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<https://doi.org/10.22210/suvlin.2018.086.03>*Rusty Barrett**University of Kentucky**erbarrett@uky.edu*

Speech play, gender play, and the verbal artistry of queer argots

This paper presents a comparative study of *argots* (or secret varieties) used in communities marked by non-normative gender or sexuality. A comparison of nine argots based in different languages suggests that the development of each of these argots involves large amounts of speech play. A variety of patterns of speech play are analyzed, including cross-language play, play languages, morphological restructuring and innovation, and lexical substitutions within the local language. The importance of speech play in these communities is illustrated with the genre of mock translations in which familiar texts (such as Shakespeare or the Bible) are reproduced using argot. The results suggest that speech play and verbal artistry are important and understudied elements of queer cultures.

1. Introduction

This paper compares a number of distinct “secret” language varieties used in gender/sexual non-normative communities to examine which (if any) features might be shared across them. While there have been a number of studies of specific “queer argots” (the relevant literature is discussed below) there has not been a comparative cross-linguistic study of queer ways of speaking. A comparison of nine different argots suggests that the prevalence of speech play is a unifying feature across all argots. The paper outlines the various forms of speech play commonly found in queer argots, suggesting that shared linguistic humor is a common feature in the development of these varieties. The importance of these distinct varieties within queer culture is demonstrated with examples of these argots being used in mock translations of highly recognizable texts. The results suggest that queer forms of speech play and verbal art present an important and understudied aspect of LG-BTQ+ cultures.

The varieties considered here (listed in Table 1) are not all necessarily intended as “secret” ways of speaking, but they are often described as such by speakers. They are all embedded within a more broadly-used language, which I shall call the

‘matrix language’ (following Myers–Scotton 1993). Queer argots typically involve different degrees of lexical replacement in which queer neologisms replace words in the matrix language. Although these varieties almost always draw most of their grammar and lexicon from the matrix language, they often include fairly large amounts of borrowing from other languages. Often, this involves a sort of ‘core’ vocabulary drawn from some other minority group. Lubunca and Kaliardà (queer varieties of Turkish and Greek, respectively) both draw heavily on Romani, while Polari borrows heavily from Italian (by way of Lingua Franca), and Pajubá (spoken by *travestis* in Brazil) builds on a core vocabulary borrowed from Yoruba.

Name of variety	Matrix language (location)	References
bahasa gay	Indonesian (Indonesia)	Boellstorff 2004a, 2004b, 2005
Gayle	English (South Africa)	Cage 2003
isiNgqumo	Zulu (South Africa)	Msibi 2013; Ntuli 2009; Rudwick 2010, 2011; Rudwick and Msibi 2016; Rudwick and Ntuli 2008
Kaliardà	Greek (Greece)	Montoliu 2005
<i>khabal'stvo</i>	Russian (Russia, Ukraine)	Nemtsev 2007; Ukolova 2009
Lubunca	Turkish (Turkey)	Biondo 2017; Kontovas 2012; Kyuchukov and Bakker 1999
<i>oxtchit</i>	Hebrew (Israel)	Levon 2010a, 2010b
Pajubá (Bajubá)	Portuguese (Brazil)	da Cruz and de Paola Tito 2016
Polari	English (Great Britain)	Baker 2002a, 2002b
Swardspeak	Tagalog, Cebuano (Philippines)	Casabal 2008; Manalansan 2003; Pascual 2016

Table 1. *Queer argots considered in this paper*

Although I include additional examples from gay male slang in American English and Mexican Spanish, the primary focus here is on queer varieties that have local names (so that they are clearly recognized as distinct language varieties). In this analysis, some varieties receive more attention than others both because of wide-ranging variation in structure and use and because of the lack of detailed documentation and description for some varieties. Although having a name might suggest that these varieties are highly enregistered (Agha 2003), they differ widely in terms of difference from the matrix language. Polari is clearly the most divergent variety and includes differences in syntax and morphology in addition to lexical replace-

ment (see Baker 2002a, 2002b). Indeed, the Summer Institute of Linguistics' *Ethnologue* treats Polari as a distinct language, separate from English (Simons 2017). In contrast, Levon (2010: 133) finds only 28 *oxtchit* words that differ from everyday Hebrew and Nemtsev (2007: 24–25) argues that *khabal'stvo* involves only gendered ways of using stereotypically feminine forms of standard Russian and contains no unique vocabulary of its own. Thus, these varieties range from those which might be seen as nothing more than exploiting the gendered indexical meanings found in any language to those that might even be considered distinct languages.

Given the diversity across these varieties, it may be that their common exploitation of speech play (particularly in the service of gender play) may be their only unifying characteristic. After discussing my choices of *queer* and *argot* to label these varieties, I will survey features of speech play and gender play within these varieties and, finally, discuss how these forms of speech and gender play emerge in queer forms of verbal art.

1.1. Why “queer”?

Although most of these varieties are used by gay men, others are also used by trans women. Others are associated with gender identity categories that don't easily align with hegemonic Western assumptions about gender and sexuality (cf. Davis 2014). While the varieties considered here are all primarily associated with individuals who were assigned male gender at birth, there are certainly similar forms of speech play used by women and trans men (e.g. Livia 2000; Queen 1997; Blackwood 2014; Zimman 2014). Because there is no direct correspondence across the different sexual and gender categories associated with these argots, I have chosen to use *queer* as a general term for cultural practices/categories in opposition to gender and/or sexual normativity (see Barrett 2001).

The variation across these queer communities can be illustrated by comparing three groups: skesanas (speakers of isiNqummo), travestis (speakers of Pajubá), and bakla' (speakers of SwardSpeak). These three categories do not align with the more hegemonic categories of “gay men” and “trans women.” Each of these three groups refers to individuals who were assigned male gender at birth and adopt feminine forms of gender expression. However, the three groups also differ in important ways. Skesana identity emerged in mining camps in the KwaZulu–Natal region of South Africa (Rudwick 2011; Rudwick and Msibi 2016) and follows a penetrative system of sexual categorizations in which the active partner in gay sex is considered heterosexual (see Barrett 2003; Cameron and Kulick 2003). In terms of sexual practice, skesanas (claim to) always take the passive role in sex with men and their partners are generally seen as heterosexual men in the outside community (Ntuli 2009: 181). Sex between two skesanas is stigmatized as unnatural and abnormal. Brazilian travestis are similar to skesanas in that they adopt feminine appearance and mannerisms. Also like skesanas, the partners of travestis are generally seen as heterosexual and sex between two travestis is stigmatized. However, unlike ske-

sanas, travestis are quite open about being both the active and passive partner and men regularly pay travestis to penetrate them (Kulick 1998: 107). Finally, bakla' identity is similar to travesti and skesanas in terms of having feminine gender expression, but bakla' sexual practice is independent from gender identity so that bakla' may have partners who identify as straight, as gay, or as bakla' themselves. Like travestis, bakla' may be active or passive partners (Manalansan 2003). The key distinctions between these three groups are outlined in Table 2 below:

Group	Partner identity	Sex with others in group stigmatized?	Role in sex
skesana	heterosexual	yes	always passive partner
travesti	heterosexual	yes	active or passive partner
bakla'	varies	no	active or passive partner

Table 2. *Key differences between skesana, travesti, and bakla' identities*

Because of such differences across categories, it would be wrong to equate any of these identities with that of gay men (or trans women). The identities associated with the various argots considered here are culturally specific and do not necessarily align with one another.

