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Introduction: Beep—Click—Link

At utopia-asia.com, a leading Asian gay and lesbian Web portal, banners for *Time* magazine, BBC World Service, and *The Advocate* loom large.[1] In *High Tech Rice,* an answering machine connects a Filipina American as she lives between two cultures.[2] In Melbourne, Australia, Yellow Kitties, an Asian lesbian support group, comes of age with a logo that reconfigures an iconic character from Japan's Sanrio.[3] In New York City, a South Asian gay and lesbian "Jungli Boogie Bhangra Blow-Out" fundraiser spins house, hip-hop, chutney, soca, and reggae. At Rice Bar in Sheung Wan, near Central, Hong Kong GAMs (gay Asian males) seek out other Hong Kong GAMs.

The recent emergence of gay and lesbian communities in Asia and its diaspora is intimately linked to the development of information technology in the region. The July 1994 official introduction of the Internet in Singapore, the launch of China's English-language Web in 1993, and Malaysia's Multimedia Super Corridor gateway inception in 1996 have mediatized the region, with some 47 million Japanese currently with Internet access and half of Koreans over the age of 17 being regular Internet users.[4] Information has indeed sparked a revolution, transforming lives and lifestyles. More significant, information has enabled the expression of sexual identities in a region that is notorious for the regulation of both information and sexual conduct. Since the mid-1990s, gay and lesbian literature about Asia and Asian diasporas has emerged with titles such as *Gay and Lesbian Asia, Different Rainbows,* and *Q&A: Queer in Asian America.*[5] The fluidity and ubiquity of information, from storage and image to media markets, has increased with digitization, making it more powerful and accessible. Information has crossed national boundaries, enabled global gay and lesbian coalitions, and formed new queer cultures incorporating Asian imaginaries. These cultures foreground the historicity of the mediascapes of

the West, Asia, and the Asian diaspora. They are characterized by the ephemerality of the commodity in late modernity. And they form a network connected by the technology of a speed-space, producing mobile and transient cultures. Hence our book *Mobile Cultures: New Media in Queer Asia.*

Time magazine reported in March 2001 that in the past five years the Internet had done to Asia's gay and lesbian communities what Stonewall enabled in the West over the past twenty-five years.[6] The 1994 introduction of the Netscape browser has played an important role in the types of information constitutive of emergent gay and lesbian identities in Asia, its diaspora, and its cyberspace. Beginning with a handful of file transfer (ftp) sites publishing bibliographic resources about Asian gay and lesbian literature[7] and Telnet ports hosting local bulletin boards, the user-friendly interface has transformed information from subcultural data to a "presentness" enabled by multimedia synergy. With it, interactive chats, self-managing listservs, and short messaging codes have proliferated on the bandwith alongside repertoires and libraries of imageworlds and signs. Information consumption has fueled information production and an increasing self-awareness, shifting subterranean bulletin board cultures and self-writing historiographies from shared interest minority groups and genealogical retrieval to a larger project of self-creation. This project asks questions both ontological (Who are we? Who we are may not be what we are) and epistemological (How do we know ourselves as the product of where we come from? Where we come from may not be what we know ourselves to be). In the process, it modernizes new kinds of connectivity and communities, online and offline. Mediated by displacement, Queer Asia uses new media to challenge the desexualization of the Asian gay man[8] and the anomaly of the Asian lesbian by indigenizing the global and producing mobile and contingent practices of self-inscription and self-identification.

If burgeoning Queer Asia and its digital facilitation is the object of study in the essays collected here, the anthology itself engages two emergent and rapidly growing fields of study. One is the globalization of sexual cultures; the other, the study of "new media." In relation to the first of these, it seems fair to say that if one single preoccupation has characterized both academic and popular discussions of sexualities over the past decade, it has been the globalization of sexual cultures. Indicative of the popular anxieties that arose over this question in the 1990s, for example, is an article on the rise of

consumer culture in Vietnam that appeared in Melbourne newspaper *The Age*'s weekend supplement, *Good Weekend,* in 1998. The article notes: "Even what are considered subcultures in the West have permeated the increasingly porous membrane around Vietnam. In Ho Chi Minh City, at the Phuong Cac café, hundreds of gay men gather on Sunday mornings. The air shimmers with expensive cologne as the young show off their designer clothes and buffed bodies. Logos of designers like Versace and Calvin Klein abound . . . everything from the clothes, the pumped-up muscles, the haircuts . . . to the attitudes and confidently open manner have been sucked in from a gay culture that transcended all borders; the café could have been in San Francisco's Castro District."[9]

