# CHAPTER THREE: Dubbing Culture

## MOMENTS OF ORIGIN

It should be clear from the last two chapters that ethnolocalized homosexual and transvestite professional subject positions like "bissu" are distinct from the waria subject position, and that both are distinct from the gay and lesbi subject positions. This chapter focuses on moments of origin for the gay and lesbi subject positions: (1) on the social level—the historical context in which they first appeared; and (2) on the personal level—how particular Indonesians come to see themselves as gay or lesbi. I foreground the crucial role of mass media and ask how these moments of origin illuminate the mutually constituting conjunction of sexuality and nation in contemporary Indonesia. In doing so I also develop a framework for rethinking ethnography in an already globalized world. I call this framework dubbing culture, where to dub means, as the Oxford English Dictionary phrases it, "to provide an alternative sound track to (a film or television broadcast), especially a translation from a foreign language."1

With regard to gay and lesbi Indonesians, my goal is to develop a theory that can account for a contingent, fractured, intermittent, yet powerfully influential relationship between globalization and subjectivities. Two additional requirements for such a theory are as follows. First, it must not mistake contingency for the absence of power; it must account for relations of domination. Second, such a theory must not render domination as determination; it must account for how gay and lesbi Indonesians transform this contingent relationship in unexpected ways.

The framework of dubbing culture is crucially concerned with agency: it questions both deterministic theories that assume the hailing of persons through ideology and voluntaristic theories that assume persons "negotiate" their subjectivities vis-à-vis structures of power. As a result, it aims to provide a more processual understanding of subjectivity: it gives us a new way to think through the metaphorical construal of hegemonic cultural logics as "discourses." To "dub" a discourse is neither to parrot it verbatim nor to compose an entirely new script. It is to hold together cultural logics without resolving them into a unitary whole.

I see this analysis as linking queer theory and mass-media theory, partaking in a "new queer studies" that highlights "the political stakes in positing a particular understanding or vision of the global" (Manalansan

2003:6). In much the same way that print capitalism presents a general precondition for national imagined communities, but in a manner open to reinterpretation (Anderson 1983), so contemporary mass media present a general precondition for dubbing culture, but not in a deterministic sense. I thus examine ways in which mass-mediated messages that might appear totalizing (because of their association with powerful political-economic actors) are, in fact, susceptible to contingent transformation. Just as the dubbed television show in which "Sharon Stone speaks Indonesian" does not originate in the United States, so the gay and lesbi subject positions I examine are Indonesian—not, strictly speaking, imported.2 Yet just as the range of possibilities for a dubbed soundtrack is shaped by images originating elsewhere, so the persons who occupy subject positions that are dubbed in some fashion cannot choose their subjectivities just as they please. I move from a literal, technical meaning of dubbing to a more speculative, analogical usage as a way to explore the relationship between social actors and the modes of subjectivation (Foucault 1985) by which such persons come to occupy subject positions.

The theory of dubbing culture developed in this chapter is central to my analysis of the paradoxes of sexuality and nation in postcolonial Indonesia. The ultimate goal of this chapter, however, is to speak at a broad level to the state of culture theory. Might it be that dubbing culture occurs in the context of globalizing processes not directly related to mass media, sexuality, or Southeast Asia? How, for instance, is the relationship between English "gay" and Indonesian "gay" like the relationship between English "beauty" and the concept of biyuti employed by Filipino gay men (Manalansan 2003:15)? Indeed, at the end of this chapter I ask if the dubbing of culture Indonesians perform when they constitutively occupy the gay or lesbi subject position is all that different from the ethnographic project in an already globalized world. This chapter, then, has a reflexive (indeed, postreflexive) dimension. It asks if the ways in which much contemporary ethnography holds together, in tension, multiple cultural logics (like "the local" and "modernity")—in such a way that they are coconstitutive, not just juxtaposed—might not be productively interpreted in terms of dubbing culture.

## THE EMERGENCE OF THE GAY AND LESBI SUBJECT POSITIONS

In what measure are sexual perversions analogues of incorrect speech? … Might there be elements of homosexuality in the modern theory of language … in the concept of communication as an arbitrary mirroring?

—George Steiner, After Babel:Aspects of Language and Translation

As noted in chapter 2, subject positions, like any other aspect of culture, have a history. One reason the gay and lesbi subject positions present such a quandary for social analysis is that, like homosexual subject positions in the West, they are quite recent. The Dutch crackdown in the 1930s, and the strong influence of Freudian psychology in Indonesian social science (Gayatri 1996:90, A. Murray 1999:142), make it possible that some Indonesians could have started calling themselves gay or lesbi (or some other term like homo or homoseks) before 1960.3 Whereas about one-third of Sucipto’s The Perfect Path from the 1920s is devoted to a commentary on Javanese mystical texts, Indonesian texts on homosexuality or transgenderism from the 1970s onward often invoke outdated Western psychological theories. However, I know of no evidence of Indonesians terming themselves gay or lesbi before the 1970s. Since I am interested in the emergence of the gay and lesbi subject positions (not in, say, how a handful of Indonesians that might have learned of Western gay and lesbian subject positions in the 1950s or 1960s through travel to the West or an intimate relationship with an expatriate Westerner), this means that gay probably took form as a widely (if imperfectly) known subject position between the early 1970s and early 1980s, a decade or two later than in some other Southeast Asian nations such as Thailand (Jackson 1999a). The lesbi subject position appears to have a similar time frame, and lesbi communities existed at least in large cities by the early 1980s (S. Wieringa 1999a:215). The appearance of the gay and lesbi subject positions in Indonesia in the 1970s to 1980s is corroborated by a range of archival and oral historical data. One of my interlocutors, an older gay man living in Surabaya, noted that "there was a big change around 1978–79. Globalization [globalisasi] came in, the mass media came in … there were some Western gay magazines that were imported; they had small parts of them summarized and translated into Indonesian so they would sell here. These publications pushed people to be more open; they would read them and realize that ‘I’m not alone.’ "