In addition to these categories being distinct from one another, there is no one-to-one relationship between knowledge of a queer argot and actual membership in an imagined queer community (see Barrett 1997). Thus, Boelstorff (2004a, 2004b) notes that there are people who do not identify as gay but understand and use *bahasa gay*. Similarly, Casabal (2008: 70) suggests that knowledge of *Sward-speak* has spread beyond queer communities in the Philippines. Msibi notes that in addition to skesanas, *isiNngqumo* is known and used by women and men who identify as gay (2013: 266). Similarly, varieties like *oxtchit* and *khabal'stvo* may be used primarily by mainstream gay men to mock effeminate men (Levin 2010a, 2010b; Ukolova 2009). Thus, the indeterminacy of *queer* is determined to capture both a range of sexual categorizations across cultures as well as the “fuzzy” boundaries between sexual categories within any given culture.

1.2. Why “argot”?

For at least fifty years, linguists and anthropologists have debated the exact social functions of queer slang varieties. In the 1960s, the debate largely centered around whether or not gay and lesbian varieties emerged in response to the oppression and marginalization of queers or as a result of the emergence of shared culture and a sense of community. For example, Sonenschein (1969) argued that gay/

lesbian slang was not intended to provide protection through secrecy, but rather was the result of shared cultural norms within lesbian and gay communities. Sonenschein compared what he called “sex terms” (those referring to sexual practices) and “role terms” (those referring to particular types of individuals within gay and lesbian culture). He found that there were significantly more role terms compared to sex terms and that sex terms were more likely to overlap with slang forms used by heterosexual contemporaries. Thus, Sonenschein argued that the “homosexual’s language” was not simply a way to keep sexual activity a secret. In addition to secrecy involving sexual acts, early research focused on the concealment and control of sexual identities, such as asking a man if he is “a friend of Dorothy” to determine whether or not he is gay (e.g. Hayes 1981; Painter 1981).

The degree to which queer varieties could be considered “secret” depends on a number of factors, including degree of difference from the matrix language. A variety with higher amounts of lexical replacement (like Polari) is more suited for secrecy than a variety with little or no unique vocabulary (like *khabal’stvo* or *oxtchit*). Boelstorff (2004a, 2005) notes that bahasa gay is not semantically opaque so that outsiders could easily recognize what is being said. In arguing against “secrecy” as the primary function of bahasa gay, Boelstorff uses the term “language of belonging” to emphasize the fact that bahasa gay serves as a way to build community more than as a means of ensuring secrecy. However, as Levon (2010a, 2010b) demonstrates, *oxtchit* is used not so much to promote belonging to community, but more to mock effeminate men as a way of policing community boundaries. In this sense, *oxtchit* and *khabal’stvo* could be considered “languages of exclusion” more than they are “languages of belonging.”

The binary opposition between “maintaining secrecy” and “forming community” clearly misses the complex and varied social functions of secrecy (see Debenport 2015, in press). This opposition reduces the range of social functions queer varieties might play to only two, both primarily defined in opposition to heteronormative culture. In addition, such a binary opposition fails to recognize that communities are themselves constituted through secrecy and shared knowledge (Debenport 2015), so that argots serve both functions simultaneously. As Chauncey notes in his discussion of argot in early 20th-century New York:

Men’s use of gay argot fostered their sense of collective identity. The very fact that men could understand a common code emphasized their membership in a group to whose codes they alone were ‘wise,’ and became a sign by which they distinguished themselves from outsiders. Indeed, it made *them* the insiders in a world that normally cast them as outsider, and many men treasured the sense it gave them of participating in a secret society. (Chauncey 1994: 287)

Because secrecy is not relevant in the case of *oxtchit*, Levin (2010a) suggests using Halliday’s term, *anti-language* rather than calling the variety an *argot*. Agha

(2015) sees *argots* as a special class of *slang*. Because slang varieties and argots are never a language of its own (but rather, always a subset of matrix language), Agha argues that the term *anti-language* suggests that *argots* are more full-fledged “languages” than they actually are. Agha also notes that Halliday’s idea of a language associated with an ‘anti-society’ or ‘anti-reality’ wrongly suggests that switching between registers involves movement from one society (or reality) to another (2017: 312).

Here, I have chosen to retain the traditional *argot* label for several reasons. Like argots, these varieties all involve a subset of lexical substitutions and manipulations of the matrix language (rather than being distinct and independent languages). Also, although secrecy is certainly not the only (or even primary) function of these varieties, speakers often describe them as functioning as a sort of “secret code” that can be used to delineate community boundaries. The term also highlights the centrality of concealment and disclosure (i.e. the closet) within queer history. My choice of the term *argot* should not be seen as promoting any single social function of these varieties. While these queer argots certainly have indexical potential for conveying queer identities, they may also do much more. They may mark femininity as a personal trait, they may mock stereotypes of male femininity, they may mark an ally’s affiliation with queer communities, they may be used to exclude outsiders from queer communities, and they may serve to exclude other queers.

