17 Language and Gendered Modernity

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To a self who participates in the construction of known discourses, the problem is not to fragment surroundings or to emerge from silence into speech, but to piece together what is daily fragmented by the Other...

Stewart (1990: 55)

1 Introduction

This chapter[1] explores how relationships between language and gender reflect and respond to the content and contexts of modernity – that is, the "modes of social life or organization which emerged in Europe from about the seventeenth century onward and which subsequently became more or less worldwide in their influence" (Giddens 1991: 1). Under Giddens' argument, modernity is not a label for a time period, so much as a reference to the complex changes in political economy which enabled the emergence of North Atlantic capitalism, the predatory expansion of capitalist economies into South Atlantic (Africa, Latin America), Asian, and other Pacific domains, and the construction of regimes of economic and political control linking home countries to colonial outposts worldwide. Recently, these regimes of control have assumed new forms, as colonial rule gave way to post-colonial configurations of independence and nation-building, and as colonial powers, like former colonies, struggle to position themselves and their citizenry within the palimpsest of empire.

These struggles for position are reflected in disputes over borders and boundaries, in disagreements over the meanings and messages of history, in tensions between local communities, in "ethnic" divisions and broader political allegiances, as well as in the seemingly unending conditions of displacement and diaspora. They are also reflected in the uncertainties of outcome which

have become characteristic of modernity as a whole, and have had profound effects on the formation of *late modern* experience. Gender has also been profoundly affected by these uncertainties and discontents, and the same is true for the linguistic practices and products through which gendered meanings and practices – as well as the *understandings* of those meanings and practices – are constructed, negotiated, and contested in everyday life. Certainly, language has always been a useful resource for expressing and contesting claims to gendered subjectivity. But the fragmented, seemingly decentralized conditions of (late) modernity has made language an especially valuable resource in that regard– even if, at the same time, modernity imposes its own demands on gender-related grammar, discourse, and text-making.

This chapter examines several examples of speakers using linguistic practices and products to claim a late modern, gendered subjectivity: a personal advertisement in a South African lesbian/gay newspaper, a poem by (self-identified) gay Irish poet Cathal Ó Searcaigh, and a portion of the life-story narrative of a Filipino *bakla*. The textual formats differ in each example, and so do the social and historical conditions underlying each of the sites of text-making. Even so, a close analysis of the language of text-making in each case shows how speakers use the textual moment to assert gendered position in these settings, and how speakers construct those assertions *in relation to* site-specific struggles over race/ethnicity, class position, sexual diversity, cultural allegiance, national identity, and other features shaping and fragmenting everyday life within the late modern period.

There are provocative parallels to be drawn between the linguistic practices attested in these texts and the performative claims to gendered subjectivity (Butler 1990: 25, passim) which emerge from text-making in such complex and contested settings. And one of the goals of this chapter is to examine these parallels and to trace their connections to the *flexible strategies of accumulation* (Harvey 1989: esp. pp. 147ff) which have come to be so closely associated with economic and social practices of late modernity.

2   Assumptions: "Text" Makes "Gendered Modernity" Accessible

Genders are cultural constructions, and not determined entirely or primarily by bodily form or biological function. Accordingly, studies of gendered experience frequently use *text* as an entry point for such inquiry, because gender is negotiated and contested through the production and circulation of life stories, personal anecdotes, gossip and other narratives, legal statements, ritual oratory, words of advice and practical caution, jokes, songs, and other forms of expressive language, as well as through word borrowings, modifications to existing vocabulary, and new word formations.[2]

I refer here to these linguistic materials as *texts*, to underscore the idea that these linguistic practices, and the messages about gender expressed through them, take place within specific economic contexts and social and historic "moments." And because *text* is *situated language use*, texts always contain formal marking which identifies their location within the larger setting and their connections to other textual materials within the same economic, social, and historical setting.

Moreover, texts also express meanings which are relevant to the situation of text-making. Accordingly, Halliday (1978: 108–9) reminds us that "text is choice, . . . selected from the total set of operations that constitute what can be meant" within the given setting. Accordingly, analysis of text needs to take into account the evidence of *choice-making* and the other indications of *intentionality of message* which the text contains.

Choice and intentionality are properties of speaker-performance, but not exclusively so. As Mary Bucholtz observes, " '[t]exts,' or stretches of discourse, take on meaning only in interaction and [. . .] as consumers of cultural 'texts,' audiences are active participants in this process of meaning making" (1999: 349, citing McIlvenny 1996). So it is helpful to think of texts as the product of speaker/audience *co-construction*, to think of textual meanings as something *interpellated* through the mutual engagement of speakers and audience within the social moment. Such site-specific engagement does not divorce text production or textual meanings from the workings of broader social and historical process. Speakers and audience are located within opportunity structures and relations of power, and the outcomes of text production are always shaped accordingly (Fairclough 1989: 4). Equally important here are the connections between textual meanings and broader frames of reference in terms of which those meanings claim authority. Birch Moonwomon (1995: 45) explains the characteristics of "lesbian text" in these terms:

> In verbal interactions communicants assume shared knowledge of many kinds. Some of the knowledge that is taken to be common is the stuff of societal discourses, which are often discourses of conflict. Lesbian text evidences assumptions of shared knowledge of various societal discourses and participation in them. Importantly, text also evidences assumptions of common stances, lesbian perspectives within the societal discourses, which are not points but territories within [the] societal discourses invoked in interaction.

Noting how text production is closely tied to political economy, and how interpolations of meanings are shaped by local and broader discursive domains, we understand why "telling sexual stories" and sharing other narratives of intimate life have become widely attested forms of linguistic performance within late modernity (Plummer 1995: 6, 16), and why text-making so often provides occasions for negotiating and contesting late modern gendered subjectivities. The identities which are displayed and confirmed through story-telling and conversation may be reflections of personal desire. But the textual details which

give "voice" to those identities position those voices within systems of reference and meaning which are socially, not just personally, constructed. (See again, Hennessy's statement in note 2.) And by doing so, as the following examples will show, texts make gendered claims accessible, if not entirely acceptable, to other participants in the speech event and to the broader audience beyond it.