That this man is highly literate probably explains why he is the only one of my interlocutors in any of my field sites to describe Western gay magazines being imported. Such imported magazines could not have circulated frequently or broadly enough to have contributed significantly to the formation of the gay and lesbi subject positions; it is clear that general mass media played the central role. The earliest study of contemporary Indonesian homosexuality to my knowledge, Amen Budiman’s 1979 book Lelaki Perindu Lelaki (Men Who Yearn for Men), notes that

in this decade [the 1970s] homosexuality has increasingly become an interesting issue for many segments of Indonesian society. Newspapers, both those published in the capital and in other areas, often present articles and news about

homosexuality. In fact, Berita Buana Minggu in Jakarta has a special column, "Consultation with a Psychiatrist," which often answers the complaints of those who are homosexual and want to change their sexual orientation. It’s the same way with pop magazines, which increasingly produce articles about homosexuality, sometimes filled with personal stories from homosexual people, complete with their photographs. (Budiman 1979:89–90)

Budiman added, "It is very interesting to note that homosexuals who originate in the lower classes often try to change their behavior by seeking advice from psychiatric or health columnists in our newspapers and magazines" (116). A similar timeline appears in the lesbi autobiography Menguak Duniaku (Revealing My World), published in 1988. Here the author reprints an "interesting piece of writing" by a doctor that "relates to my world," one linking mass media, sexuality, and national "style":

About ten years ago [1976 more or less], Indonesian newspapers and magazines discovered a new issue that sold well with readers. This was the problem of adult men who wanted to become women, and though the total was less, women who wanted to change themselves into men.

Nevertheless, before and after that issue circulated as a social issue, what was set forth was the problem of homosexuality [homoseksualitas] and lesbianism [lesbianisme]. Stories and reports were offered about the social condition of these things in industrial nations, together with commentary from sleazy Indonesian mass media. From time to time it was implied between the lines that even in Indonesia things like this had emerged.

After home electronics entered the consumer market in Indonesia, not all films with sex scenes were censored, because the form of sale was through video cassettes. So Indonesian films became colored by erotic and sexual scenes. The reaction of the Indonesian public varied. Some linked the showing of these films, including those that offered homosexual [homoseksual] or lesbian [lesbian] scenes, with the "invasion" of foreign values…. But those who talked about this didn’t really know what was being discussed…. A nation that must be made smart becomes a gullible nation. Such a gullible nation is a nation that has a label, but does not possess an identity [identitas]…. So it has happened with homosexuality and lesbianism, or with the problem of "changing ones genitals," and other problems that are connected with a style of life [cara hidup] that is "strange but stimulating" ["aneh tetapi merangsang"]. (Prawirakusumah and Ramadhan 1988:481–482)

In July 1980 an anonymous author, "X," published a story in the magazine Anda (You) entitled "I Found My Identity as a Homosex Person." This to my knowledge is the first time gay subjectivity appeared in mainstream mass media. The author wished to "provide a picture of what the life of homosex people is like" and "for those who are homosex/lesbi, to

encourage them to go to experts so maybe they can change. And if they cannot change, to accept themselves." He described a sexual awakening marked by encounters with mass media. When he was eleven years old (in 1964) and beginning to experiment sexually, "I read in a magazine about the meaning of the word homosex. I began to compare that explanation of homosexualitas with my own situation, but wasn’t yet sure." At this point the author claimed the term gay was not yet in use. As a young adult in college in 1977, "by coincidence I saw a book entitled Homosexual Behavior among Males, which explained that homosexualitas was proper and normal. I slowly developed a positive attitude concerning homosexualitas."4 This author is Dédé Oetomo, one of a handful of Indonesians willing to identify themselves publicly as gay or lesbi:

One of my friends from kindergarten was a psychology student at the University of Indonesia. He had connections at this popular psychology magazine called Anda and suggested I write my story. That must have been the spring of 1980. I thought I’d use my real name, but my aunt said "why don’t you use a pseudonym for the time being." So we settled on the name "X." It was published in July 1980 and the editors forwarded about fifteen letters from people who wanted to contact me. That was around October 1980. Most people were supportive, saying things like "I’m glad you are so honest; I hope you can be happy now."

Among my gay and lesbi interlocutors whose memory extends back to the early 1980s, there is wide agreement that the entry of gay and lesbi into mass media, and in a sense the beginning of the gay and lesbi worlds, originates not in the Anda article (of which most are unaware), but in the unofficial "marriage" in Jakarta of two lesbi women, Jossie and Bonnie (respectively, twenty-five and twenty-two years old at the time). The event took place on the night of April 19, 1981, and was covered soon thereafter by two weekly magazines with a national readership, the May 31 edition of Tempo and the June 6 edition of Liberty. The Liberty article was that week’s cover story (fig. 3–1) and began as follows:

## FIRST IN INDONESIA: A LESBIAN MARRIAGE, ATTENDED BY 120 GUESTS

In a luxurious building in the Blok M Kebayoran Baru district, a large crowd met in the Swimming Pub Bar…. The guests coming to this place turned their gaze to the young "groom and bride," both of whom smiled unceasingly…. The groom, Jossie, wore a white jacket and a blue tie with red blowers, while the bride, Bonnie, wore a long red gown…. The wedding cake was cut by Bonnie’s soft hands; over a hundred witnesses, including both sets of parents, watched as they fed each other a mouthful. This celebration of marriage went smoothly. Among the guests who came that night were several friends from the Police….5



Figure 3–1. "First in Indonesia: Lesbian Wedding, Attended by 120 Guests," with picture of Jossie and Bonnie. Liberty magazine, cover illustration for June 6, 1981, issue.