1.3. Queer argot as verbal art

Although studies of queer argots have highlighted quite distinct social functions of these varieties, one seeming constant is that queer argots are consistently associated with displays of humor. As Montoliu notes for Kaliardà (the Greek argot):

Speech play and conscious linguistic engineering are at the very base of Kaliardà: new words are created all the time, replacing old ones or modifying their original meaning. Many of these new words are metaphorical synonyms that involve a funny definition of the word or are based on a comic analogy. (Montoliu 2005: 308–309)

While queer argots seem to be consistently used to display verbal agility and wit, the humor associated with queer argots is typically linked with additional social functions. Thus, by emphasizing the role of speech play in the formation of queer argots, I do not mean to dismiss any of the other functions these varieties may serve. The various and competing functions described for queer argots are strikingly similar to the various uses of play languages (like Verlan, or Pig Latin) described by Joel Sherzer:

Play languages are used to mark ethnic and social identity, to keep secrets, and to express opposition to the hegemonic rule of upper-middle-class and education-oriented standard languages and

dialects. They highlight speakers on display, showing off verbal virtuosity in an interactional, performance, and competitive mode. And, like all (...) forms of speech play (...), they can be used as pure play, simply for the fun of it. (Sherzer 2002: 29)

Speech play may be an important component in the formation of new varieties (see Gilmore 2015) and in the elaboration of existing languages (see Peterson and Webster 2013). Thus, the presence of speech play in queer argots is not in any way unique to queer. However, in comparing argots across cultural contexts, a number of similarities emerge. In particular, forms of speech play are typically coupled with forms of gender play. By *gender play*, I mean uses of language that challenge the hegemonic boundary between masculinity and femininity. Challenges to gender normativity are found throughout the lexicons of queer argots and across studies of queer discourse. This need not mean that challenging gender norms is a basic part of queer identity. Indeed, queer argots like *khabal'stvo* or *oxtchit* are described as being used by gender normative men to mock effeminate gay men (although even here they index gender non-normativity). Thus, it is common for speech play to coincide with gender play. For example, puns are a common type of neologism in queer slang, such as *heteroflexible* (American gay slang for “a man who identifies as straight but has sex with men”). Examples from Mexican Spanish gay slang include *machomenos* (a pun on *mas o menos* “more or less” to describe a man whose masculinity is questioned) and *musculoca* (“muscle queen,” a pun on *musculoso* “muscular” and *loca* “queen”) (Bernal 2007). These puns not only play with the ambiguity of phonological similarity, but also play with the ambiguity of outward displays of heterosexual masculinity (that might be secretly queer).

Verbal skill is often highly valued in queer cultures (e.g. Barrett 2017; Hall 1997; Harvey 2000, 2002; Murray 1978). The importance of language play in queer culture can be seen in the long tradition of producing dictionaries of gay and lesbian slang (e.g. Baker 2002a; Fessler and Rauch 1997; Legman 1941; Max 1988; Paterkin 2003; Reuter 2006; Rodgers 1972; Summerbell 1985). While many uses of queer argot involve redirection of stereotypes concerning gendered, they also demonstrate that play with gender is largely achieved through play with language. By focusing on speech play, I hope to highlight the way in which these argots reflect queers taking great pleasure in humorous interactions with other queers. After first discussing linguistic forms of gender play in queer cultures, I will discuss play involving multilingualism, the use of play languages (like Pig Latin), speech play involving morphological productivity, and lexical substitutions based on play with phonology and semantics. The paper concludes by discussing the genre of mock translations as a form of queer verbal art which build upon the forms of speech play associated with queer argots.

2. Speech play and gender play

Forms of gender inversion are common across queer cultures (see, for example, Johnsen 2008 on gender inversion in gay male speech in Norwegian, French and English). This is not to imply that all queers are gender non–normative. Indeed, gendered language may be used to mock and marginalize effeminate gay men (as with *khabal'stvo* and *oxtchit* discussed above). However, forms of indexical disjuncture (Barrett 2017) that highlight the rift between sex and gender repeatedly surface in queer discourse. In terms of queer argots, varieties like *khabal'stvo* and *oxtchit* seem to involve little more than gender non–normative language use (Levin 2010a, 2010b, Ukolova 2009). Linguistic challenges to gender normativity occur throughout these argots. Indeed, most of the forms of speech play discussed below also involve gender play to some degree.

Speech play involving gender is also common in queer contexts where argots have not emerged. For example, in languages with grammatical gender, queer speakers often manipulate morphological markers of gender for various stylistic and interactional effects. For example, queer speakers of Hausa (Gaudio 2014), Hebrew (Bersthling 2014; Levin 2010b), Hindi (Hall 2002), and Portuguese (Borba and Ostermann 2007, 2008) all manipulate morphological markers of gender in various ways. As with argots (like *oxtchit*), manipulations of grammatical gender may be used to marginalize out–group individuals (see Hall 2002). These manipulations of gender morphology are simply one component in broader forms of speech play. For example, Gaudio (2014) describes the ways in which 'yan *daudu* speakers of Hausa in Nigeria simultaneously manipulate gender morphology and forms of syntactic voice in speech play evoking stereotypes of gendered forms of agency. In addition to being combined with forms of grammar beyond gender, gender play with language also combines gender non–normative language with forms of normative gendered language to create innovative ways of speaking that are not easily categorized according to normative gender ideologies. These types of indexical disjuncture distinguish queer ways of speaking from heteronormative gender registers. Thus, for example, isiNgqumo incorporates large amounts of isihlonipho, a respect register used by (particularly rural) women (Rudwick and Msibi 2016). While isiNgqumo borrows heavily from isihlonipho in order to index femininity, the maintenance of distinction between isiNgqumo and isihlonipho is critical to maintaining the distinction between skesanas and women.

Given the central role of language in producing challenges to gender normativity, speech play and gender play are often indistinguishable in queer discourse. The examples of speech play that follow are often also be examples of gender play. These include non–normative use of gendered morphology (such as the use of French *-ette*) in Polari, the appropriation of registers that index femininity (as in *khabal'stvo*), and the use of feminine names (both to refer to other men and as forms of lexical substitution). Of course, there are also forms of speech play in

queer argots that are independent of gender, including forms associated with masculinist cultures (such as borrowings from Cockney rhyming slang or sailors' slang in Polari). The following sections outline specific patterns of speech play that recur across various queer argots.

2.1. Cross-language play

Speech play often includes borrowing forms from other languages. Speakers often play with other languages spoken around them, such as with forms of Mock Spanish used in the United States (see Hill 1993, 1998) or the *shm-* reduplication borrowed from Yiddish into American English (e.g. *happy shmappy*). Forms of speech play are thus often sites where the effects of language contact can be observed (Heath 1984: 380). Among queer argots with a fair amount of lexical replacement, the range of languages donating words to queer varieties is quite broad. For example, the Kaliardà (Greek) lexicon contains borrowings from Italian, Romani, Turkish, English, French, Spanish, and Albanian (Montoliu 2005: 305). Lubunca (Turkish) contains borrowings from Romani, Arabic, Armenian, Bulgarian, English, French, Greek, Italian, Kurmanji, Ladino, and Russian (Biondo 2017; Kontovas 2012). Tagalog-based Swardspeak borrows from English, Spanish, Japanese, Bikol, and Hilagaynon (Pascual 2016: 35), and Zulu-based isiNgqumo (which emerged in a comparatively isolated social context) contains borrowings from Xhosa and English (Msibi 2013). Although Levin finds that *oxtchit* contains only 28 words, those words include forms borrowed from Arabic, English, French, Spanish, Italian, and German (2010b: 134). Although speakers may be unaware of the historical origins of borrowed forms, the wide range of borrowings across multiple varieties suggests that speech play across language boundaries is a central component in the development of queer argots.