The language of this description is instructive. Employing a tropology all too familiar in post-AIDS discussions of homosexuality, the excerpt figures "Western gayness" as an unstoppable virus, permeating Vietnam's "porous membrane" to cause the mutation of Ho Chi Minh City into a city indistinguishable from San Francisco. With its lingering attention to the symptoms of middle-class commodity culture, the excerpt also shows the mixture of triumphalism and nostalgia that characterizes popular journalistic discourse on the crumbling of Eastern bloc communist regimes under the assault of global capitalism—which, like gay culture, "transcends all borders." This highlights the fact that any discussion about the globalization of gayness inevitably draws on broader debates over the effects of globalization in general. As a result, to begin talking about the global gay, it is necessary first to speak about debates over globalization itself.

Stuart Hall frames a central question on how best to think about globalization: "Is this just the old enemy in a new disguise? Is this the ever-rolling march of the old form of commodification, the old form of globalization, fully in the keeping of capital, fully in the keeping of the West, which is simply able to absorb everybody else within its drive? Or is there something important about the fact that, at a certain point, globalization cannot proceed without learning to live with and working through difference?"[10] Arjun Appadurai's now classic essay "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy" is useful in classifying answers to this question. Appadurai delineates two critical responses to globalization: one that privileges homogenization and one that privileges heterogenization.[11] A homogenizing view of cultural globalization, which has been characteristic of much important Marxist writing on the subject, constructs the process as

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producing an overall reduction of cultural difference around the globe, as commodification proceeds hand in hand with cultural "Americanization." This view, adopted by neo-Marxist commentators such as Fredric Jameson and Masao Miyoshi, is one that, in a much simplified if also ambivalent form, underlies the weekend magazine description of Ho Chi Minh City's Phuong Cac café.[12] As Lisa Rofel observes in her incisive critique of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's book *Empire,* one danger with approaches that rest on an assumption of the universally homogenizing effects of global capitalism is that such approaches risk rhetorically reenacting the very violence they also denounce: the erasure of cultural difference.[13]

In fact, Hardt and Negri's book represents an interesting development in globalization studies, insofar as it appears in one way to take issue with the homogenization thesis by emphasizing plurality, hybridity, difference, and a polynuclear world structure. Squarely rejecting the "Americanization" thesis, the authors state emphatically, "*The United States does not, and indeed no nation-state can today, form the center of an imperialist project,*" and, taking their cue from Deleuze and Guattari, they insist that their notion of "empire" "manages hybrid identities, flexible hierarchies, and plural exchanges through modulating networks of command." However, as Rofel discusses in some detail, the authors' apparent appreciation of the effects of decentering and cultural dis-integration belies the deeply homogenizing impetus of their thesis as a whole, which casts a highly Eurocentric notion of empire as "a new form of global sovereignty"—even as "the sovereign power that governs the world"—and presumes a universal and undifferentiated "capitalism" that is the engine behind this new world order.[14]

Appadurai's heterogenizing view offers a different alternative. This view foregrounds the interactions between the Western and the non-Western that globalization enables and impels, and holds that as a result, cultural globalization challenges the global hegemony of the West, and indeed of any singular world order, as much as it reinforces or extends existing structures of cultural domination. Appadurai is suspicious of the presumption of homogenizing accounts to explain globalization as though it were a singular process reducible to a consistent or predictable logic; he prefers to emphasize precisely the unpredictability and instability—the "disjunctures"—that follow from the interaction of the different forms of flow that happen in and through globalization.[15] This more nuanced approach to the intricacies of cultural flow in the era of globalization does not claim that

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cultural forms and identities emanating from the United States have now altogether ceased to act as a compelling influence in cultures worldwide. Rather, it asks that we recognize that Americanization is not the *only* influence and that the effects of American culture are not felt equally or in the same way at every location. Such an approach, we believe, has much to contribute to the postcolonial project of "decentering the West" by challenging narrowly Eurocentric forms of knowledge. To take up this approach is not the same as simplistically privileging the local and the particular over the global and the universal while leaving that dichotomy squarely in place. Rather, as Ann Cvetkovich and Douglas Kellner suggest, such an approach means we must "think through the relationship between the global and the local by observing how global forces influence and even structure ever more local situations and ever more strikingly. One should also see how local forces and situations mediate the global, inflecting global forces to diverse ends and conditions and producing unique configurations for thought and action in the contemporary world."[16] As we discuss in detail at the end of this introduction, many of the contributors to this volume take up Cvetkovich and Kellner's challenge to articulate the global with the local and to attend to the ways each cross-cuts and problematizes the other in the realm of sexual cultures.