The Liberty reporter covering the event was fascinated by how Jossie appeared masculine and Bonnie feminine. The reporter claimed Jossie had been examined by doctors and found to have 75 percent male hormones and only 25 percent female hormones, while Bonnie was normal and "once had a boyfriend." When asked how she and Bonnie had sex, Jossie turned aside the question by referring to mass media, saying "It’s precisely like you have seen in imported books."

Even at this early point in the history of the gay and lesbi subject positions, there was great interest in belonging, productivity, and love, themes tightly interwoven with national rhetorics of the good citizen. The reporter underscored Jossie’s unemployed status at the time of the wedding—a disgraceful position for a new head of household—and asked Bonnie if her relationship with Jossie was based on emotion, sex, or love. Bonnie replied, "We want to have an eternal love."

It was the public consecration of Jossie and Bonnie’s relationship—their "official" wedding "with invitations, guests, fine clothes, and members of both families present"—that engendered the most anxiety for the media. The Tempo article contained a sidebox entitled "There They Have Laws for Them," which spoke about social recognition of homosexual relationships in the West, describing, for instance, how the United States had antidiscrimination laws and gay pride marches. This is the first occasion

to my knowledge that Indonesian mass media directly compared gay and lesbi Indonesians with gay and lesbian Westerners. The Liberty reporter openly pondered the social consequences of recognition:

This event is indeed unique, not least because it is the first time something like this has occurred in Jakarta, maybe in Indonesia, or even the whole world—that the marriage of two people of the same sex is formalized openly, without anything to cover it…. If the relationship by Jossie and Bonnie were tied together … with an ordinary reception in the presence of their peers, anyone could have done it. It would have been no different than a birthday party. What is unique … is a lesbi wedding formalized with a joyous ceremony, and thus constitutes a new "dilemma" in Indonesia. Viewing the life of these two young lesbi women, it is apparent that they have a different way of thinking about how to solve the problem of lesbianism in our Republic. In our estimation, both of them want to become pioneers for their people who are not small in number. And with them both standing in front, their hopes openly revealed, who knows what will happen.

Why did the Liberty reporter see the wedding of Jossie and Bonnie as a new dilemma? Crucially, it was not just the presence of the parents, the lovely cake, and the 120 guests that formalized the marriage, but the coverage of the event in the mass media. These mass media provided the incitement to discourse that inscribed the ceremony in a public sphere, marking it as a problem of the Republic but also part of a globalizing media environment rendering the Republic’s boundaries uncertain. Many gay and lesbi Indonesians recall the mass media coverage of Jossie and Bonnie’s reception as life-changing (not the reception itself, which few attended). In making the existence of a specifically Indonesian lesbi subjectivity public, the coverage of the reception holds a place in Indonesian popular culture roughly analogous to the coverage of Darrell Berrigan’s 1965 murder in Bangkok (Jackson 1999a). When Lambda Indonesia, the first gay activist organization, sent out its press release in March 1, 1982, one Western gay magazine noted that its "founding resulted in part from increasing coverage of lesbian and gay issues by the straight press, particularly the public marriage of two Jakarta lesbians in May 1981."6 In the novel Menguak Duniaku, the tomboi Hen recounts how while at a friend’s house he "picked up a copy of Tempo from a pile of magazines in the corner. I flipped through the pages and my eyes froze when I saw an article ‘The Story of Jossie and Bonni[e],’ like what I had read a few months earlier." Hen then provides what appears to be a full transcript of the article, which identifies Jossie and Bonnie as "the first female couple, properly called lesbians, in Indonesia to publicize themselves through a reception" (Prawirakusumah and Ramadhan 1988:303). The author of a report on lesbi women written in the early 1990s stated that "Ten years

after their marriage, the echo from the wedding of this female homosexual couple still reverberates. Their marriage is the only lesbian marriage to ever go proudly public in Indonesia" (see also Ary 1987:17).7 The wedding of Jossie and Bonnie is also mentioned in more recent works on lesbi life (e.g., Herlinatiens 2003:12).

In the years immediately following this event, in at least two other instances lesbi couples received media attention. In the first, two young women, Suratmi and Isnaini, killed themselves in a rural area of Central Java (near Solo) by running in front of a train rather than be separated by their families. According to the news report (once again from Liberty), Suratmi, "Isnaini’s best friend and workmate," was asked to dress as a man and stand in for Isnaini’s new husband from Solo who had failed to return to the village for an official reception. It is unclear if the two women had been in a sexual relationship before the ceremony took place, but following the ceremony it became well known: "they went everywhere together, including the movies." This visibility "became a problem" for the villagers and the women were ordered to end their relationship, which resulted in the suicides. As in the case of Bonnie and Jossie, social opprobrium revolved around the politics of recognition, not the sexual acts of the women.