3   Looking Beyond the Dorp: Language Choices and Gendered Meanings in a South African Gay Personal Advertisement

Late modernity in Southern Africa has been closely entwined with systems of racial/class-based inequalities which derive both from colonial administration and from attempts to stabilize White rule during the initial years of post-colonial independence. These regimes of state power have engaged in various ways female- and male-based, same-sex oriented, desires, practices, and identities. The lesbian/gay visibility in the "new" South Africa (including the freedom from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation outlined in the new South African constitution) is the latest reflection of this engagement. Gay-oriented bars and clubs advertise openly in the popular press. The sexual preferences of politicians and other national figures are regularly discussed on television programs and in other public forums. Gay pride events and other celebrations of vibrant lesbian/gay cultures are regular events in major urban centers such as Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Durban, and same-sex business districts and residential neighborhoods have emerged in these cities, as well.

In the small towns (*die dorp*) in the countryside, at a distance from urban areas (and much of the South African terrain falls within this category), homosexual presence is not always so visible, and is often submerged beneath references to "confirmed bachelor" and "the dutiful, stay-at-home daughter." Finding a partner for anything more than casual sex (or even for that) can be difficult in those settings, especially when local sex/gender ideologies remain firmly anchored within Afrikaner-based, Calvinist value systems.

Example (1) is one of several "personal ads" included in the back pages of the August, 1997 issue of *The Exit*, South Africa's monthly gay and lesbian newspaper, and speaks directly to these concerns. The writer self-identifies as a G(ay),W(hite) M(an) in his late 30s and uses Calvinist-inspired, Afrikaner notions of purity, wholesomeness, and honesty to frame his self-description as well as to specify the type of man with whom he hopes to make contact. At the same time, the presentation of these remarks is decidedly trans-global. In fact, the organization of the text resembles that widely attested in sexually oriented personal advertising in North Atlantic and other print media, both "straight" as well as gay: an eye-catching title, relevant facts about the writer, a brief

description of the desired respondent, listing of any characteristics which the writer will find undesirable in a respondent, additional stipulations, and the necessary contact information.

(1) *Huislik en Opreg*
GWM, laat 30s, eerlik, opreg, liefdevol, sin vir humor, eensaam, huislik, manlik maar geen hunk. Gesoek: 'n opregte eelike saggaarde standvestige ordentlike GWM vir vriendskap moontlik verhounding later. Jou bate jou persoonlikheid nie "looks" nie. Geen drienkers, drugs of queens. English guys welcome. ALA. [reply number]

In this case, the information presented in each of these categories (with English translation) is as follows:[3]

1 *Title*: Huislik en Opreg
2 *About the writer*: GWM, laat 30s, eerlik, opreg, liefdevol, sin vir humor, eensaam, huislik, manlik maar geen hunk.
3 *About the intended respondent*: Gesoek: 'n opregte eelike saggaarde standvestige ordentlike GWM vir vriendskap moontlik verhounding later. Jou bate jou persoonlikheid nie "looks" nie.
4 *Undesirable traits*: Geen drienkers, drugs of queens.
5 *Additional stipulations:* English guys welcome. ALA.
6 *Contact information*: [the reply number, to which any response should be directed]

1 *Title*: Homebody and wholesome
2 *About the writer*: Gay White man, late 30s, honest, wholesome, loving, sense of humor, lonely, homebody, "masculine"/straight-acting, but not a "hunk."
3 *About the intended respondent*: What I am looking for: an upright, honest, soft-natured, reliable cleancut GWM for friendship, possibly relationship later. Your strong point will be your personality, not your "looks."
4 *Undesirable traits*: No heavy drinkers, drugs, or queens.
5 *Additional stipulations*: English guys welcome. A(ll) L(etters) A(nswered).
6 *Contact information*.

On first reading, and consistent with the text's repeated references to Calvinist values, the primary language of this statement would appear to be Afrikaans. Yet note how much of the textual message is expressed through English rather than Afrikaans vocabulary: *GWM, humor, hunk, later, "looks", drugs, queens, English guys welcome, ALA*.[4] Importantly, the late modern Afrikaans vocabulary contains words and phrases corresponding to each of these English lexical references, and using those words and phrases would have positioned the advertisement (and its message) even more securely within an Afrikaans-centered cultural framework. The choice of English, rather than Afrikaans, in

these instances becomes especially significant in those instances, and researchers as well as potential respondents need to read the usage accordingly.

For example, when telling us that he does not want replies from heavy drinkers, drug users, or flamboyant, effeminate men, the writer uses Afrikaans *drienkers* but English *drugs* and *queens*. Alcohol consumption aside, party drugs (and addiction to them) are not traditional features of Afrikaner culture, and religious tracts published by the Dutch Reform Church often use references to the ever-pervasive drug culture as markers for the external (i.e. British/American/North Atlantic-based) influences now competing for the hearts and minds of the Afrikaner faithful. The writer's use of English *drugs*, rather than Afrikaans *dwelmmidel* (or Afrikaans *dwelmslaaf*, "drug addict") is consistent with this broader, English/outsider versus Afrikaans/insider dichotomy.