In a recent essay, Appadurai poses a crucial question researchers of global and regional cultures need to address: "In short, how does the world look—as a congeries of areas—from *other* locations (social, cultural, national)?"[17] Through detailed, microlevel engagements with specific cultural contexts, the contributors to this volume offer a range of necessarily varied and discontinuous responses to the crucial question How does the world and the Asian region look from this specific point in culture and history? The heterogeneity of their responses underlines the insight of many scholars of globalization and regionalization that, despite the familiar rhetorics of "one world" and of "Asia" as a singular and coherent cultural region, in practice these processes do not produce one world or one Asia, but many.

Prior to the recent debates on the way sexual cultures and sexual knowledges become mobile in globalization, approaches to sexual cultures throughout the world could be divided into two broad camps. On the one hand, traditional anthropological and sociological work on sexual cultures tended to take an empiricist approach, addressing as their object sexualities as they are practiced as modes of cultural organization in diverse geo-

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graphic locations. This work tended to emphasize the "cultural difference" of the "other" culture under investigation, projecting a discrete "cultural identity" and paying little attention to potential for intercultural communication and appropriation between contexts.[18] In contrast to this ethnographic tendency to appeal to the "otherness" of different cultural contexts stands work that tended rather to assume, and often celebrate, the cross-cultural sameness of "gay" or "lesbian identity." To take an extreme example, Judy Grahn's 1984 book *Another Mother Tongue* contains a chapter entitled "We Go around the World," in which she asserts that "people are Gay the world over" because "being Gay is a universal quality."[19] Neil Miller's 1992 book, *Out in the World,* in which his project was to "go out in the world . . . in search of gays and lesbians," similarly assumes in advance that "gays and lesbians" are what he will find, while also collaborating in the writing of a universalizing fantasy of a "gay globe."[20]

Later academic discussions of what has often been called "global queering," after a much discussed 1996 article by Dennis Altman, have tended to take up the terms of the broader debates on cultural globalization and transpose them onto the domain of sexual cultures.[21] Early interventions into these debates tended, like the article on gay commodity culture in Vietnam cited above, to emphasize the homogenizing power of gayness gone global. Posing a central question in these debates, and implying a response to it that comes down on the homogenizing side, Altman asks, "Is there . . . a universal gay identity linked to modernity? This is not to argue for a transhistoric or essentialist position . . . but rather to question the extent to which the forces of globalization (both economic and cultural) can be said to produce a common consciousness and identity based on homosexuality."[22] The position Altman indicates here, in which the globalization of Euro-American modernity results in a universal gay identity and "common consciousness" across the globe, was common enough in the mid to late 1990s to border on becoming a kind of "cultural commonsense" view of sexualities in the global age—as indicated by its reproduction in the piece of popular journalism about Ho Chi Minh City. But more recently, this view has been strongly challenged by new work that has begun to appear on the topic.

Since the late 1990s, a series of books and articles has challenged earlier presumptions that "globalizing" is synonymous with "homogenizing" in the realm of sexualities. This later work is marked by a number of charac-