For some queer argots, the effects of language contact reflect the history of ethnic groups sharing the social marginalization experienced by queers. For example, Polari, Kaliardà, and Lubunca all contain borrowings from Romani while Pajubá is founded on a core vocabulary from Yoruba (da Cruz and Tito 2016). Polari also contains borrowings from Yiddish while Lubunca includes borrowings from Ladino. In these cases, language contact suggests overlap between different marginalized experiences in which queers interact with ethnic minorities who are also shut out of the dominant culture. The importance of sailors in queer history (and sexual practices) can be seen in the many borrowings from Lingua Franca in Polari and related Italian borrowings in Kaliardà and Lubunca. Given the current global dominance of English, it is not surprising to find English borrowings not only in queer argots but in local forms of gay slang such as Polish (Dyszak 2016) or Spanish (Bernal 2007).

The place of foreign languages in queer culture is wide-ranging, from the stereotype of the highly fluent gay male French teacher to the camp humor of translating “dirty” phrases in humorous foreign language phrasebooks marketed to gay men (Barrett 2003). The use of foreign languages is a common aspect of camp

humor. For example, Harvey (2000: 243) lists the use of French as a basic form of camp linguistic style. Speakers of Polari often code-switched between Polari and French both to further obscure their speech and to exploit the camp associations of French as an index of aristocracy (Baker 2002: 57). While the use of French by British queers may have sometimes been serious, it seems to have more commonly be exploited as a mock variety. The use of *that's your actual French* by Julian and Sandy (Baker 2002b: 56) emphasizes the satirical nature of their frequent switches into French. Such camp play with language has a long tradition. For example, one of the earliest gay travel guides, Nerf, Asti and Dilldock's 1949 *The gay girl's guide*, includes camp references to Russian:

Since war with Russia remains a potentiality for many years, the following are included for use if you become a P.O.W. and have an appropriate lieutenant or sergeant of the camp guards to practice on...
 I'd like to suck your cock
 Yah ho-TYEL-boooy poso-SART varsh KOO-ey
 I sure like your cock and balls but you need a bath
 Mnnyeh O-chen NRAV-yar-tsar varshee MOO-doo no vahm
 NOOGE-no BARN-yar.
 (Nerf et al 1949: 18, reprinted in Hagius 2010)

Within queer argots, we see similar play across languages in the formation of words with elements taken from more than one language. For example, the isiNingqu-mo verb for “to break up/leave” *uyaangitek'sela* incorporates the English word *taxi* (*tekxi-*) (Ntuli 2009: 76). The Polari word for television (*vardavision*) is similar, combining the Italian root *varda-* (to see) with the morpheme *-vision* (Baker 2002a). Similarly, Peña (2004: 244) discusses the term *pájaration*, “gayness” combining the Cuban slang term for gay men, *pájaro*, with the English nominalizing suffix *-ation*. Humorous combinations of language may be purely indexical rather than actually involving borrowing. For example, a recent article on drag balls in Portland, Oregon refers to a drag category of *art heaux*, playing off of French spelling conventions to create mock sophistication in the mock French spelling of English “hos” (whores) (Prado 2017).

Of the queer argots considered here, Kaliardà makes the most widespread use of neologisms formed by combining morphemes from different languages. Montoliu (2005) notes that Kaliardà regularly replaces some Greek prefixes with forms from other languages. For example, the Greek prefix *palio-* “old” may be replaced by either *phuro-* (from Romani) or *veko-* (from Italian *vecchio*). Similarly, the Greek intensifier *theo-* (etymologically from *Theós* “God”) is replaced with the prefix *godo-* (from English *God*). Another common pattern in Kaliardà is to build compounds with roots from two different languages. For example, the Kaliardà name for Paris, *Mutzótopos* (“vagina place”), combines the Romani word for vagina (*mutzó*) with the Greek form *tópos* “place.” Additional Kaliardà examples of cross-language morphology are given in Table 3:

Kaliardà form	First element	Second element	Gloss
balo–múskulos	<i>balo</i> “fat” < Romani “pig”	<i>múskulos</i> Italian “muscled”	muscled
laisotémba	<i>lachó</i> Romani “good”	<i>tempo</i> Italian “weather”	summer
but–gratsiozo	<i>but</i> Romani “very”	<i>grazioso</i> Italian “graceful” (pun on <i>grazie</i> – “thank you”)	thank you
tzinavótopos	tzinavo Kaliardà “to be gay”	tópos Greek “place”	London
mutzótopos	mutzó Romani “vagina”	tópos Greek “place”	Paris

Table 3. Cross-language morphology in Kaliardà (after Montoliu 2005)

These forms of cross-language morphology reflect a more general pattern of queer speech play involving the formation of humorous morphological blends (e.g. Polari *fantabulosa* fantastic + fabulous + a). They also highlight the role of foreign languages and code-switching as sources for speech play within queer cultures. This queer play with foreign languages can also be seen in camp uses of French by English speakers, the proliferation of phrase-books as a source of gay male humor (Barrett 2003), and the widespread borrowings found across queer argots. In addition to speech play involving language contact, queer argots often involve the use of play languages similar to Pig Latin (Sherzer 2002: 26–29).

2.2. Play languages

Play languages manipulate linguistic forms through a basic set of simple rules to alter the phonological form of words. These rules may rearrange sounds in a word (as in Pig Latin) or iteratively infix syllables into words, as in Ubbi Dubbi (Yu 2008). Polari, SwardSpeak, and bahasa gay all include forms that clearly originated in play languages. For example, SwardSpeak contains a set of words that follow the same basic pattern found in the French play language Verlan in which words are pronounced backwards (or backslang). SwardSpeak contains examples of both Verlan-style syllable reversal (a, b, and c in Table 4) and backslang (d in Table 4). Both forms may also occur with an additional final [s] (as in c and d in Table 4).

Tagalog	SwardSpeak	Gloss
a. sibat	batsi	to leave
b. matanda	damatan	old
c. itits	titi	cock (penis)
d. alaws	wala	nothing

Table 4. SwardSpeak syllable reversal (Pascual 2016: 35)

Backslang is also a basic way of forming words in Polari (Baker 2002: 31), although Polari backslang is based on spelling (rather than pronunciation). Examples include *ecaf* [ijkæf] (later shortened to *eke* ([ijk]) for “face”, *riah* [rijə] for “hair”, and *esong* [esɑŋ] for “nose.” The use of backslang is not unique to Polari, so that some of these forms overlap with other British slang varieties.