The writer's choice of English *queens* in this statement requires discussion. In South African English usage (but see note 5, below), much as is the case in North Atlantic settings and elsewhere, *queens* refers to publicly flamboyant, highly effeminate gay men, and is a term used by heterosexual persons as well as by gay-identified men and by lesbians. But South African everyday discourse also includes another term for flamboyant, effeminate men: *moffie*. This term derives from a particular component of South African sexual history, as Chetty (1994: 127) explains: " 'Moffie,' coined in the coloured communities of the western Cape, has become the South African equivalent of 'queer,' 'faggot,' or 'flikker,' with extremely derisive connotations." Today, *moffie* is part of the sexual vocabularies maintained by speakers of English, Afrikaans, Xhosa, and other Southern African languages. And while "derisive connotations" may still be invoked by this term, *moffie* does not always command negative reference in its late modern usage. Gay/male-identified men, regardless of language background, use *moffie* to underscore feelings of intimacy or mutual affection during conversations with other gay friends. And even when Afrikaans-speaking heterosexuals use *moffie* to mark male effeminacy, they are not necessarily equating effeminacy and male-centered, same-sex desire. *Moffie* may identify a married man with children, a school teacher, or even a local minister, if any of these individuals appears to fall short of a more aggressive, masculine ideal. Similarly, and paralleling one meaning of English *bachelor*, *moffie* may also identify a man who remains unmarried, lives at home, and takes care of elderly parents or other relatives – regardless of his sexual orientation or style of expressive masculinity (Hambidge 1995).

Queens and *moffie* are in some ways quite similar, but *moffie* commands a broader and more complex range of meanings than does *queens*, while *queens* identifies a more limited domain of visible, flamboyant, and decidedly sexualized identities. This is the category of persons being excluded when the writer says *geen . . . queens*, "no . . . queens." Yet excluding *queens* from the pool of desirable respondents affirms the writer's willingness to receive replies from men whose sexual personae, while not flamboyantly effeminate, are also not aggressively masculine, either. Note the word-choice in the next statement in the advertisement: *English guys welcome*. Ordinary guys – who, in South African

linguistic usage could be *moffies* but are not *queens*, and might be speakers of Afrikaans and/or English – are the men whom the writer hopes to contact through this advertisement, and he has constructed the text which reaches across linguistic and cultural traditions, accordingly.[5]

Far from being an arbitrary or random component of text design, the interplay of Afrikaans and English usages in this text here contributes directly and richly to the writer's presentation of his intended message and to his outreach to his intended audience. In contrast, framing the statement entirely in Afrikaans would have limited the writer's chances of making contact with English-speaking respondents, since a sizeable number of speakers of English in South Africa are not sufficiently familiar with Afrikaans to be able to read a text written in that language.[6] Moreover, enduring associations between Afrikaans and the everyday administration of apartheid rule could even discourage first-language fluent Afrikaans speakers from responding to an advertisement framed entirely in that language, since such an assertion of language loyalty could overlap with loyalty to other, less desirable social stances.[7]

Finally, framing the text entirely in Afrikaans would also delete usages like *GWM* and *ALA*, codings which indicate the writer's familiarity with the international language of male-centered personal advertising, and imply a familiarity with other, broadly circulating domains of male-centered sexuality. While the ample use of Calvinist references suggests that the writer is not trying to present himself or to position his (homo)sexuality in cosmopolitan terms, these codings and other features of English usage (particularly, the possibility of a US-based English usage, in the sense of note 4) confirm the writer's willingness to explore sexual possibilities beyond the boundaries and restrictions of the home village.

4   Getting Back to Sources: Language, Gender, and Rural Tradition in the Poetry of Cathal Ó Searcaigh

Sexual diversity is also prominent in the everyday discourses of Irish late modernity. And while laws criminalizing homosexual practices have been rescinded in the Republic of Ireland, conservative voices still charge that homosexual persons undermine the obligations of responsible sexual citizenship. To build support for lesbian/gay rights in this setting, same-sex desire has to claim a secure place within the broader frameworks of national identity and national unity. References to Irish cultural tradition provide useful resources to this end, and so does the emergence of a "gay Gaelic" as a language appropriate for public and private (homo)sexual discursive practice.

Cathal Ó Searcaigh, "the first openly gay poet writing in the Irish language" (Kennedy, forthcoming: 2), draws heavily on both of these resources in his poetic explorations of male homoerotic experience. As Kennedy explains, the

content of his poems is not always explicitly "gay," and very few of the poems actually address the connections between sexual identity and national identity directly. However, because "Ó Searcaigh [is] the first Irish-language poet to claim the political importance of identifying himself as a gay man, this self-identification . . . provides a clear context for reading his love poetry as homoerotic" (Kennedy, forthcoming: 2, footnote 3).

Much of the imagery in Ó Searcaigh's poetry lends itself quite effectively to homoerotic and other gay-centered readings; this is especially the case for his depictions of life in the Irish countryside, as I explain below. But homoerotic/gay-centered messages are not presented in isolation in these texts, and these themes always have to be read in terms of broader social tensions which define late modern experience within the Irish setting.

For example, in *An Tobar* / "The Well," Ó Searcaigh contrasts the *Uisce beo bioguil, fioruisce gle* / "lively, lively water, pellucid spring-water" which can be drawn from the family well, with the *uisce lom gan loinnir* / "mawkish [water] without sparkle" which comes from the kitchen faucet.[8] This imagery foregrounds the traditional resources of the Irish countryside, and highlights their vulnerability under the pressures of modernization. Read more generally, the imagery reminds the reader that, whenever modernity takes hold, "a mechanical world of convenience, forgetful of sensual pleasure and stimulation" will eventually replace the more traditional "purer, more organic connection[s] with nature" (Kennedy, forthcoming: 5).

In other settings, the "mechanical . . . , forgetful . . ." world of modernity is not always so disruptive. Indeed, the countryside's "pure . . . organic connection to nature," valuable as it is in many ways, did not support Ó Searcaigh's earliest efforts to come to terms with male-centered, sexual desires. To find suitable opportunities to that end, he moved away from rural Donegal, and eventually took up residence in London. The anonymity of urban life (he explains in other texts) helped him move easily within the city's many homosexual venues. But urban anonymity left other desires unfulfilled. After several years in self-imposed cultural exile, and as his interests in poetry took priority over continuing a career in television broadcasting, he returned to Donegal to pursue his writing within its more familiar terrain.