The second lesbi relationship to gain public attention in the wake of Jossie and Bonnie involved Aty, a twenty-one-year-old pop singer in Jakarta who was arrested for her love affair with the fifteen-year-old Nona. Tempo reported the incident on May 23, 1981, noting that it was "The first case of a lesbi woman being tried ‘for doing it with someone of the same sex."’ In this case, the two women escaped from Jakarta to Malang in East Java, where Nona sent a letter to her parents saying that she would "choose Aty as my friend" until death. Reflecting yet again an emphasis on recognition, Nona emphasized in her letter that she had made a vow on a Bible with Aty.

Articles concerning gay men and lesbi women continued to appear intermittently throughout the 1980s; determining the exact level of coverage is not yet possible because there has been no systematic attempt to catalogue this coverage. In 1984 a group of Australians translated and published (under the title Gays in Indonesia) a set of articles that appeared between 1981 and 1983, collected by Dédé Oetomo (Gays in Indonesia Collective 1984). Given his diligence, the total of forty articles over two years probably represents a substantial percentage of the total number of articles published in major mass media during that time, highlighting that attention to gay and lesbi Indonesians was ongoing but rather minimal. Topics covered in these articles include the murder of a karate teacher in Bogor by a young man whom the teacher had forced into homosexual sex; "I Didn’t Know My Husband Was a Homosexual," the story of a

tricked wife who explained that unlike warias, gay men cannot be identified by a feminine appearance; and a story of homosexual behavior between men in a village Islamic school (pesantren), known as mairil. There also appeared a number of articles speculating on the causes of homosexual behavior based on Western sexology, and on notions of sin (usually drawing from Christian or Islamic sources).

It appears that throughout this period there was more media coverage of lesbi women than gay men. This is probably due to the greater policing of female sexuality in national discourse. The reports emphasized self-identified, lower-class lesbi women in couples as a foil to the modern middle-class woman. While gay and lesbi voices appeared in the early 1980s in Oetomo’s Anda article and the coverage of Jossie and Bonnie’s wedding, most articles were written from an outsider’s perspective. Very little of this 1980s’ mainstream mass media coverage addressed homosexuality outside Indonesia, raising again the issue of how gay and lesbi "globalized" to Indonesia at all.

## COMING TO GAY OR LESBI SUBJECTIVITY

Any model of communication is at the same time a model of trans-lation, of a vertical or horizontal transfer of significance. No two historical epochs, no two social classes, no two localities use words and syntax to signify exactly the same things, to send identical signals of valuation and inference. Neither do two human beings. —George Steiner, After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation

My gay and lesbi interlocutors of the 1990s and 2000s did not typically know of this history from the 1980s or the Dutch crackdown of the 1930s; they had little interest in, or knowledge of, ETPs. How did these Indonesians come to see themselves as gay or lesbi? Across what lines of similitude and difference are their selfhoods woven? How did Indonesians appropriate Western notions of homosexuality from the 1980s to the early 2000s, the period when gay and lesbi subjectivities first spread across the nation?

It is late morning in the city of Makassar, and I am recording an interview with Hasan, a thirty-two-year-old gay man I have known for many years. We are speaking about Hasan’s youth, and he recalls his first sexual relationship as a young teenager, which took place with an older friend at school. At that point Hasan had never heard the word gay:

HASAN: I didn’t yet know. I was confused. Why, why were there people like that? What I mean is why were there men who wanted to kiss men? This got me thinking when I was at home. I thought: why did my friend do that to me? What was going on? Was it just a sign, a sign of, what do you call it, just of friendship, I thought like that. I was still blind as to the existence of the gay world.

TB: And to learn the term gay or about the gay world, how did that happen? HASAN: I knew later, when I was watching television. I saw on the "world news," there it showed a gay demonstration. And according to the information there … the people who were demonstrating, um, wanted the government to accept the marriage of men with men. And that made me confused. Why was it like that? That’s when I was in high school [about two years after his first sexual experience with a man].

TB: And when you saw that, about that gay demonstration, what was your reaction, your feelings?

HASAN: I felt that an event like that could only happen outside; that in Indonesia there wasn’t anything like that. I thought that maybe because we had a different state [negara], a culture [kebudayaan] that wasn’t the same as their culture, so, maybe outside maybe it could be, and in Indonesia maybe it couldn’t be, but, at that time I didn’t think that there were people like that in Indonesia.

Hasan here recounts a moment of recognition, one that later leads him to look for other gay men and eventually call himself gay. Through an encounter with mass media, he comes to knowledge of what he takes to be the concept "gay" and retrospectively interprets his same-gender relationships before acquiring this knowledge in terms of "blindness." Readers familiar with debates in queer studies over the internationalization of gay and lesbian subjectivities (e.g., Adam, Duyvendak, and Krouwel 1999; Altman 2001) might seize on the fact that Hasan saw a gay demonstration as evidence of activism driving this "globalization," but, in fact, this is the most unusual aspect of Hasan’s narrative. Three other elements prove more typical: sexuality is tied to mass-mediated language; an outside way of being becomes intimate; and the border dividing gay culture from other cultures is national, not ethnolocal.

