discourse, and text-making—not just words and phrases—draws attention to the tensions between sexual politics (that is, the social contestation of sexual ideologies and practices) and sexual desires and to the effects these tensions have on a speaker's understandings of his or her own sexual subjectivity. Structuralist psychoanalytical theorists such as Jacques Lacan and Julia Kristeva have hinted at such connections when they suggest that desire is structured like language, but the point of view developed here situates such lines of analysis in culturally, historically, politically, and materially specific contexts.

A framework of sexual languages can therefore help in approaching the imbrication of sexual politics and sexual desire. Johnson's exploration of the undercurrents of race, masculinity, and "deviant" sexuality in African American men's gay language suggests some of the forms such articulation can take. Provencher's reflections on efforts to construct a homosexuality that affirms national identity as well as same-sex desire suggests other dynamics, as does Higgins's discussion of cultural identity and sexuality in francophone Montreal. The efforts to build sexual citizenship (i.e., a socially acknowledged status for nonheterosexual subjectivities and relationships within the body politic) from personal expressions of sexual belonging (i.e., efforts to lay claim to association as a sexual person) addressed by Provencher are also found in Leap's discussion of language and township homosexuality in South Africa and in Boellstorff's analysis of *gay* language in Indonesia.

Sexual languages show how speakers' linguistic resources (Fairclough 1989, 34–35) incorporate a wide range of cultural and linguistic practices, some closely associated with the cultural logics construed as local, others seen to



be aligned to outside sources. Which cultural and linguistic practices become incorporated into the grammar, discourse, and textual practices of a particular sexual language is an important issue to pursue in any setting. Evidence of linguistic materials from sources construed as outside may point to areas of reference that speakers have trouble representing through sexual languages construed as indigenous. Such evidence may also indicate that linguistic practices seen as indigenous have been superseded by linguistic practices seen to have come from outside—in recognition of the outside code's prestige and authority or in response to missionization, colonial rule, or transnational political economy.

Studies of sexual languages can provide ethnographically detailed and conceptually nuanced analysis concerning the reterritorialization of what are often seen as globalizing cultural practices and logics. Although such phenomena can unfold on a worldwide scale, the processes by which they circulate and localize are in no sense uniform or even inevitable. It may surprise readers to learn that many persons and communities of same-sex desire within the North Atlantic (Euro-American) domain resist and challenge the authority of dominant North Atlantic gay cultures. Although some sites outside the North Atlantic have been able to incorporate aspects of its dominant gay cultural norms without disrupting sexual cultures construed as local, the indeterminacy of globalizing forces means that in some cases North Atlantic sexual cultures are experienced as distant or even irrelevant.

What is true for the globalization of sexual cultures is equally true where the globalization of sexual languages is concerned. Recalling the title of this collection, Are persons outside Euro-America who use gay languages—in particular, languages that draw from gay English—speaking in another's tongue? To what extent has the emergence of languages of same-sex desire across the globe been dependent on the transnational circulation of North Atlantic-based gay English? To what extent has the transnational circulation of gay English preempted the authority of locally based gay languages? To what extent has the transnational circulation of gay English enhanced local gay language authority?

## Previewing the Chapters

Although we make no claim to global coverage, the places under discussion in this book were chosen with the idea that the particular analyses would raise comparative questions of more general interest. As a result, we focus on the encounter between various gay languages and gay English in France, francophone Canada, urban African America, Cuban American Miami, Germa-

ny, Israel, South Africa, Thailand, Indonesia, and New Zealand. Research interviews, ethnographic fieldwork, life-story narratives, articles in newspapers and magazines, popular music, poetry, and informal everyday conversations provide the substantive grounds for the discussions. In some cases (Boellstorff, Higgins, Jackson, Johnson, Minning, Moriel) the authors have participated in the struggles they describe as members of the communities in question or been allies of the communities, and those chapters draw on the insights gained through these direct engagements. In all cases the analyses are guided by extended periods of residence and engaged social interaction. In that sense each chapter can be read as an ethnographic statement as well as a commentary on the articulations of language and same-sex desire in a globalizing world.