Ó Searcaigh did not renounce his urban-based homosexual identity when he returned to Donegal, but he did have to think carefully about appropriate ways to claim that identity within rural Irish settings, and reflections on that task are deeply entwined throughout *An Tobar*´s depictions of modernity. An unnamed narrator, whose remarks suggest that he speaks for the poet within the text, provides some of this commentary. A second voice is also attested in this poem: *Sean Bhrid* / Old Brigit. Her name and title identify her as a grandmother-like figure, a matriarch, a wise woman, and a village elder. She also carries the name of an important Irish Catholic saint, as well as the name often given to the local busybody in jokes and other stereotypic depictions of rural Irish life. Like the narrator, she brings a variety of intertextual perspectives into the discussion, but unlike the narrator, whose point of view is shaped

by urban and rural differences, Sean Bhrid views rural Irish life primarily from within.

An Tobar begins with Sean Bhrid's reminder that regional improvements have made obsolete Donegal's ancient family wells, but, at the same time, indoor plumbing has made water from the now-abandoned family wells all the more valuable. And, consistent with her status as matriarch and village elder, she speaks here not only for herself, but on behalf of the larger local constituency.

This discussion continues into the poem's middle stanzas, as Ó Searcaigh remembers how well water provided much needed refreshment during the summer heat. Sean Bhrid is silent during these remarks, realizing perhaps that the poet is now developing the argument she set out to propose. All that remains is to bring the argument to conclusion, and Sean Bhrid does so by offering the following words of advice in the poem's final stanza:

> (2)
> *Aimsigh do thobar fein, a chroi*
> *Oir ta am an anais romhainn amach;*
> *Caithfear pilleadh aris ar na foinsi.*
>
> Seek out your own well, my dear,
> for the age of want is near;
> There will have to be a going back to sources.

Read in terms of the poem's discussion of modernity, these remarks propose a rejection of modern-day conveniences and a return to the traditional practices of the Irish countryside. This position is consistent with Sean Bhrid's opening commentary, and also follows from her many intertextual connections with rural Irish culture. But Sean Bhrid's suggestions take on a more subversive reading when read against Ó Searcaigh's male-centered sexuality. A second person singular reference in the imperative verb – *Aimsigh do thobar fein* / "seek out *your own* well" – urges the poet to look beyond the expectations of rural Ireland's family-centered, community-based sexuality, and to define his sexual subjectivity in terms of *his* own understanding of what is an appropriate "source."

Linguistic details are significant to the poem's presentation of messages in other ways. Remember that in example (1), the writer framed his personal advertisement by combining materials from the resources of two locally available languages (Afrikaans and English). But while two languages (Gaelic and English) are also available in the rural Irish setting, Ó Searcaigh does not attempt to combine them in *An Tobar* (or in any of his writings). Instead, he crafts two versions of the poem, one in Gaelic, the other in English. There are no English loan-words in the Gaelic text, and no evidence of English "interference" structuring Gaelic vocabulary and syntax. Similarly, there are no Gaelic loan-words in the English text and (by my reading) no evidence of Gaelic interference structuring the English vocabulary and syntax. And while the two

texts are published together, they are presented as separate texts, each within its own column on the page, and each under its own title.

Because Ó Searcaigh writes poetry in Gaelic, and has earned praise for his creative use of that language in written form, it is tempting to view the Gaelic text of *An Tobar* as the "poem," and the English text as the "translation." Doing so positions Ó Searcaigh's Gaelic poetry (as well as his writing of poems in Gaelic) as an example of the *aris ar na foinsi*/ "getting back to sources" proposed by Sean Bhrid in the final stanza of *An Tobar*. Moreover, since Gaelic is the language of the countryside and, more generally, Gaelic provides a performative marker for allegiance to Irish tradition, there are additional reasons to consider the Gaelic text as the primary site of message-making in this setting.

At the same time, the particulars of (sexual) subjectivity which the poet will be claiming through his *aris ar na foinsi* are deeply embedded in the modernist condition.[9] And given its associations with urban experience, its close ties to the workings of British colonial rule, its international status, and its enduring connections to structures of power and opportunity, English – not Gaelic – is the language of modernity within the rural Irish setting. Because of these linkages to modern experience, there is nothing remarkable about Ó Searcaigh, or any Irish writer, trying to explore same-sex desires by writing poetry in English. But even when working within an English language format, Ó Searcaigh makes clear that he wants to see discussions of (homo)sexuality move beyond English-centered linguistic domains. Remember that the sources highlighted in Sean Bhrid's final remark are Irish tradition/Gaelic in basis, and "getting back to [those] sources" requires a willingness to "seek out" (in Sean Bhrid's terms) what are unavoidably new and unfamiliar forms of linguistic as well as social practice.

Such explorations were very much a part of Ó Searcaigh's earlier efforts to claim his own sexual subjectivity. Exploration was a motive prompting him to leave home and, eventually, settle in (English-speaking!) London. And in other texts, he describes evenings when he walked the London streets and explored its homosexual haunts, searching for a sex partner who also could speak a few words of Gaelic. Now that he has returned to Donegal, finding speakers of Gaelic is no longer a difficult task, but with same-sex identities and desires not given broad public expression in rural Ireland, "seeking out" a Gaelic-speaking sex partner is still a matter of uncertainty, though now for entirely different linguistic reasons.

Breaking down linguistic boundaries, and (in a fashion similar to example (1)) incorporating (sexualized) English into (traditional) Gaelic text construction, will not solve the problem here. As Sean Bhrid observed above, when indoor plumbing brings well water into the house, the water loses its sparkle. More appropriate is the creation of an entirely new, entirely Gaelic-based language of same-sex desire, whose references are not bound to modernist assumptions about sexuality and whose formal details are not dependent on modernist forms of sexual representation. The all-Gaelic text of *An Tobar* needs to be read as movement toward this goal. The absence of explicit references to

male sexuality, and of other markers which signify "gay poetry" to an English audience and are highly visible in the English version of the poem, makes good sense under this reading. These absences are not expressions of coded or closeted gay meanings, nor do they suggest any reluctance to talk about (homo)sexual issues in public text-making. Rather, these absences reflect Ó Searcaigh's attempts to construct an alternative presentation of sexual meaning – in Gaelic and in English, a presentation which affirms Gaelic understandings of same-sex desire in terms of Gaelic linguistic and cultural practices.