Throughout my fieldwork, I have taken great pains to investigate how it is that Indonesians come to gay or lesbi subjectivity. Unlike ethnicity, religion, or gender, the gay and lesbi subject positions are not passed down through the family. They are experienced as novel. Unlike ETPs or the waria subject position, they are not something one learns from one’s community or traditions: becoming gay or lesbi has required the reception and transformation of ideas from outside the home. This process appears,

on first consideration, to be an ethnographic mystery. Unless they are quite upper class or have traveled to the West, most Indonesians remain surprisingly unaware of the terms gay and lesbi or think the terms (and homo) are English names for warias. Even gay men and lesbi women who went to elementary school in the late 1980s or early 1990s recall the use on the schoolyard of terms primarily for warias, such as banci, but rarely gay or lesbi. No ethnolocalized tradition (adat) or religion sanctions gay or lesbi or even names them systematically. How, then, do these subject positions take hold in the hearts of so many contemporary Indonesians?

Despite the testimony of my interlocutor concerning Western gay pornographic magazines imported into Indonesia in the late 1970s, during my fieldwork gay men and particularly lesbi women did not describe such pornography as having given them the idea they could be gay or lesbi; many have never seen such pornography, and it was certainly never distributed on a national scale or to most rural areas. Early in my fieldwork I learned of the small, informally published magazines or "zines" produced by some gay and lesbi groups. I initially hypothesized that such zines might play a "conduit" role, indigenizing and disseminating Western concepts of homosexual identity. I was mistaken. Zines are a form of cultural commentary highlighting many aspects of gay and lesbi subjectivity, including the relationship between love and the nation (see Boellstorff 2004c), but are almost always accessed after first seeing oneself as gay or lesbi. None of my interlocutors cited zines as how they came to gay or lesbi subjectivity: they do not represent a significant medium through which gay and lesbi subjectivities are taken up by Indonesian men and women—or were first taken up historically, since the gay and lesbi subject positions existed for several years prior to the appearance of the first gay zine in 1982.

The majority of gay men and lesbi women first hear about the terms gay and lesbi from print media. Others hear of the terms from peers or teachers; in these cases the term is also mass mediated since those who employ it have usually encountered it directly or indirectly through mass media. One gay man recalled that "I first heard about gay from my biology teacher. She didn’t use the term gay or homo, just the concept. She said it was a genetic mutation and that such a person is a man but his face is pretty like a woman’s. Through that I knew that I was that kind of person." Another recalled that "My school friends never called me homo or banci. But I heard other people get called such names. At school some of the boys would tease one of my friends. If he grabbed another boy by the hand, another boy would call him ‘homo.’ I heard the word and thought ‘that’s me,’ I knew that what was said by that was me [yang disebutkan itu adalah saya]."



Figure 3–2. Ways in which one sample of 35 gay Indonesians first learned of the term. Categories listed on the horizontal axis: (1) from Indonesian mass media [19]; (2) from imported Western gay/lesbian media [0]; (3) from the Indonesian gay media [0]; (4) from religious sources [0]; (5) from friends [11]; (6) by wandering into a cruising area [3]; (7) from a sexual partner [2].

A few gay men first knew they could be gay after wandering into a public area frequented by gay men, and a few gay men and lesbi women became aware of the subject positions after being seduced. However, these are not the dominant pathways to learning of the gay or lesbi subject positions.

Figure 3–2 summarizes the responses of one sample of thirty-five gay men with whom I conducted extensive interviews. It shows that the element of Hasan’s narrative with the greatest resonance is his description of a kind of ‘Aha!’ moment when, during an encounter with mainstream print or electronic mass media, they come to think of themselves as gay. But unlike the ‘Aha!’ moments that dominate knowledge production in the West, this is the discovery of similitude rather than difference. About 90 percent of my interlocutors encountered these terms through mainstream print media, or from schoolmates or friends who learned of the terms through mainstream print media. This is true whether the individuals in question are from Java, Bali, Sulawesi, or other islands; whether they are Muslim, Christian, Hindu, or Buddhist; whether they are wealthy, middle class, or impoverished; whether they live in cities or rural areas; and whether they were born in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, or 1980s. Rarely is a cultural variable distributed so widely across such a diverse population. The critical role of mainstream mass media in the lives of gay and lesbi Indonesians is all the more notable when comparing the life narratives of gay men and lesbi women with those of warias. I have never heard warias cite mass media as the means by which they first saw themselves

as warias; they learn of the waria subject position from their social environs. Hasan’s narrative rehearses a common story of discovery that most gay and lesbi Indonesians see as pivotal in their lives, a moment they recall without hesitation, as in the case of the following Javanese Christian man in Surabaya:

In elementary school the only word was banci [waria]. For instance, a boy who walked or acted like a girl would get teased with the word banci. So I didn’t know about the word gay until junior high. I heard it from books, magazines, television. And I wanted to know! I looked for information; if I saw that a magazine had an article about homos I’d be sure to read it…. I learned all of that stuff from the mass media…. So having someone come and tell me "It’s like this," that never happened. I learned it all through magazines and newspapers…. And when I read those things, I knew that I was gay.

For this man "homo" is an impersonalized descriptive category, whereas "gay" is a framework for understanding the self’s past motivations, immediate desires, and visions of an unfolding future. For many men an important aspect of this moment is realizing the possibility of a nonnormative masculine sexuality other than waria. Basir, a Muslim man who grew up in a small town in Sulawesi, tells his story in the following interview excerpt:

TB: When you were in your teenage years, did you already know the term gay?

BASIR: In my environment at that time, most people didn’t yet know. But because I read a lot, read a lot of news, I already knew. I already knew that I was gay. Through reading I knew about the gay world….

TB: What kinds of magazines?