teristics. It is in general less speculative and makes a more active, research-based engagement with sexualities as practiced and represented in local contexts. Its detailed engagement with the micropolitics of sexualities situated in place leads in turn to a tendency not to see the global and the local as two arenas utterly separate and opposed, but to consider the mechanics and meanings of *glocalization,* or the localization and indigenization of globally mobile understandings of sexuality.[23] This is the approach taken by Lenore Manderson and Margaret Jolly in their introduction to *Sites of Desire, Economies of Pleasure: Sexualities in Asia and the Pacific.*[24] Eschewing both the universalist, essentializing view of "sexuality" as something shared and unitary across cultural divides, and also the simplistic relativism born of the reification of "cultural difference," Manderson and Jolly hope that their collection might "focus on cross-cultural *exchanges* in sexualities" in the colonial period and after. Comparably, the 1999 special issue of *GLQ* edited by Elizabeth A. Povinelli and George Chauncey on "Thinking Sexuality Transnationally" collects work on local and global sexualities that, in general, discards the conceptual opposition of the global and the local for an emphasis on the intricate weave of the *transcultural.* Lisa Rofel's essay in that volume, "Imagining Gay Identities in China," provides a succinct statement of this newly dominant conceptual paradigm: "Transcultural practices resist interpretation in terms of either global impact or self-explanatory indigenous evolution. Instead, they open inquiry into contingent processes and performative evocations that do not presume equivalence but ask after confrontations charged with claims of power."[25] Another instance of this turn away from the simplistic model in which the local and indigenous confronts the global and Western in a stark encounter where one must always eventually cede power to the other is Cindy Patton and Benigno Sánchez-Eppler's 2000 collection, *Queer Diasporas.*[26] This anthology proceeds from the assumption that mobility, rather than fixity or identity, is a defining characteristic of both actual bodies in diaspora and of desire and sexuality themselves.

The contributors to this volume are, in general, writing out of this recently ascendent paradigm in global sexuality studies that works in the interstices of the transcultural. Tom Boellstorff's essay, for example, argues that the Indonesian terms *gay* and *lesbi* are neither simply direct translations of gay and lesbian nor autochthonous and authentically "local" sexuality categories. Rather, he suggests, they are ambivalent signifiers of iden-

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tity produced out of the messy transmission between the contexts of local Indonesian audiences and the Anglo-American cultures that produced "gay" and "lesbian" in the first instance. This messy transmission, in which the message received is never quite the same as the one that began the journey, is what he calls "dubbing culture." In the context of Malaysian politician Anwar Ibrahim's trial for sodomy, Olivia Khoo's essay examines how Malaysian women identifying as lesbian in local Internet cultures respond to the official discourse that produces sodomy as religious crime while at the same time subtly conflating it with both the homosexual and the Western. Here too, then, the situation is not one of a homogeneous "global lesbian" culture confronting local cultures of sexuality, but the significantly more complex situation of local women appropriating an ostensibly "global" signifier—"lesbian"—as a standpoint from which to critique a local official discourse that exploits religious law on sodomy both to dispose of a political threat and to reinforce a version of Malaysian nationalism that takes as its foil a "West" tainted by its association with homosexuality. Again, Berry and Martin's essay finds that models of sexuality deployed within lesbian, gay, and queer Internet cultures in Taiwan and South Korea bespeak the creative glocalization of Euro-American sexuality categories in these Asian contexts, rather than evidencing a simple takeover of the latter by the former.

In addition to the study of sexualities, this anthology also contributes to research on new media. Although new media can be understood broadly to cover everything from fax machines and satellite television to cell phones and pagers, there is little doubt that computer-mediated communications (cmc) ranging from email to the Internet come to mind as the most prominent example of new media for many people at the moment. Yet, as David Silver notes in his survey of writing on cmc, "while scholars from across the disciplines flock to the general topic of cyberculture, few have made their way into the margins to explore issues of race, ethnicity and sexuality online."[27] In addition to the absences listed by Silver, we would note the lack of work on the Internet and other new media outside the West. The essays collected in *Mobile Cultures* help to fill these gaps. But more than this, we hope they also challenge assumptions about what new media are, about their social position and function, as well as Eurocentric, heterosexist, and simply erroneous notions of what should be counted as culturally marginal and what as central in today's world.

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The Asian societies written about in this anthology are highly diverse. They range from urban and middle-class societies like those addressed in South Korea, Taiwan, and Japan, where the use of media technologies is at least as widespread as anywhere in the West, to others that are more agrarian and less materially wealthy, like India and Indonesia, where even land-line phones and electricity are by no means ubiquitous. With these circumstances in mind, Tom Boellstorff points out in his essay on dubbing culture that what counts as new media in one place may not in another, and that the significance of what are conventionally understood as new media also varies widely. On the other hand, as Sandip Roy indicates when he recounts hearing by email from small town–based Indian men who have sex with men, one should not presume that what are conventionally understood as new media in the West have no significance in less affluent cultures elsewhere.