Another example of a queer play language can be seen in *bahasa gay* (Boellstorff 2005: 190) in which the first syllable (and the onset of following syllable) are maintained with remainder of word being replaced with a suffix, either *-es* or *-ong*. Examples of *-ong/-es* replacement are given in Table 5 below:

Indonesian base form	Gloss	New <i>bahasa gay</i> term
banci	waria	béncong / bences
berapa	how much?	brépong
dandan	put on makeup	déndong / dendes
lelaki	man	lékong / lekes
sakit	sick (‘attracted to the same sex’ in <i>bahasa gay</i>)	sékong / sékes / sekes

Table 5. *-ong and -es* suffixation in *bahasa gay* (Boellstorff 2005)

Following the pattern of Javanese speech levels, it is typical for there to be only one *bahasa gay* form in any given utterance (Boellstorff 2004a, 2005). However, it is possible to use the suffixal substitution pattern iteratively as in the example in Table 6 below:

		literal translation
Standard Indonesian	Lelaki cakep, [kamu] mau ngésong [fellate]	boy cute [you] want fellate
<i>bahasa gay</i>	Lékes cékes, méses ngéses?	

Table 6. *Substitution in bahasa gay* (Boellstorff 2005)

Play languages serve a wide range of functions that are similar to the range of functions associated with argots more generally. These play languages are primarily manipulation of the phonological form of words. Of course, speech play may also involve the manipulation of morphology. The following section considers the elaboration and development of playful morphological paradigms in queer argots.

2.3. Morphological play and paradigm elaboration

Agha (2015: 324) notes that the emergence of slang forms often involves analogous uses of morphology in which affixes are used in contexts that do not occur within a standard variety (such as *fund-age* in American English slang). We see this

exact pattern in the extension of *-ette* as a productive suffix in Polari. In terms of indexical potential for camp meanings, the suffix *-ette* hits the trifecta; it may be used as a diminutive (*kitchenette, cigarette*), it indexes femininity (*majorette, Paulette*), and it is borrowed from French (*serviette, coquette*). Given these associations, one would almost expect that expanded use of *-ette* would become a basic feature of Polari. Examples from Polari include *masterpiecette, glassette, telegramette, restaurantette, futurette, and tourette* (Baker 2002b: 60).

Other than the cross-language compounds in Kaliardà mentioned earlier, patterns of compounding in queer argots are not particularly distinct from those found in other languages. However, compounds in Polari and in American gay slang are typically humorous and playful, suggesting their likely origin as forms of speech play. The examples in Table 7 below show compounds building on the Polari root *ogle* meaning “eye”:

- | |
|---|
| ogle = eye |
| ogle fakes – glasses (<i>fake</i> = “false”) |
| ogle riah – eyelashes (<i>riah</i> = backslang for “hair”) |
| ogle fake riah – false eyelashes |
| ogle filters – sunglasses |
| ogle riders – eyebrows |

Table 7. *Compounds building on ogle “eye” in Polari (Baker 2002b: 60)*

Here, the addition of multiple Polari terms (as in *ogle fake riah*) produces humor by over-extending existing Polari patterns. Perhaps the most productive queer compounding pattern is the use of *X queen* found in the majority of gay male English varieties (including Polari, Gayle, and U.S. gay slang). These *queen* compounds were used to refer to various “types” of gay men based either on their personal traits or their sexual desires. Examples of *queen* compounds from American English gay slang are given in Table 8 below:

X queen	Meaning	X queen	Meaning
closet queen	gay man who isn’t out	seafood queen	cruises for sailors
éclair queen	rich homosexual	size queen	wants large penis
highway queen	gay truck driver	store queen	addicted to shopping
leather queen	leatherman	toilet queen	cruises public rest-rooms
railroad queen	cruises for hobos	Xerox queen	all his partners look alike

Table 8. *Compounds based on “queen” (from Rodgers 1972)*

Compounding patterns may also build on rhyming patterns as in British and American gay slang terms building on rhymes with the word *fag* and based on the compound *fag hag* “a straight female extremely fond of the company of gay men” (Reuter 2006: 69):

<i>fag bag</i>	“A straight woman married to a gay man” (Reuter 2006: 68)
<i>fag drag</i>	“A drag king who sometimes performs a gay male identity” (Baker 2002a: 118)
<i>fag mag</i>	“A magazine . . . geared towards gay men or lesbians” (Baker 2002a: 118)
<i>fag mag-net</i>	“An event..that draws the rapt attention of gay men” (Reuter 2006: 68)
<i>fag stag</i>	“heterosexual man who..socialize[s] with...gay men” (Baker 2002a: 118)
<i>drag hag</i>	“someone who likes the company of drag queens” (Baker 2002a: 112)
<i>hag fag</i>	“A gay man who likes to hang out with lots of women” (Baker 2002a: 140)
<i>tag hag</i>	“someone who likes to wear expensive designer clothing” (Baker 2002a: 200)
<i>spag fag</i>	“a gay man who is sexually attracted to Italian men” (Baker 2002a: 196)
<i>spag hag</i>	“anyone who finds Italian men sexy” (Baker 2002a: 196)
<i>stag hag</i>	“a person who enjoys the company of straight men” (Baker 2002a: 197)

Table 9. *Compounds based on the fag hag pattern*

These examples suggest that speech play involving morphological patterns is central to the expansion of queer argot lexicons. In addition to the introduction of neologisms, argots develop through the replacement of matrix language words with new forms unique to the argot. In contrast to the cross-language replacements discussed above, these lexical substitutions often involve replacing one word in the matrix language with another phonologically similar form (also from the matrix language). The following section discusses these processes of lexical substitution where, again, speech play serves a central role.

2.4. Lexical substitution

One of the most common ways in which queer argots expand is through the replacement of vocabulary with other words (or names), usually based on phonological similarity. In Gayle and Swardspeak, these substitutions involve feminine proper names. The amount of phonological overlap varies across varieties. In Gayle, replacement words may only share an initial consonant with the word they substitute while substitutions in Swardspeak and bahasa gay overlap by at least one syllable. As is typical for argots, a single lexical substitution is inserted into otherwise

unaltered utterances in the matrix language. For example, in Table 10 below, the Indonesian form *lapar* (hungry) is replaced with *lapaangan* (open field):

		literal translation
Standard Indonesian	Saya sudah <i>lapar</i> dua jam.	I already <i>hungry</i> two hours.
bahasa gay	Saya Sudah <i>lapaangan</i> dua jam.	I already <i>open field</i> two hours

Table 10. *Lexical substitution in bahasa gay* (Boellstorff 2005: 191)