BASIR: Gossip magazines, you know, they always talk about such-and-such a star and the rumors that the person is gay. So that broadened my concepts [wawasan], made me realize "Oh, there are others like me."

A Balinese Hindu man in his late twenties notes that: "In my first year of high school, I started to think. I started to think very hard: why do I like men? Because my other friends liked women. So from that my questions began, but they weren’t yet answered…. I turned to the print media. So if there was news about gay stuff I’d be sure to read it—letters to the editor that asked ‘why am I like this?,’ reports in women’s magazines, and so on."

One afternoon I was speaking with Darta, an unmarried Ambonese man in his early thirties living with his family in Surabaya. We were alone in the living room, but family members bustled about in the back of the house. I realized that since we were speaking Indonesian, they could be listening in on the conversation, yet Darta didn’t seem bothered. Sitting

on the cool tile floor, I looked up at him and asked, "Does your family already know about you?" Darta answered, "Yeah, they know that I’m effeminate and I have sex with men. It’s no problem. They don’t say it’s a sin or anything. After they read magazines, they knew and understood, and accepted me."

"What magazines did they read?" I asked.

"Women’s magazines, like Kartini. Those magazines always have gossip columns. So that’s how they knew."

"When did you hear about gay for the first time?"

"I also read about it from magazines. When I first heard the word gay, it was in fifth or sixth grade [c. 1985], on the island of Ambon where I grew up. It was there that I first heard about lesbi. Earlier, you know—gay wasn’t around yet [gay belum ada]. But lesbi was already in women’s magazines … and I read lots of those magazines because mom was a regular subscriber. Mom and I loved reading the articles on sexual deviants. I was always effeminate, and one day she even said I was lesbi! Because she didn’t know the term gay; the term wasn’t public back then. But eventually I learned the term gay as well [dapat gay juga]. That was also from a magazine. There was some story about historic English royalty … Richard someone. When I saw that, I thought ‘there’re others like me.’"

Because gay and lesbi representations mingle in these mass media, most lesbi women, like the following Balinese woman, also trace their subjectivities to encounters with mass media: "I didn’t use the word lesbi because I didn’t even know the term [when I was young]. I didn’t hear about the word lesbi until about 1990, when I read it in a magazine. And right away, when I read about lesbi and what that meant, I thought to myself, ‘That’s me!’" Sukma, a Muslim who terms herself a masculine lesbi woman (hunter yang lesbi), recalls that although she had sexual relations with other women in her early teenage years, "I didn’t know hunter yet, but I already knew lesbian, lesbi, I knew. I’d already—I’d already read it, don’t you know? In magazines, through hanging out with friends who mentioned it, through means like that." Sukma talked about short articles in newspapers that would occasionally mention how women could have sex with women, concluding, "Through that I could know that I was lesbi" (lewat itu saya bisa tahu bahwa saya itu lesbi).

For these Indonesians, the prerevelatory period of sexual subjectivity is usually experienced locally; the local is the social space of the not-yet (belum) gay or not-yet lesbi. What they describe when they encounter the concepts gay or lesbi through mass media is a moment of recognition that involves a shift in sexualized spatial scale; it is not only that same-gender desire can be constituted as a subjectivity, but also that its spatial scale is translocal. The deictic "That’s me!" places the self in a dialogic relationship

with a distant but familiar Other. On one level this spatial scale is national. One reason for this is that the mass media through which Indonesians come to gay or lesbi subjectivity employ the national language, Indonesian (not ethnolocalized languages like Javanese or Buginese), and incorporate themes of national unity and patriotism. A second reason is that, unlike ETPs, the concepts gay and lesbi are seen as self-evidently incompatible with ethnolocality: no one learns what gay or lesbi means through "Makassarese culture" or "Javanese culture." Gay and lesbi persons think of themselves as Indonesians with regard to their sexualities. On a second level, gay and lesbi Indonesians, unlike warias, see their subjectivities as linked to a transnational imagined community: it is as if they are one island in a global archipelago of gay and lesbian persons. How can mass media have such unexpected effects from the margins?

The role of mass media is striking because there has been little coverage of openly gay or lesbi Indonesians: while coverage is increasing, what Indonesians still usually encounter through mass media is gossip about Indonesian celebrities and particularly gossip about Western celebrities. In contrast to some other postcolonial states like India, imports now represent a substantial amount of cinematic and televised fare in Indonesia, and most Indonesians, not just gay and lesbi ones, learn about the West through mass media rather than "the direct experience of living abroad" (Utomo 2002:211). Although there is a long tradition of filmmaking in Indonesia dating back to the early twentieth century and at some points garnering nationwide audiences, in the late 1990s the Indonesian film industry generally produced only fifteen to twenty films per year, mostly low-budget erotic films that went directly to second- or third-run theaters (Ryanto 1998:42).8 Homosexuality appears so rarely that in 1997 a representative from Virgo Putra Film Corporation noted with regard to the film Metropolitan Girl "that film is really great, because there is a lesbian [lesbian] scene in it, something that has never existed in an Indonesian film up to this point."9 Print media frequently run articles on "hetero" sex crimes, with descriptions of police breaking up "sex parties,"10 arresting sex workers, or seizing pornography. Such musings on sexuality are sometimes linked to globalization, but homosexuality typically receives at best indirect mention, as in the following 1996 editorial:

The speed of information and the high mobility of people on the face of this earth has resulted in sociocultural interaction [interaksi sosio budaya]. Within this sociocultural interaction there occurs a process of influence, imitation, and identification…. [We] must guard against this sociocultural interaction…. it’s possible that we will lose our self-identity as Indonesians…. So don’t be surprised if premarital relations, sexual relations outside of marriage, sexual harassment, rape, living together without being married, sexual deviations, infidelity and similar things are already no longer considered strange.11

 

Figure 3–3. Gay men portrayed as possessed by animal lust. Bali Post, March 1, 1998:12.