This observation in Roy's article underlines the importance of materially grounded research in efforts to understand the social position and function of the new media. All the work in *Mobile Cultures* shares this characteristic. Therefore, just as it contributes to work challenging the untested assumptions underlying early writing on globalization and sexualities, it also joins other work challenging the equally untested assumptions underlying the early writing on the new media.

This earlier writing follows a well-established pattern. For, as the title of Carolyn Marvin's *When Old Technologies Were New: Thinking about Electric Communication in the Late Nineteenth Century* reminds us, what counts as new media varies from era to era as well as from place to place.[28] And, as Lynn Spigel noted in her study of the introduction of the then new technology of home television, despite all the changes, "the terms of the thinking about communication technologies are very much the same."[29] Initial responses to the new media technology of the day have divided and continue to divide between rapturous utopianism and apocalyptic alarm. Both responses are usually derived from the same characteristics: the new connectivity enabled by these technologies feeds hopes for global human community at the same time it feeds fears about damage to face-to-face local community. For example, James Carey traces initial responses to the telegraph back to the eighteenth-century ideal of a universal "brotherhood of man."[30] Marvin notes the fears of social breakdown inspired by electrical communication.[31] And in her study of the origins of broadcasting in Amer-

ica, Susan J. Douglas also covers "the fevered expectations" that "wireless would bring world peace, freedom from the cable companies, a democratized communications system, transcendence over space and time."[32]

This bifurcated pattern has continued with today's new media. David Silver notes, "Early cyberculture often took the form of dystopian rants or utopian raves. From one side, cultural critics blamed the Internet for deteriorating literacy, political and economic alienation, and social fragmentation. . . . Conversely, a vocal group of writers, investors and politicians loosely referred to as the *technofuturists* declared cyberspace would bring down big business, foster democratic participation, and end economic and social inequities."[33] Clearly, this repeated pattern suggests ideological overlays. Furthermore, just as previous utopian hopes and apocalyptic fears have not been realized, there is every reason to expect a similar outcome for today's new media. However, this does not mean new media have no significant new effects at all. Certainly, the art practices of Shu Lea Cheang analyzed by Katrien Jacobs here are entirely dependent on the globalized connectivity produced by digital media, as are the specific transnational connections enabling the Western women's interpretations of YAOI culture considered by Veruska Sabucco.

What needs to be undertaken to achieve a more precise understanding of the real and novel social effects of today's new media is materially grounded research. Nancy Baym noted this lack in studies of Internet communications as early as 1995.[34] And even though queer people emerged early among the Internet's most enthusiastic users, this situation still prevails as regards research on lesbian, gay, and bisexual Internet use.[35] Beyond a small but growing number of fieldwork-based studies,[36] most writing on sexuality and new media has been theoretical and/or speculative, sometimes flirting with more sensational possibilities such as virtual transvestism and cyber-rape.[37] The essays collected in this volume make a valuable and timely contribution to materially grounded research into the deployment and effects of new media in lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities viewed within their specific cultural contexts.

Much of the very early work depended on contrasting new media with the existing material world and placing the media conceptually as though they were somehow separate from that world. In the case of CMC, this is clearly expressed in the rhetoric of the "virtual" and the "real." As Kevin Robins puts it, "The mythology of cyberspace is preferred over its sociol-

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ogy . . . it is time to re-locate virtual culture in the real world."[38] Indeed, this is precisely what has been occurring in the past few years. Responding to her own concerns about a lack of fieldwork, Baym's research contradicted earlier assumptions that CMC inhibits interpersonal communication and the formation of community. Her 1995 work showed that Internet users in the field overcome the lack of visual and aural channels and do form personal relationships and communities, often integrated with their lives off the Internet. This rethinking underlies a great deal of the work on new media being produced at the moment. For example, the essays collected in the *Race in Cyberspace* anthology are heavily focused on actual practices on and off the Internet and derive their theorizations from them rather than from abstract or formal properties of the Internet.[39] In this book also, many of the essays start from the assumption that the use of new media is not separate from but part of everyday life, conditioned by it in various locally specific ways and having particular effects on it. For example, Mark McLelland's investigation of YAOI and "newhalf" cultures on the Internet in Japan demonstrates how they extend and further enable existing and local cultures. And while Audrey Yue's essay shows that the Internet has enabled regional connectivity implicated in the discourse of New Asia for upwardly mobile Singaporean and Malaysian lesbians in a manner that is unprecedented, she simultaneously highlights how pager technology has enabled the extension and maintenance of altogether more local working-class lesbian communities in Singapore.