Provencher, Minning, and Higgins examine cases where Continental French, German, and Canadian French linguistic codes seen as locally gay come into unequal dialogue with gay English. This is a simultaneous process of text-making by speakers and speaker-making by texts. Senses of selfhood are shaped by the reterritorialization of gay English, even as subjects themselves participate in reconfiguring these linguistic codes. That is why the chapters consider whether the textual products should be described as English-, French-, or German-based or inclusive of those linguistic regimes. Provencher shows how gay English, which often appears to dominate messages in gay French magazines, cannot be understood in isolation from the gay French that accompanies it. Minning shows how gay English usage has become so widely embedded in German linguistic discourse that talking in gay English in such contexts may be better described as speaking gay German. And because Canadian French, not English, was the language of choice from the beginnings of the gay rights movement in Quebec, Higgins describes how English-speaking gay men in that province had to shift language loyalties (gay English to gay French) in order to participate fully in the public work of gay liberation—and how gay English thereby became a private rather than public language of same-sex desire.

Moriel discusses the formation of lesbian/gay languages in Israel and explores other ways in which conceptions of locality and globality affect the emergence of public gay cultures. Reference in Hebrew, animate or inanimate, must be grammatically marked for masculine or feminine sex/gender. That tends to make sex/gender salient in conversational contexts, frustrating efforts to conceal sexual identities in Hebrew public discourse. Moriel (who was part of a politicized struggle to develop gay Hebrew) notes that the absence of obligatory gender-marking in English (third-person, singular pronouns excepted) gave it utility in certain cultural contexts. But while an Israel-centered

gay English began to upstage efforts to build gay Hebrew, Israeli gay English is itself now being upstaged by the creation of a "disco scene lingo" that incorporates linguistic material from multiple language sources to create new forms of discourse that reflect a broad range of marginalized sexualities.

Moriel's essay is the first of several that examine the convergence of social, cultural, and historical conditions in the emergence of linguistic practices seen as both locally based and concerned with same-sex desires, experiences, and subjectivities. Leap addresses this theme by exploring why same-sex oriented residents of Cape Town's black townships use Xhosa-English code-switching rather than monolingual text-making (Xhosa or English exclusively) as their language for claiming citizenship as (homo)-sexual persons in post-Apartheid Cape Town. The code-switching in question is anything but arbitrary, and the "language" that emerges through these practices marks a sharp distinction between township-based and City Centre-based (homo)sexualities. In this and other ways, Xhosa-English code-switching is much more relevant to everyday experiences of township-resident same-sex subjectivities and desires than is any form of gay linguistic practice based in English.

In contrast, Murray shows how a different set of linguistic practices have emerged among same-sex-identified Māori men in New Zealand. As in Cape Town, English has been a helpful resource for discussions of same-sex desire. As Murray explains, however, several factors have favored the use of Māori-based language resources and a preferential use of Māori linguistic/sexual discourse in those discussions. First, same-sex-oriented indigenous people have affiliated themselves with the emergence of lesbian/gay activism in New Zealand. Second, the mobilization against HIV/AIDS in New Zealand has brought male same-sex desires and practices into the foreground. A third factor is the resurgence of Māori-based political activism, which legitimized Māori-based efforts toward social change in other arenas such as that of sexuality. Working against such efforts are government resettlement and education policies that have led to a state of affairs in which many Māori no longer speak their ancestral language. Although language loss makes conversations on any topic in Māori difficult, the ongoing resurgence of Māori self-determination strongly supports efforts toward language relearning and creating a discourse of same-sex desire as part of the relearning process.

Boellstorff describes a rather different articulation of inside and outside in Indonesia, a region of great linguistic diversity. There, *gay* language is closely aligned with the national language, Indonesian. The distinctiveness of Indonesian in Indonesia's complex linguistic landscape appears in the way the language is seen as national; it is singled out and contrasted with

other languages that are thereby framed as local and indigenous. Indonesian is thus marked as appropriate for purposes of political unity and for subjectivities not based in tradition. *Gay* language's close connection to national language foregrounds nationalism in *gay* language text-making. Moreover, the pragmatics of *gay* language's use—not primarily as a secret language but as a language of interaction—show how *gay* Indonesian men find themselves both linked to and ignored by dominant conceptions of national authenticity.