In the 1990s lesbi women continued to receive more attention (i.e., surveillance) than men in mass media, but the focus shifted from lower-class lesbi women to entertainment figures, from couples to individual women, from ceremonies to sex acts, and from self-identified lesbi women to speculation on concealed homosexuality. An example is Nusa’s 1998 interview of the actress Inneke Koesherawati.12 The article, entitled "I Indeed Embrace Devi Frequently," revolved around accusations that Inneke was the lesbi lover of another actress, Devi Permatasari: "To give the public certainty … [Devi] married [the male actor] Candra Priatna. ‘Society now has proof I’m not a lesbi woman,’ said Devi. But what about Inneke? For her the news of Devi’s marriage is already enough to disprove the gossip. ‘What more proof do you want. What’s clear is that I’m a normal woman.’"

Coverage on gay men has tended to follow the same pattern, with a particular interest in gay sexuality as a vice of the kalangan eksekutif or "executive classes." A 1998 Bali Post article "Homoseksual" is typical.13 Opening with an image portraying homosexual men as "after meat" or possessed by animal lust (fig. 3–3), the columnist, an "andrologist-sexologist,"

reprints two letters. In the first, "DP" describes befriending another man who showered DP with kindnesses and invited DP to spend the night in a hotel, where he seduced DP. In the second, "WA" describes feeling aroused by seeing men in tight pants or underwear. Both ask the columnist, "Am I homoseksual?" The columnist replies "No" to both, because the first was "receiving intensive sexual stimulation" and the second because "just because he likes a handsome man does not indicate that WA is homoseksual." Emphasizing the importance of conditioning, the columnist warns DP never to repeat his experience with another man and WA to avoid seeing men in their underwear, lest either become habituated to homosexualitas.14

When Indonesians encounter Western homosexuality in the mass media, what they usually see is not a one-hour special on "Homosexuality in the West"; rarely is it even the kind of demonstration described by Hasan. Gay and lesbi Indonesians typically speak of brief, intermittent coverage: a single fifteen-second item on Rock Hudson’s AIDS diagnosis; an editorial about Al Pacino’s role in the movie Cruising; reports on the 1991 death from AIDS of Freddie Mercury, lead singer of the British rock band Queen; a gossip column about Elton John or Melissa Etheridge; or gossip in the wake of the hit movie Titanic that Leonardo DiCaprio might be gay. The contrast to Liberty’s coverage of Jossie and Bonnie’s marriage in 1981 is evident: the emphasis has changed from Indonesia to the outside, from couples to individuals, from the acknowledged to the imputed, and from impoverished criminality to elitism. Alongside this attention to Western entertainers has come greater coverage of homosexuality outside Indonesia.15

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s a growing number of imported programs presented gay and lesbian characters.16 Particularly when homosexuality is a relatively minor element of the plot—as in movies like Cruising or The Wedding Banquet, and television shows like Melrose Place—such programs are difficult to censor on the basis of their homosexual elements.17 Although some gay men and lesbi women actually see such films, because the films either make it onto Indonesian screens or, increasingly, are available on video or VCD, what gay and lesbi Indonesians found most significant through the 1990s and early 2000s are national print media, particularly newspapers and women’s magazines like Kartini and Femina. In most cases the references to homosexuality are negative—psychologists presenting homosexuality as a pathology, crime exposés, or disapproving gossip columns. The mystery of how Indonesians come to gay and lesbi subjectivity deepens in the face of this paradox: it is mainstream mass media that play the crucial role, yet "homosexuality"—Western or Indonesian—appears quite infrequently and inconsistently in these mass media. Denunciations of sexually decadent programming from the

West usually cite premarital sex, adultery, and unmarried cohabitation between men and women rather than homosexuality.

Beginning in the mid-1990s there has been an increasing, if still small, presence of gay and lesbi voices in general mass media, with a substantial increase after 2002. This remains a radical act because it collapses the boundaries between the gay and lesbi worlds and the normal world; it could thus have serious repercussions, including bringing shame upon the family or being expelled from the household or workplace. The scholar and activist Dédé Oetomo has remained the most salient gay or lesbi voice in mass media; few articles on homosexuality fail to interview him, and on several occasions he has appeared in full-color photo essays, complete with partner, house, and car—elements that mark him (and most images of gay and lesbi subjectivity in mass media in the 1990s) as middle class.18 On June 9, 1997, Oetomo appeared on the talk show Buah Bibir (Topic of Conversation). Emceed by Debra Yatim, a woman known for her connections to women’s rights circles, the show was well known for its sensational topics such as adultery and domestic violence. The topic for discussion on June 9 was lesbi women, but Oetomo, willing to be publicly identified as homoseks, was the guest star (several lesbi women appeared with their faces blackened out). This marked the first time that gay or lesbi subjectivities had appeared so openly on national television. When Minister of Information Hartono criticized RCTI (the station producing Buah Bibir) as well as station SCTV, which produced a similar program, Portret, Yatim defended the show by appealing to ETPs and style: "gemblak in [the area of] Ponorogo [in East Java] have been around for a long time, in [the West Java city of] Indramayu there are tayuban dances in a homo style [gaya homo], and even at the Borobudur temple there are reliefs about homosexuality."19 When Minister of Religion Tarmizi Taher added that the "promotion of gay and lesbianisme" must not be "provided with opportunities" in television, radio, or other public forums, the editors of Kompas joked, "But how is it that béncongs [warias] are in almost every telecomedy, sir?"20—highlighting how the waria subject position is less threatening than the gay and lesbi subject positions, so clearly novel and with transnational resonances.21