Finally, the particular focus on historical and social practice in an Asian rather than Western context is itself a distinctive feature of this anthology that also challenges much current thinking about new media. In much the same way that attention to the specific Asian contexts of "global queering" demonstrates that global connections are locally made and therefore variable rather than homogeneous, the essays here show that the appeal and uses made of new media are also highly locally specific. Larissa Hjorth's essay on the "character" dolls that Japanese consumers often hang off their mobile phones shows a very particular local adaptation and personalization of the hardware that, she argues, depends for its communicative effect on the heritage of the idea of *ma,* or the gap that opens up meaning. The implications of Berry and Martin's essay on South Korea and Taiwan and McLelland's essay on Japan challenge the usual characterization of CMC as "global"; in each case, the particular verbal languages preferred by users

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tend to localize rather than globalize Internet usage. Furthermore, Berry and Martin's essay, David Mullaly's essay on a Thai Web site that appropriates the idea of the gay gene to encourage local discussion, and Baden Offord's essay on Singaporean activism and the Internet all show how local concerns with social and/or legal visibility condition and stimulate local queer Internet use.

On the other hand, just as avid queer use of the Internet challenges the usual assumption that new media, like other technologies, are mostly toys for straight boys, so other essays in this volume challenge the idea that when global connections are made through the Internet, they are also dominated by forces dominant off-Net. Sabucco's essay shows how the global connections made possible by the Internet have enabled Western women's YAOI culture of *anime* interpretation and rewriting. Roy's article shows how the Internet and associated new media facilitate a transnational Indian queer activism that previously would have been far more difficult to implement.

These essays share an interdisciplinary approach to theoretical frameworks and highlight a self-reflexive practice of cross-cultural hybrid research. As such, they extend the hybrid oral/written language potential recently suggested by Mann and Stewart in their communications theory study on Internet research.[40] Roy's social movement account of diasporic South Asian gay identity incorporates ethnography with grassroots activism. Offord's political economy approach to the cultural transmission of sexual rights in Singapore's cyberspace and Khoo's media institutional study of cyberlaws and censorship in Malaysia point to interconnectedness between state imperatives and everyday life. Similarly, Yue examines the relationship of cultural policy to informational capitalism using cybernetics to problematize cultural citizenship. McLelland, Hjorth, and Sabucco explore the consumption of Japanese popular culture through fandom, art theory, and cultural history. These essays situate the queer consumption of new media within the uses of culture in Asia and its diaspora, from the effects of the distribution of resources, the processes of moral valuation, and the conditions of belonging to the logics of transnational exchange. Jacobs deploys postmodern film spectatorship to foreground the traffic in pornography, and Mullaly uses semiotics to locate the different postcolonial grammars of speech. Together, these essays, like Boellstorff's anthropology of cultural translation, exemplify the mediations between the virtual/real, digital/analog, and East/West. They engage the politics of representation

surrounding us/them, self/other, researcher/researched, and draw attention to how meanings are embodied in practice, reflecting the partiality of knowledge claims. This contingency foregrounds the unrelenting attention given to stories, rituals, routines, and conversations using a wide range of interpretative tools, such as participant observation, fieldwork, email surveys, focus group interviews, and online questionnaires.[41] Like Berry and Martin's hybrid approach to data collection, showing how cyberspace is embedded within real social spaces in South Korea and Taiwan, these methods engage the circuits of distribution, regulation, and production to highlight how new media have indeed been embodied in real spaces and by emergent identities in the queer Asian imaginations.

Running through all the essays collected in *Mobile Cultures* are three highlighted features of new media: technology, transportation, and communication. Technology, from hardware to terminals and memory bytes, plays an important role as a link, a network, and a practice for mediating the divergence and convergence of queer 'n' Asian displacement. Mass transportation has facilitated the accelerated movement of both bodies and information, opening the way to new modes of navigation and travel that have restructured the grids of how we communicate and experience communities in our everyday lives. Communication, as a tool that transmits messages from one place to another, rides the information highway in the search for identity, a highway that may also be intersected by traffic lights and signals. Interwoven with the analytical practices of the essays collected in *Mobile Cultures* are queer stories about Asia and new media that speak of dot coms, crackdowns, and gaps and cracks in meaning. From sexual politics to cultural policies, the same browsers with different clicks drag icons to reveal the junctions and disjunctions where meanings crack, collide, and collude. In spite of and alongside the commercialization of sex from Net-order brides to online Asian gay and lesbian pornography, new media have become a crucial site for constituting new Asian sexual identities and communities.