Boellstorff (2005: 191) compares this example to something like English “I’ve been Hungarian for two hours” where a single word is replaced with a word that sounds similar. Boelstorff describes the prototypical pattern as overlap with the initial CVC syllable, i.e. replacement by a form based on the first syllable of a word (plus the following onset if the first syllable doesn’t have a coda). For example, the Indonesian form *bodoh* (pedicab) is replaced with *bodrex* (cough medicine). In actual practice, however, the size of overlap may be longer (*lapar* > *lapangan*; *semak* > *semangka*) or shorter (*tidak* > *tinta*). Additional examples are given in Table 11 below:

bahasa gay term	Original meaning	Indonesian replaced	Meaning
bodrex	cough medicine	bodoh	pedicab
ciptadent	brand of toothpaste	cium	to kiss
émbér	bucket	émang	indeed
jelita	lovely	jelek	bad
lapangan	open field	lapar	hungry
semangka	watermelon	semak	to like
tinta	tint	tidak	no

Table 11. *Lexical substitutions in bahasa gay* (after Boellstorff 2004: 255)

Lexical replacement may involve chains of substitution that further obscure the original form in the matrix language. For example, Polari contains a number of forms borrowed from Cockney rhyming slang (Baker 2002b: 30) such as *mince pies* as a replacement for *eyes*. Some rhyming slang forms seem to be unique to Polari, such as *the color of his eyes* to mean “penis size.” The common pattern is for a rhyming slang term to be reduced to the first (non-rhyming) part. For example, *feet* is first replaced by the rhyming form, *plates of meat*, which is then reduced to *plates*. As the reduced form no longer shares phonological form with the original form, the relationship between the substitute form and the original is only recoverable if one is also familiar with the rhyming slang form. Examples are given in Table 12 below:

Polari word	Rhyming slang form	Gloss
barnet	Barnet Fair	hair
hampsteads	Hampsteads Heath	teeth
minces	mince pies	eyes
plates	plates of meat	feet
scotches	Scotch peg	leg

Table 12. *Cockney rhyming slang forms in Polari* (Baker 2002b: 30)

As noted above, both Gayle and Swardspeak use lexical substitutions involving proper names. In both varieties, these replacements typically involve feminine proper names. Speech play involving feminine names is a basic feature of queer argots. For example, Cage notes that the practice of referring to other men with feminine names was a common practice in 18th century Molly Houses in Britain, where the substitute names were known as “maiden names.” Cage quotes a 1709 letter to the *Tattler of London* complaining about “Petty Fellows” calling one another “Betty” and “Nelly” in public (Cage 2003: 29). The replacement of men’s names with feminine forms is a common practice in Polari. Baker gives the examples of *Martin* > *Martina* and *Harold* > *Harriett* (2002b: 14). Similar replacements in U.S. gay male slang are reported by Rogers (1972), including *Robert* > *Roberta*, *Donald* > *Donna*, and *Johnny* > *Jenny*.

Rogers also gives examples of feminine names used to refer to specific “types” of gay men in gay U.S. slang of the 1960s. Rogers’ examples include forms based on phonology (e.g. *Bathsheba* for “one who frequents gay bath houses”) and forms based on cultural references. For example, a gay man who “goes from one tragic episode to another” is called *Camille*, after the main character in American adaptations of the Alexandre Dumas (*fils*) novel *La Dame aux Camélias*. Similarly, a “gay hippie” was called *Ophelia* after the character in *Hamlet* (who put flowers in her hair like a hippie). Examples of this use of names are given in Table 13 below:

Abigail	“middle-aged homosexual whose approach to life...[is] conservative” (17)
Bathsheba	“frequenter of the baths” (28)
Camille	“homosexual who goes from one tragic episode to another” (40)
Erma	“a well-meaning fuck up” (75)
Katherine	“male homosexual when he appears in the role of hostess” (120)
Minny	“a kind, but simple-minded sort” (134)
Ophelia	“gay hippie” (144)

Table 13. *Feminine names in US gay 1970s slang* (Rodgers 1972)

In SwardSpeak (Casabal 2008), the names of (primarily) female celebrities are used to replace similar sounding words in either Tagalog or English. These substitutions can then be used in either language regardless of the original language of origin. In SwardSpeak, substitutions are based on general phonological similarity so that there is no pre-specified phonological template (like that found in *bahasa gay*). As with *bahasa gay* substitutions, these SwardSpeak forms are typically single-word substitutions in what is otherwise ordinary Tagalog or English. (e.g. There's a *Cheese Whiz* going around that you're *Cathy Dennis*). Examples based on Tagalog words are given in Table 14 below:

Original Tagalog	SwardSpeak replacement	Meaning
chaka	Chaka Khan, Chuckie	ugly
kati	Cathy Dennis, Cathy Santillan	horny (itchy)
gutom	Tommy Lee Jones, Tommy Hilfinger	hungry
lupit	Lupita Kashiwara	cruel
irita	Rita Gomez, Rita Avila	to irritate
mura	Mariah Carey	cheap
mapagsamatala	Samantha Lopez	abusive
huli	Julie Andrews, Julie Yap Daza	to catch/get caught
mahal	Mahalia Jackson, Maharlika	expensive
tsismis	Cheese Whiz	rumor(s), gossip

Table 14. *SwardSpeak name substitutions*

Here, international and local Philippine celebrity and brand names are used to replace Tagalog words. Although the majority are women's names, there are also men (Tommy Lee Jones) and commercial brands (Cheese Whiz). Although SwardSpeak does contain some forms with a semantic relationship (e.g. *Camilla Parker Bowles* to mean "evil stepmother"), for the majority of these substitutions, the relationship is purely phonological. Similar substitutions may be based on the phonological similarity of English words, as in Table 15 below:

Name	Gloss/English root
Winnie Monsod, Wynona Ryder	to win
Lucita Soriano	to lose something/someone
Sheryl Cruz	to share
Crayola Khomeini	to cry

Table 15. *English-based SwardSpeak substitutions (Casabal 2008)*

As in the Tagalog-based examples, there is no relationship between the original language and the nationality of the celebrity in the replacement. English *to win* can be replaced by either an American (Wynona Ryder) or a Philippine (Winnie

Monsod) celebrity. Indeed, the name need not actually be associated with an actual person. For example, *Crayola Khomeini* is not an actual woman, but is simply a humorous invented name (which follows the broader speech play pattern in Sward-speak as well as play across languages).