5   Growing Muscles and Going in Drag: Language and Gender in Transnational Relocation

Unlike the situation in rural Ireland, some forms of same-sex identities and desires do receive rich public expression in Filipino contexts. One of the more visible forms of same-sex identity is *bakla*, male-bodied Filipino persons who use cross-dressing, effeminate behavior, particular forms of linguistic reference,[10] and related practices to express a male-centered gendered subjectivity in female-centered terms (Manalansan 1994: 61). At an earlier time, the *bakla* sense of the feminine may have been constructed entirely according to indigenous models and practices. Today, meanings of *bakla* incorporate North Atlantic, mainland pan-Asian, as well as Philippine-based gendered imaginaries. And while public expressions of *bakla* "identity" continue to affirm the subject's ties to Filipino culture and tradition, *bakla* also incorporates expressions of local place for those living outside of the homeland. (For more discussion of these issues, see Besnier, this volume.)

Understandably, there are tensions and conflicts between traditional and diasporic readings of *bakla* subjectivity, and how individual *bakla* address these issues is always a primary theme in their life-story narratives. Example (3) is an excerpt from one such narrative. Tony, the speaker in this text, was born just outside of Manila and is now (mid-1990s) a resident of New York City. He is talking with Filipino anthropologist Martin Manalansan about his decision to leave Manila and move to the USA, and about his reactions to the new forms of gendered opportunity which voluntary relocation provided him.[11]

(3)
1   Noong nasa Manila ako,
2   kunyari pa akong pa-min ang drama ko
3   although alam ng lahat na bading talaga ang truth.
4   Pag-step ng aking satin shoes dito sa New York,
5   o biglang nagiba ang pagrarampa ko.
6   May I try ko ang pagmu-mu and also nag-gym ako.
7   Ang sabi ng ibang Pinay na bading na parang lukresiya ako.

8 Bakit daw ako nagpapmuscles and then nagmumujer ako.
9 Alam mo, pag wala ka sa pakikialam ng pamilya at kaibagan mo sa Pilipinas,
10 kahit ano puwede.

Manalansan translates Tony's statements as follows:

1 When I was still in Manila,
2 I was still putting on the macho drama
3 although I knew that all the badings[12] knew the truth.
4 When my satin shoes hit New York,
5 I suddenly changed the way I walked the ramp.
6 I tried going in drag and going to the gym.
7 Many Filipinos told me that I was crazy.
8 Why, they asked, was I growing muscles and going in drag?
9 You know, when you live far away from your parents and friends in the Philippines,
10 anything is possible.   (Manalansan 1998: 141)

Central to the organization of this text and to the gendered messages it conveys are the contrasts in location – Manila (lines 1–3) versus New York City (lines 4–8), and the differing styles of gendered performance which unfold at each site: *pa-min ang drama ko*/ "macho drama" in Manila, versus *ang pagmu-mu* ("drag") and *nag-gym ako* ("going to the gym") in New York City. These close associations between location and style of gendered performance are reflected in the language choices evidenced throughout this multilingual text. For example, Tony uses Tagalog words to identify features of *bakla* experience which are closely associated with *bakla* life in the homeland, and may also be relevant to *bakla* experience elsewhere. In some cases, these "Tagalog" words may have been borrowed from Spanish or English sources, but have become fully incorporated in Tagalog grammar and lexicon, and now they conform to Tagalog rules of pronunciation and word structure: e.g. *pa-min* ("macho," English *man*, line 2), *pagmu-mu, nagmumujer*[13] ("drag," Spanish *mujer*, lines 6 and 8), *pamilya* (Spanish "familia," line 9), or *lukresiya* (English "crazy," line 7).[14]

Other English words appear in Tony's remarks without any Tagalog modification of their linguistic form. Some of these English words simply provide support to text structure: *although* (line 3), *and also* (line 6), *and then* (line 8). More generally (and I discuss a small group of exceptions, below), English words identify meanings which are not uniquely *bakla* in basis, but are still relevant to *bakla* experience in the diasporic setting: *step* (line 4), *satin shoes* (line 4), *ramp* (line 5), *gym* (line 6), *muscles* (line 8), and of course *New York* (line 4).

While Tagalog versus English word choices are found throughout this text, their presence makes especially important contributions to textual meaning in several of its sentences. In line 6, word choices draw attention to the broader contrasts in homeland versus diasporic gendered performance structuring Tony's efforts to construct *his own* version of *bakla* subjectivity:

(line 6) *May I try ko ang* <u>*pagmu-mu*</u> *and also* <u>*nag-gym*</u>.
> "I tried going in drag[Tagalog] and going to the gym[English]."

In line 8, word choices suggest that Tony's friends react to his efforts to claim *bakla* subjectivity in terms of similar contrasts:

(line 8) *Bakit daw ako* <u>*nagpapmuscles*</u> *and then* <u>*nagmumujer*</u> *ako*
> "Why, they asked, was I growing muscles[English] and going in drag[Tagalog]?"