Jackson discusses how discourses of homosexuality in Thailand reflect yet another type of engagement between linguistic traditions and conceptions of spatial scale (local, national, and transnational). In Thailand, *gai* has become an accepted and popular term for same-sex-identified men, and although "lesbian" has not become an accepted reference among same-sex-identified women, Thai women do employ the English-based *tom* and *dee* (the *tom* of tomboy and the *dee* of lady) to refer to masculine and feminine women in same-sex relationships respectively. The resistance (and indifference) to gay English reference centers around male-to-female transgendered persons and transsexuals, who find cultural resonance in such Thai-language concepts as *kathoe*y and *phu-ying praphet sorng*. (This also reflects the fact that North Atlantic terminologies of transgender language have to date been globalized to a far lesser degree than language associated with gay men and lesbians outside of medical and sexological circles.) The variable presence of English distinguishes these nationalized sex/gender constructions from constructions like *gai* and *tom-dee*, whose linkages to sexual cultures beyond Thailand are quite clear. In this sense, as in other settings examined in this collection, the variable status of gay English text-making reflects broader themes in social history and cannot be described effectively in terms of an acceptance versus resistance dichotomy.

Gay English fluencies do not unify male-identified men of Hispanic/Latino backgrounds in cities like Miami, Florida. They can, however, provide a way to articulate experiences of same-sex desire in the United States with the sexual cultures linked to their countries of recent origin—hence the oppositional references to transculturation and *pájaration* in the title of Peña's chapter. Peña reports that a recurring theme in these articulations is speaker dissatisfaction with conditions of gay culture and society in both the United States and elsewhere. Fluency in (gay) English thus provides a linguistic framework through which Hispanic gay men articulate multiple components of this dissatisfaction, even while such linguistic practices interpellate them into marginal subject positions. Talking gay English in these settings allows Hispanic/Latino men to voice anger, express same-sex identities and desires,

and become caught up in cultural logics that shape their subjectivities as Hispanic/Latino in a white-dominated society.

Johnson also examines how forms of gay English, so influential elsewhere around the globe, intersect with ways of "talking gay" that have already taken root in English-speaking gay contexts. Johnson analyzes how something not completely alien to the multilingual alternatives Peña describes for Hispanic/Latino settings is also present within urban African American settings. Mainstream-based gay English is certainly present, but it is not fully accepted. Instead, as Johnson shows, African American gay men are impacted by and draw upon heterosexual tropes of domesticity—in particular, references to mother, family, and home—to articulate varieties of gay English that speak more directly to the conditions of racism, normative whiteness, and homophobia with which they contend.

## Conclusions

Taken as a whole, these essays indicate the value that attention to language offers the study of the interface between globalizing processes and sexual subjectivities. In particular, they demonstrate the danger of assuming that what will count as local, traditional, or indigenous before the globalizing encounter—an orientalist fantasy of the pure native culture that not only assumes ahead of time that people outside the North American core who call themselves lesbian or gay are inauthentic but also has little in common with the long histories of transcultural communication we find in every chapter of this volume. At the same time, these essays show how globalizing processes do not result in homogenization but can, as Daniel Miller notes, result in a posteriori differences (Miller 1995, 2–3). In other words, globalization appears to be making the world more different just as much as it is making the world more the same. It all depends on the culturally contextual rubrics used to decide what constitutes difference and similarity. Difference is not an acultural, ahistorical attribute but the forging of cultural distinctions in particular contexts and power relations. Finally, by challenging us to rethink definitions of "the political" through gay language/linguistic practices, we come to understand how groups articulate claims to recognition and belonging that may not be recognizable as political from a post-Stonewall, U.S. perspective yet are deeply engaged with conceptions of the public and visions of social justice.

## Note

1. In all text that discusses Tom Boellstorff's work the term *gay* will be italicized not only because it is part of the contemporary Indonesian language but also to underscore how

gay subjectivity in Indonesia transforms what was once an ostensibly Western term into something "authentically" Indonesian. In other words, *gay* is more than just "gay" with an Indonesian accent.

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