A similar pattern of substitutions involving women’s names is found in Gayle. According to Cage (2003), the pattern first emerged as part of *moffietaal* (“gay language”), an Afrikaans-based variety that originated among Cape “Colored” drag queens in South Africa. The pattern was borrowed by white speakers and became the basis for Gayle, an English-based argot. A few similar forms are found in isiNgqumo (Ruwick and Ntuli 2008: 449) including *uBelinda* (“blind” possibly borrowed from Gayle) and *uTracy* (“hermaphrodite”), a form restricted to townships and not found in Gayle (Cage 2003: 99). Thus, while particular forms may not have been borrowed from Gayle into isiNgqumo, the basic pattern seems to have spread across argots in different matrix languages within South Africa. As with substitutions in Sward-speak, women’s names in Gayle may replace any part of speech. A subset of the substitutions in Gayle are based on semantics, as in Table 16 below:

Golda	Jewish gay man (after Golda Meir)
Sue-Ellen	alcoholic (after a character on the TV program <i>Dallas</i>)
Isadora	to dance (after Isadora Duncan)
Joan	a bitter gay man who treats others badly (after Joan Crawford)
Sandra	one who always predicts bad events (from Cassandra in Greek mythology)

Table 16. *Semantic-based Gayle substitutions (Cage 2003)*

However, the majority of Gayle substitutions are based on phonological similarity. The range of phonological overlap between the substitute and original varies, ranging from full overlap (*Nora* < *ignorant*, *Fatima* < *fat*) to only sharing an initial consonant (*Thelma* < *thin*, *Nancy* < *nothing*). Examples of substitutions in Gayle are given in Table 17 below:

Name	Gloss	Name	Gloss
Beatrice	eavesdropper (big ears)	Laura	lover
Carol	to cry	Marjorie	margarine
Dora	drink (n), drunk (adj)	Maureen	murder (n. or v.)
Fatima	overweight (fat)	Nancy	nothing
Geraldine	old (geriatric)	Nora	stupid (<i>ignorant</i>)
Hilda	ugly (hideous)	Priscilla	policeman
Hester	to hear	Rita	male prostitute (rent boy)
Jessica	jealous	Thelma	thin
Kaye	lubricant (KY brand name)	Tina	tiny

Table 17. *Examples of sound-based lexical substitutions in Gayle (from Cage 2003)*

As with other argot substitutions, these forms are typically used as insertions (Muysken 2000) into utterances in the matrix language. Examples are given in Table 18:

If you run out of Kaye, try Marjorie. (Kaye = lubricant, Marjorie = margarine)
Word's out that he Maureenened his Laura. (Maureen = murder, Laura = lover)
The Moira is Hilda tonight. (Moira = music, Hilda = hideous)
Are you Marie?! Do you want Priscilla to pick you up? (Marie = crazy/mad, Priscilla = police)

Table 18. *Example sentences from Cage's (2003) Gayle dictionary*

Dictionary example sentences often express cultural ideologies that extend beyond language (Barrett 2003; Debenport 2015). These Gayle examples presuppose specific gay interactional contexts, even if largely imagined. They also illustrate the types of language play that surrounds queer argots not only in their emergence, but also in their transmission and their everyday use.

The various forms of lexical substitutions in bahasa gay, U.S. gay slang, Gayle, and Swardspeak all involve expanding argot vocabulary through forms of speech play. In most cases, this speech play overlaps with gender play, building on traditions of using feminine names in communication between gay men.

3. The verbal artistry of queer argots

The linguistic patterns found in speech play often form the basis for genres of verbal art. As Sherzer notes, this relationship blurs the division between speech play and verbal art:

The boundaries between speech play and verbal are are hard to delimit and are cultural as well as linguistic. At the same time, there are certain verbal forms where the relationship between the two is particularly salient and where it is quite clear that forms of speech play constitute the building blocks of verbal art. (Sherzer 2002: 70)

The forms of speech play associated with the emergence of queer argots also serve as “building blocks” for forms of queer verbal art. This relationship can be seen in the genre of mock translations in which well-known literary texts are “translated” into queer argots. This genre “rewrites” heteronormative cultural tropes as queer vernacular texts. Mock translations are certainly not restricted to queer culture. Non-queer examples include Andy Griffith’s paraphrases of Shakespeare plays (Griffith 1964) and Mark Twain’s humorous back-translation of his story “The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County” in which Twain took the French version of his story and “clawed [it] back into a civilized language once more by patient, unremunerated toil” (Twain 1903). Because queer argots are not full

languages (and only replace a subset of the matrix language grammar) and because they are built upon recognizable canonical texts, these “translations” are generally transparent to outsiders. They often build on texts that lend themselves to *camp* interpretations, such as the story of Cinderella and her evil stepsisters, rendered into SwardSpeak in Table 19 below. Here, Cinderella is male and is named Chaka Khan (SwardSpeak for “ugly” based on the Tagalog word *chaka*):

Chaka Khan knew *Camilla Parker Bowles* all too well: This was the same *Churchill* woman who constantly abused and berated his mother until the poor woman became a *junk shop* and went *Lucrecia Kasilag*, eventually perishing in a *Lupita Kashiwara* fashion.

Table 19. “A fairy tale” (Banal 2005)

The excerpt describes the abusive way that Chaka Khan’s evil stepmother (“Camilla Parker Bowles”) treated Chaka’s actual mother who became a drug addict (“junk shop”), lost her mind (“went Lucrecia Kasilag”) and died in a cruel (“Lupita Kashiwara”) fashion. The camp trope of the evil stepmother is highlighted by the SwardSpeak substitutions, such as the use of Camilla Parker Bowles (the rival of “gay icon” Princess Diana) to mean “evil stepmother.”

Even in cases where the translated text is decidedly *uncamp*, elements of camp aesthetic may be inserted into the translation. For example, the opening the Polari translation of the Bible (see Table 20) uses the camp trope of juxtaposing elements of “high” culture with “low” experiences (Harvey 2000: 243). This creates an indexical disjuncture between the religious associations indexed through the linguistic structure and the gay cultural contexts mentioned in the text.

The Polari Bible
Seventh Edition
 Containing the Authorized Version
Diligently translated out of the original
tongue into High Polari by the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence & a Gentleman
Appointed to be read in discotheques & Turkish baths
Published in Manchester a notorious hotbed of the sin of Sodom by the Larlou Press.

Table 20. *Polari Bible* (Greening–Jackson 2015)

The text in Table 20 is inserted into an illustrated Biblical title page and uses a linguistic style associated with a sacred text (e.g. *diligently translated out of the original tongue into High Polari*). The camp juxtaposition comes from linking this religious language with public readings in gay contexts, such as discotheques, baths, and Manchester (“a hotbed of the sin of Sodom”).

The Polari Bible also extends textual differences beyond the use of argot lexical substitutions in two main ways. First, the Polari lexicon is extended to replace reli-

gious terminology in ways that serve to further queer the text. For example, *spirit* and *angel* are both replaced with *fairy*, maintaining the basic concept of a magical-sacred entity while substituting with a term (fairy) with clear queer indexical associations.