In a small number of cases (*truth*, *drama*, *may I* ____ *verb*) English words signal a third type of gendered/locational reference: meanings which are fundamental to *bakla* experience, whatever the site of gendered performance. *Truth* has the same meaning here as in everyday English conversation. *Drama* in this usage refers to particular details shaping a person's life experience, a reference similar to "that's the role he is playing/he is meant to play." *Drama* may also be used to specify the individual who serves as role-model for a specific moment of gendered performance, as Manalansan explains:

> When someone wants to ask about the drag persona of another bakla for the night, the question could be framed this way: *Ano ang drama niuya ngayon?* [What is his drama today?] The answer could be, *Tina Turner ang drama niya.* [Tina Turner is his/her drama.]   (Manalansan 1995: 257)

May I ____ *verb* commands a somewhat more complex reference: this construction introduces sentences which describe forms of action attempted by the speaker, but not necessarily brought to completion. The presence of *May I* <u>*try*</u> in line 6,

> <u>*May I try*</u> *ko ang pagmu-mu and also nag-gym ako.*
> "I tried going in drag and going to the gym."

underscores the experimental nature of his attempts to reconstruct *bakla* subjectivity, and sets the stage for the skeptical reaction of his friends as reported in the following two lines.[15]

The list of English terms which apply to *bakla* experience, broadly defined, does not include English-language names for the *bakla* subject: instead, and the other textual movement between Tagalog and English word choices notwithstanding, Tony refers to *bakla* by using the Filipino/swardspeak term *bakla* throughout this text, never by using *gay*, *homosexual*, or *queer*. English words do not appear in lines 9–10, where Tony weighs the costs of displacement against the benefits of diasporic residence:

> *Alam mo, pag wala ka sa pakikialam ng pamilya at kaibagan mo sa Pilipinas, kahit ano puwede.*
> "You know, when you live far away from your parents and friends in the Philippines, anything is possible."

The all-Tagalog wording in this statement reiterates the position which Tony voiced at an earlier point in the text (see again, line 6): leaving home has not led him to reject his Filipino-based *bakla* "identity" so much as given him opportunities and incentives to redesign the female-centered references already associated with *bakla* tradition. And by constructing lines 9–10 entirely in Tagalog,[16] Tony confirms that "traditional" understandings of *bakla* can be meaningful to his gendered performance in the diasporic setting, just as he has shown elsewhere in the text how diasporic understandings of *bakla* can inform efforts to claim male, same-sex identities and practices within contexts back home.

6   Discussion: Gender, Modernity, and Flexible Language

Tony is one of many *bakla* who regularly combine linguistic materials from Tagalog, English, and Spanish when responding to questions during structured interviews and when talking with friends in less formal speech settings. In fact, text-making across linguistic boundaries is one of the defining characteristics of *swardspeak*, the language closely associated with *bakla* experience worldwide. As Manalansan explains, while all gay "argots" (as he calls them) provide gay men with

> linguistic strategies that enable gay men to negotiate and express their unique experience and views, . . . *swardspeak* reflects the historical, cultural, and politico-economic processes   of a mobile group of multiply-minoritized men from a former American colony in the Third World. [It is] in fact a "syncretic" dynamic that "critically appropriates elements from the master codes of the dominant culture and 'creolizes' them, disarticulating signs and rearticulating their symbolic meaning."   (Manalansan 1995: 250, quoting Mercer 1988: 57)

Manalansan continues,

> The argot is a fast changing one. The movement of people between the Philippines and America provides a way by which innovations in both areas provide the grist for exchange and revitalization. . . . While many of the phrases and words presented [in his 1995 essay – WL] will actually be out of date by the time [that essay] is published, the fundamental mechanisms and dynamics of the argot remain strongly continuous.   (Manalansan 1995: 252)

Among other points, this description of swardspeak suggests that the social and political experiences shaping *bakla*-related gendered modernity are mirrored in the language pluralism, and carefully mediated movement between language traditions, which are characteristic of swardspeak text-making. Importantly, and as explained in previous sections of this chapter, similar parallels between

experiences of gendered modernity and the textual descriptions of those experiences can be found outside of the Filipino context. For instance, the gay personal advertisement in example (1) drew richly on Afrikaans understandings of male-centered desire and on Afrikaans linguistic conventions which regularly express them. But the language of the advertisement also incorporated under-standings of male-centered desire which circulate outside of South African linguistic, cultural, and gendered domains, and against which Afrikaans (homo) sexual discourse is now being redefined.[17] And similarly, in example (2), the social and sexual meanings which Ó Searcaigh explored through his pairing of linguistically distinct texts spoke directly to his moving away from English-speaking urban domains and the English-dominant (homo)sexual opportunities available there, and his return to a sexual subjectivity framed entirely within Gaelic-centered traditions.

   This convergence of language pluralism and gendered experience attested in these texts is neither accidental nor arbitrary. Other studies of social groups especially hard hit by the disruptions of late modernity have identified text-making practices which use contrasts in language tradition to mark tensions between local versus regional, ethnic versus national, and personal versus more corporate allegiances which shape the details of everyday experience within the late modern setting.[18] Most of those discussions use claims about *code-switching* to describe the dynamics of language pluralism attested in the text-making. Carol Myers-Scotton observes, however, that in some instances of code-switching, the individual movement from one language option to another "does not necessarily have a special indexicality; rather it is the *overall pattern* which carries the communicative intention" (1993: 117, my emphasis). Under this arrangement, Myers-Scotton continues, "code switching itself be-comes the unmarked choice" – that is, an expected, anticipated, an unremark-able component of text-related language pluralism.

   David Harvey's discussion of *flexible accumulation* (1989: 147 ff) helps us understand why, particularly in the moments of gendered text-making of interest to this chapter, an "overall pattern" of code-switching, not particular movements from one language to the next, would become the unmarked (lin-guistic) practice in such settings.[19] The tensions between nationalism, citizen-ship, and sexual subjectivity which are so evident in those speech settings, and addressed in such detail in the texts constructed there, are central to the late modern experience worldwide, and are closely associated with the workings of political economy which underlies those experiences, what Lash and Urray (1988) have described as a *disorganized capitalism*. Under an already unstable, unpredictable, and disorganized modernity, Harvey argues, investors, mana-gers, and workers so often become engaged in projects which bring together – generate an *accumulation* of – opportunities, resources, valued statuses, and symbols of "success" which would otherwise not be available or accessible to them. Importantly, the sources of opportunity, resources, status, and symbols are not limited to the immediate home terrain, but are widely cast across local and regional domains, and beyond, and the resulting accumulations are always

open to further modification, elaboration, and change. In other words, and adding more meaning to Harvey's initial phrasing, the accumulation of opportunities, resources, statuses, and symbols does not adhere to some predetermined inventory, but is always fluid and flexible.