These essays foreground the role of new media in the intricate interactions of local and global in constituting new forms of queerness, and can be considered as addressing three broad themes. Part 1, "Interfaces: Global/Local Intersections," groups together work that emphasizes the local appropriation, or glocalization, of globally mobile technologies and discourses. Mark McLelland examines how the availability of the Internet has changed Japan's YAOI and "newhalf" sexual cultures and simultaneously placed

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these very locally specific cultures in a framework of global accessibility. Chris Berry and Fran Martin argue against a view of cultural globalization that casts it as synonymous with cultural homogenization by drawing attention to local appropriations of Internet and BBS technology by emergent lesbian, gay, and queer communities in South Korea and Taiwan. Tom Boellstorff styles the Indonesian borrowing from and rescripting of global gay cultures as "dubbing culture," and David Mullaly shows how a scientistic discourse of gay genetics is reconceptualized at a Thai Web site through reference to traditional Buddhist notions of "the good person" and "the blameless life." Like McLelland, Veruska Sabucco also considers YAOI; however, her essay also considers glocalization "in reverse", analyzing the appropriation of homoerotic Japanese *manga* cultures by Western women fans who create communities through Internet technologies.

The essays collected in the second part, "Mobile Sites: New Screens, New Scenes," emphasize the local specificity of the contexts in which new media are used while also highlighting the role of new media mobility in reconstituting what counts as "locality." Larissa Hjorth's examination of the signifying (and nonsignifying) practice of hanging character dolls from cell phones in Tokyo foregrounds how constructions of sexuality in contemporary Japan differ in crucial ways from Euro-American contexts. Sandip Roy demonstrates the forging of new notions of what counts as "Indian" in the use of CMC among gay and lesbian communities in India and the Indian diaspora. Baden Offord highlights the utility of the Internet for the formation of resistant queer community politics locally in Singapore.

Part 3, "Circuits: Regional Zones," intimates some of the queer possibilities inherent in new discourses and practices of transnational Asian and Internet regionalism, which are themselves responses to globalization. Katrien Jacobs considers some of the implications of the transnationally mobile art practices of Taiwanese American filmmaker Shu Lea Cheang in making her latest work, a feature-length porn film made in Japan, *IKU*. In doing so, Jacobs demonstrates a specifically regional set of cultural flows (Taiwan-USA-Japan) and bespeaks a queering of Asia Pacific regionalism. Both Olivia Khoo's and Audrey Yue's essays are concerned with the rise of the rhetoric of New Asia and the ways local lesbian communities in Singapore (Yue) and Malaysia (Khoo) respond to the changed discursive conditions of culture and nationhood. The New Asian regionalism is for these authors first of all a strategy of power, but they draw attention to how it simultaneously

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enables novel tactics of resistance from local queer subjects who exploit the mobilities enabled by new media to extend lines of community and identity underneath and alongside the newly extensive lines of regional power.

We hope that the essays collected here excite more interest in this topic and inspire further research. For, extensive as the range of material collected here is, it in no way exhausts the possibilities. Indeed, we must emphasize that important new media uses in queer Asian cultures that we are already aware of are not included in this volume. These range from the chat rooms of Hong Kong to the mobile phone texting languages of Manila and the burgeoning queer Web sites of the People's Republic of China. These are omitted not by choice but because of lack of research, and we look forward to reading essays on these and other queer 'n' Asian new media practices in the near future.

Notes

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2 Joanner L. Cabatu and Ekaterina Mirkin, dirs., *High Tech Rice,* USA/Russia, (1996).

3 Yellow Kitties can be contacted at yellowkitties@hotmail.com.

4 "Technology: Over 47 Million Japanese Have Internet Access," *Nando Times,* 24 April 2001, ⟨http://www.nandotimes.com⟩ (1 May 2001); "Korean Internet Users Tallied at 20.9 Million," *Korean Herald News,* 20 April 2001, ⟨http://www.koreaherald.co.kr/SITE/data/html_dir/2001/04/17/200104170032.asp⟩ (1 May 2001).

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