In the beginning *Gloria* created the heaven and the earth.
 And the earth was *nanti* form, and void; and *munge* was upon the *eke* of the deep.
 And the *Fairy* of *Gloria* trolled upon the *eke* of the *aquas*.
 And *Gloria* cackled, Let there be *sparkle*: and there was *sparkle*.
 And *Gloria vardad* the *sparkle*, that it was *bona*: and *Gloria medzered* the *sparkle* from the *munge*.
 And *Gloria screeched* the *sparkle journo*, and the *munge she screeched nochy*. And the *bijou nochy* and the morning were the first *journo*

Table 21. *Opening of the Polari Bible* (Greening–Jackson 2015)

Following the Polari tradition of replacing men’s names with women’s names, the Polari Bible replaces the majority of male names. Thus, *David* becomes *Davina*, *Peter* becomes *Petra*, *Jesus* becomes *Josie*, and *Satan* becomes *Sadie*. Here, God is also clearly feminine, renamed *Gloria* and always referred to with feminine pronouns. These additional changes to the text add to the camp style, using speech play to push beyond a direct “translation” to a distinctly queer form of verbal art.

Queer mock translations produce self-deprecating humor by rendering canonical heteronormative texts in queer argot. As Chauncey notes in his history of gay New York, gay argot “allowed men to see themselves as participants in the dominant culture by enabling them to see themselves in the interstices of that culture” (1994: 287). The translation of highly-recognized cultural tropes into queer discourse is one way of creating such interstices within heteronormative culture. The humor produced through viewing heteronormative culture through a queer lens is illustrated by the excerpt from a Julian and Sandy sketch in Table 22 below, from the BBC radio program *Round the Horne*. The sketch (“Bona Books”) aired as part of an episode of the show called *Journey to Uranus* in 1968. In the sketch, Mr. Horne wanders into a bookstore run by Julian and Sandy where all of the books have been rewritten in Polari. In this excerpt, Sandy is telling Mr. Horne about the Polari edition of Shakespeare:

Sandy: We’ve got our own edition of Shakespeare, don’t we?
 Yeah, we’ve rewritten it ourselves in up-to-date Polari
 It includes such things as *Much Ado about Nanti*, *All’s Bona that Ends Bona*,
Two Omis of Verona, *As They Like It*
 Horne: Isn’t that *As You Like It*?
 Sandy: Not really, but live and let live, I say.

Table 22. “Bona Books” (Simmonds 1968)

Here, the humor is founded on viewing Shakespeare from a purely queer perspective. The outsider status indexed through the use of Polari is paralleled in the “translation” of *As You Like It* to *As **They** Like It*. Sandy’s response of “live and let live” conveys a stance of acceptance for the way “they” (heterosexuals) like it, momentarily placing queer likes and desires at the center of normativity.

The humor of the queer perspective in this Julian and Sandy sketch exploits puns and double entendre beyond those specific to Polari. In the excerpt in Table 23, Sandy has asked Julian to recite the “Seven Ages of Omi” speech from the Polari version of *As **They** Like It* (*omi* = “man”, *palones* = “woman”):

Julian: All the world’s a stage
 And all the omis and palones merely players;
 They have their exits and their entrances
 Sandy: That’s true, Mr Horne, we all have our exits and our entrances.
 Everyone one of us. I know I do. Oh, carry on Jules. Nice, nice.
 Julian: Thank you. One omi in his time plays many parts...

Table 23. *The Seven Ages of Omi*

In this excerpt, camp humor again emerges from mixing “high” culture (Shakespeare) with a double entendre based on a “low” interpretation of the text. In the original, the line *They have their exits and their entrances*, refers to theatrical entrances and exits on and off a stage. However, Sandy’s response (*We all have our exits and our entrances... I know I do*) raises the interpretation of entrances and exits of the body (i.e. where the body might be “entered” in sexual activity). Here again, the speech play afforded by Polari serves as the “building block” for camp verbal art that extends speech play beyond that available through the argot alone.

4. Conclusion

These mock translations show how queer argots come to be used in forms of verbal art founded in the camp cultural traditions of queer communities. While queer argots may be used for a variety of social purposes (secrecy, inclusion, exclusion, etc.), it is important to recognize that they also serve as a form of queer entertainment, a resource for the production of camp humor in queer interactions. The emergence of queer argots may teach us a variety of things about the historical experiences of queer communities, but one of the most important of these is that queers have a history of enjoying each other’s company, laughing at themselves, and relishing in the breaking cracks in the hegemonic discourse of heteronormative society.

Scholars working in queer theory have given much attention to the role of abjection, shame, and insult in the formation of gay culture (e.g. Eribon 2005; Halperin 2007; Halperin and Traub 2010). Obviously, issues of marginalization or shame

are important in the formation of queer argots. However, as Hall (2013) notes, focusing solely on the anti-social produces a static account of heteronormativity that prevents queer theory from adapting to changes in social norms. An account based on shame and insult also fails to recognize the pleasure that queers take in the formation of queer culture. Argots are (by definition) registers of shame – language varieties that enable marginalized groups to “hide” from normative society. But even in the formation of linguistic ways of hiding, queers were clearly laughing at the ways that language allows us to challenge normative assumptions about gender and sexuality. In the sense, queer argots can be seen in terms of “intimate grammars” (Webster 2010, 2015). Webster defines intimate grammar as an “emotionally saturated use of language that runs the risk of negative evaluation by outsiders (or non-outsiders) but are deeply and expressively feelingful for individuals” (Webster 2010: 187). A focus on queer shame or insult should not force us to lose sight of the equally important history of queer joy – that unique form of happiness produced by the discovery of a community where one may experience freedom from the solitary confinement of the closet.

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Govorna igra, rodna igra i verbalna umješnost u queer žargonima

U radu je prikazana usporedna analiza žargona (ili tajnih varijeteta) koje upotrebljavaju govornici u zajednicama koje se identificiraju kao rodno ili seksualno nenormativne. Iz usporedbe devet žargona različitih jezika moguće je zaključiti da razvoj svakoga od njih uključuje bogatu govornu igru. U radu se analiziraju raznoliki uzorci govorne igre, primjerice međujezična igra, ludički varijeteti, morfološka reanaliza i inovacija te leksičke zamjene unutar lokalnoga jezika. Važnost govorne igre u promatranim zajednicama opimjeruje se žanrom kvaziprijeвода u kojima se poznati tekstovi (poput Shakespearea ili Biblije) reproduciraju upotrebom žargona. Rezultati istraživanja ukazuju na to da su govorna igra i verbalna umješnost važni, ali nedovoljno istraženi elementi queer kultura.

Keywords: argot, speech play, verbal art, sexuality, gender, queer culture

Ključne riječi: argot, govorna igra, verbalna umješnost, seksualnost, rod, queer kultura