Aiwa Ong's (1999) discussion of cultural logic underlying the Chinese resettlement throughout the Asian-Pacific rim shows how Harvey's claims about the economic dimensions of flexible accumulation extend into efforts to maintain cultural identity in the context of displacement and diaspora. Note the multiple sites of social action, and the strategic (re)construction of cultural and social ties in response to them, which Ong identifies in the following remarks:

> Chinese traders in transnational settings have been viewed mainly as skillful handlers of money, but rarely have they been seen as agents actively shaping their self-identity in a cross-cultural context. . . . What is often missing in accounts of diasporan experiences is an account of diasporan subjects as active manipulators of cultural symbols [. . .].

She continues:

> Hong Kong emigrants seek the kinds of symbolic capital that have international recognition and value, not only in the country of origin but also in the country of destination and especially in the transnational spaces where the itineraries of traveling businessmen [*sic*] and professionals intersect with those of local residents. As a result, . . . multiple geographies were and continued to be engaged by ethnic Chinese whose earlier diaspora are continually evolving into a network of family ties, kinship, commerce, sentiments, and values spread throughout regions of dispersal and settlement.   (Ong 1999: 12)

The relationships between language, cultural practices, and political economy which Ong identifies in these remarks – and specifically the *flexible accumulation* of linguistic and other symbolic resources, on which these relationships are based – are not limited to the transnational experiences of affluent, Asian/Pacific diasporic Chinese. Similar accumulations of expressive resources from diverse language and cultural traditions can be found throughout late modernity, including sites of gendered modernity of the sort examined in this chapter. Importantly, these accumulations of language traditions and linguistic practices through which speakers and their audiences engage in gendered identities and practices at these sites resemble the "flexibility with respect to labour processes, labour markets, products and patterns of consumption" (Harvey 1989: 147) which structures (and in some ways, may also restrict) accumulation within the economic domain.

To foreground these connections between text-making and political economy, and to underscore the parallels between linguistic practices and the *flexible accumulation* of other forms of valued resources in late modernity, I propose describing the "overall pattern" of language use in such settings as occurrences of *flexible language*. Doing so draws attention to how code-switching, language

pluralism, and other "familiar" linguistic practices actually claim new signi-ficance within contexts of late modern, gendered text-making and within the economic and social "moments" within which those texts are situated. Flexible language reminds us that, when staring in the face of a disorganized capitalism and confronted by the other unstable and unpredictable meanings of gender which now circulate widely throughout the late modern social order, having access to a diverse range of linguistic and other symbolic resources becomes valuable. In fact, having access to such a flexible linguistic/symbolic inventory becomes *all the more* valuable, if, as Ken Plummer has claimed (see discussion in section 2 above), text-making provides the primary means for making sense out of local uncertainties of gendered late modernity and for claiming one's own place within it.

If speakers find that *flexible language* provides an effective format for de-scribing gendered experiences in late modernity and for making sense out of its local disorganization, speakers are telling us that *gender itself* is fragmented, decentralized, constantly subjected to negotiation and change within contexts of late modernity, and that gendered identities are accessible to late modern subjects only in flexible, accumulative terms. This understanding of gender is consistent with recent efforts to theorize gender in performative rather than prediscursive terms. Particularly important here is the argument (Butler 1990: 15, 25) that gendered meanings do not exist prior to the social moment, but emerge from forms of social practice, some of which are heavily gendered, others of which are not necessarily gender-specific or even intended to be.

Text-making in flexible terms – that is, where the production and interpreta-tion of text is not confined to the structures and references from a single linguistic tradition, but draws on a broad accumulation of linguistic and other symbolic resources – seems especially suited to the demands of these performative tasks. As discussion in this chapter has shown, flexible lan-guage provides speakers with linguistic options which address the concerns of the gendered moment, but which can easily be adjusted or reconstituted once the concerns or the text-making task begin to change.

But while text-making in flexible terms is directly linked to broader condi-tions of late modern experience, flexible language is also a product of that experience, and has to be studied accordingly. For example, since economic accumulations unfold unevenly across boundaries of race, sexuality, class, and nationality, the same should be true for linguistic accumulations and for the gendered identities constructed in terms of those accumulations. In the examples reviewed here, efforts to give voice to gender have benefited from literacy, mobility, and other privileged forms of textual practice. In instances where speakers do not have access to such privileged practices, accumulations of linguistic resources and meanings of gender which follow from them will be constructed quite differently. In that sense, it would be worthwhile to move beyond the textual similarities attested in these examples, and to examine the economic and social implications expressed through the *different* styles of language choices and code-mixing which each example displays.

NOTES

1 My thanks to Denis Provencher, Miriam Meyerhoff, and Janet Holmes for the helpful critiques they gave to each of the earlier versions of this text. And my thanks to Wolfram Hartmann, Kieran Kennedy, and Martin Manalansan for supporting the development of the South African, Gaelic, and Filipino examples, respectively.

2 I am not suggesting here that the text-based negotiations/contestations of gender take place only within the domains of text-making, and thereby, independently of material conditions lying outside of the text. As Rosemary Hennessy (2000: 19) explains, the material requirements that allow human life to continue depend on social relations that encompass *more* than language, consciousness, identity, discourse – although they do depend on them too. It is this "more" that constitutes the material "outside" of language – the human relations through which needs are met – but which is only made meaningful through language.

3 My thanks to Wolfram Hartmann, Columbia University and University of Namibia, for his assistance with the preparation of this English translation.

4 The spelling of *humor*, and the presence of such references as *hunk* and "*looks*", suggest that the author is drawing specifically on a US-based English usage in this regard.

5 Miriam Meyerhoff reminds me that *queens* could function as an Afrikaans term (e.g. borrowed from English) in this usage, and not be the result of a mid-phrase code-switching. If so, *geen . . . queens* makes even clearer the writer's lack

of interest in effeminate men, while *English guys welcome* shows that, Afrikaans usage notwithstanding, he is still willing to receive replies from non-effeminate English speakers.

6 When I have discussed the "readability" issue with English-speaking South African gay-identified men, they have consistently reported that they skip over personal ads written in Afrikaans, assuming from the writer's linguistic usage that he only wants replies from other Afrikaner men.

7 Each issue of *The Exit* contains two or three personal advertisements written entirely in Afrikaans and oriented exclusively in terms of Afrikaner interests. Other associations notwithstanding, the wording of these texts always makes clear that the writers are from rural areas of Southern Africa and are hoping to meet same-sex-identified Afrikaner men from similar locales. Occasionally, the personal advertisements will also include statements written in Zulu, though usually these texts also include enough vocabulary from English and other Western language sources to make the text accessible to a wider audience. In other words, Zulu-language personal ads are in no sense written exclusively for a Zulu readership.

8 Unfortunately, copyright restrictions make it impossible to reprint the entire poem, but the text is available in Ó Searcaigh (1993).

9 By linking homosexuality to modernity here, I am not proposing that same-sex desires and practices were absent from Irish tradition. However, just as modernity

reshaped other segments of social experience, modernity prompted the formation of same-sex-based subjectivities not possible at earlier points in time. And, following arguments outlined in D'Emilio (1983), Sedgwick (1990), and Katz (1995), modernist forms of same-sex desires had profound effects on other segments of modern social experience, and the resulting articulation of a homosexual/ heterosexual binary greatly influenced popular *understandings* of modernity itself.

10   The language associated with *bakla* experience is called *swardspeak* (Manalansan 1995); see discussion in the following section of this chapter.

11   My analysis of this passage builds on Manalansan's several studies of *bakla* (1994, 1995, 1998), and has benefited from his many helpful suggestions. I reformatted the passage and added line numbering to facilitate discussion of the textual detail.

12   *Bading* is one of many terms for *bakla* identity commonly used in Tagalog and in swardspeak conversations.

13   Note the reduplicated first syllable – *mu* – of the base in both words. Marking the plural of animate nouns by duplicating the first syllable of the base is a widely attested Tagalog morphemic process. The two versions of this word, each with its own phonetic and morphemic forms, may suggest borrowings from Spanish at two different points in time or under two different sets of linguistic and social circumstances. Compare, for example, Trager's (1939) explanation for the different forms of Spanish loan-words found in the language of Taos pueblo, New Mexico.

14   Manalansan notes (personal communication) that *lukresiya* may be a combination of Spanish *loca* and English *crazy*. (The deletion of the final vowel in the first word segment is widely attested in Tagalog word compounding.) Perhaps more consistent with the foregrounding of assertive feminine presence in this passage, Manalansan also suggests that *lukresiya* may be a Tagalog/ swardspeak rendering of the first name of the notorious Italian noblewoman, Lucrezia Borga. The contrasts in reference resemble the several intertextual meanings surrounding the name *Sean Bhrid* in example (2). Miriam Meyerhoff (personal communication) reminds me that, in all such instances, the multiple readings intensify the stylistic force of the term's textual reference.

15   Manalansan (1995) speculates that the phrase derives from the English language-based children's game, *Mother, May I*. Miriam Meyerhoff (personal communication) suggests that this usage may be an English-based reflection of the Tagalog, sentence-level modality marking. It is likely that both explanations apply with equal force here.

16   *Pamilya*, while a Spanish loan-word, is part of Tagalog vocabulary.

17   I have in mind here both the writer's use of *GWM*, *ALA*, and other linguistic codings, as well as his framing of male same-sex(uality) with a North Atlantic derived identity category, *gay*, rather than in terms of *moffie* or some other Afrikaans-based marker of sex/ gender subjectivity.

18   For example, Susan Gal (1987) connects the dynamics of language loyalty and language shift on the part of certain linguistic minority

groups within the European periphery to the speakers' associations between language choices available to them, and the relative status imposed on them by the surrounding society. Jane Hill (1995) shows how Don Gabriel shifts between Mexicano and Spanish when telling the story of his son's death, so that he can mark the differences in "community-centered" versus "personal profit-oriented" orientations and underscore other contrastive ideological stances as the narrative unfolds. Kathryn Woolard (1989) explains the shifting between Catalan and Castilian Spanish in everyday Catalunyan conversations as a symbolic marker of the Catalan speaker's unique location – historically, politically, culturally, and linguistically – within the Spanish nation-state. And Suzanne Romaine (1994) argues that the introduction of English expressions into Tok Pisin (the "English based pidgin/creole" widely spoken throughout Papua New Guinea) is leading to the rapid depidginization of Tok Pisin and, ultimately, the demise of this linguistic tradition, at least within PNG's urban areas. The reluctance of some Tok Pisin speakers to switch between Tok Pisin and English in vernacular conversations, and even to acquire English, is understandable under these circumstances, just as the emerging stratification of Tok Pisin speakers along the lines of English, rather than Tok Pisin fluencies, is now unavoidable.

19 Myers-Scotton's explanation for the occurrence of unmarked code-switching (1993: 119ff) focuses almost entirely on characteristics of the speakers' linguistic background and their face-to-face interaction. Larger issues of political economy are not attested in her analysis. My use of flexible accumulation in the following paragraphs is not intended to dispute Myers-Scotton's analysis, but only to situate that analysis within a broader frame of reference.

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