Lesbi women appear much more rarely in mass media of their own accord. One Balinese lesbi woman appeared in the tourist magazine Bali Eko in the mid 1990s: "It was in English … and in the article I came out, using my real name, and talked about how hard it was being a lesbi here…. My parents and family were mad at first—‘how can you do this?, they said’—but I think it’s been good. It forced us to talk about things more, but they still pressure me to marry."

Since 2002 several private television stations have run segments of ten to thirty minutes on gay and lesbi life in Indonesia, including face-to-face

interviews. Gay and lesbi topics have appeared on talk shows with greater regularity, with celebrities like Ivan Gunawan openly identifying as gay. The film Arisan! included a major plotline concerning the struggle of Sakti, a gay man, to accept himself and find love with another man. Though Sakti’s upper-class life bears little resemblance to the lives of most gay men, the film, with its two on-screen kisses between Sakti and his lover, was widely viewed in theaters or on video. Additionally, a growing number of books on gay life have appeared that focus on rich Jakartans, detailing an elite world of sex parties and wealth alien to the lives of most gay and lesbi Indonesians (e.g., Priaga 2003). This greater coverage of gay and lesbi lives in the mass media, however biased, will surely have unintended ramifications for how gay and lesbi Indonesians in ensuing years understand their subjectivities.

Occasionally gay or lesbi Indonesians respond to unfavorable coverage, as in an exchange of letters from the Surabaya newspaper Surya in 1998. On January 8 the newspaper published a letter by someone using the initials "M.Y.R." that claimed, "In this era of globalization, everything demands openness…. Up to now I have always regarded the life of gay people as something normal, with the note that everything has always been limited to friendship and communication. But after more than a week of research in Surabaya, I’ve become nervous. Apparently the life of gay people there is just a business mask, to get money easily." A week later the newspaper published the response of "A.T." After stating how he had known the gay world since 1984 and had even appeared on the cover of Intisari magazine in May 1993 for an article about gay issues, A.T. emphasized that "For all that time I have never known that there are gay men who sell themselves for money. What I know is that there are hetero people (there are some who already have families) who prostitute themselves for money…. Don’t just base your research on a week’s work and then draw conclusions."

Such back-talk can appear in other formats. One day in March 1998 I was hanging out in the salon of a gay man in southern Bali when two members of a local gay group suddenly entered the door. Tossing their motorcycle helmets on the sofa and pushing aside a stack of glossy fashion magazines, they sat down and started speaking animatedly: "We got invited to participate in this radio show about being gay three days ago, and earlier this morning we went on-air [anonymously] with a parent and a psychologist." The other man chimed in: "But that psychologist was so stupid! He didn’t know his material. He kept saying that it was a disease, that if a client got married and had kids that meant he was cured. We argued with him for the whole show."

Rarely, mainstream mass media address the organizational activities of gay and lesbi Indonesians. One of the most extensive examples was the

five-part series run by the newspaper Nusa from November 23 to 28, 1997, covering the Third National Congress of Gay and Lesbi Indonesians in Denpasar, Bali. Most of the reportage was sensationalistic, focusing on sexual practices and the supposed shame and secrecy of the attendees. However, the final installment—entitled "The ‘Medicine’ That Makes the People Who Like the Same Kind [Kaum Sejenis] Happy: To Be Recognized by Society"—explored, albeit briefly, the politics of acceptance articulated by many of the conference attendees. Focusing on the fact that no gay or lesbi organization has ever been recognized by the government, in a context where many waria organizations are so recognized, the article noted that "it is difficult for [gay and lesbi organizations] to be legalized by the government for the reason that gay identity [identitas gay] does not exist in the [system of] government administration."22 As in the case of Bonnie and Jossie’s wedding almost two decades before, the issue was not sex acts but belonging and recognition.23

The gay and lesbi subject positions thus lead us to a specific sociological problem. As a new, consumerist middle class emerged following the oil crisis of the 1970s, Indonesians began to learn of the possibility of thinking of oneself as gay or lesbi through the intermittent reception of messages from mass media. These messages do not intend to convey the possibility of a kind of selfhood. They are often denigrating and dismissive, but above all they are fragmentary. Because I have bundled together a series of examples, I may have given the false impression that such coverage is an everyday occurrence. But normally these discussions of "homosexuality" are but isolated moments in the buzz and confusion of other reportage, even in the early 2000s. It is not an incitement to discourse or a coherent "hailing." But the sum of these partial asides, sporadic humaninterest stories, and irregular interviews has been a slowly increasing hum of discourse tenuously linkable to gay and lesbi subjectivities, reaching the farthest corners of Indonesia. It has implied that one could understand one’s selfhood in terms of same-gender desire, and thus that gay and lesbi subjectivities are somehow akin—suggesting that gay is conceptually closer to lesbi than to waria. These media disseminate the idea that gay and lesbi subjectivities exist, while being vague, incomplete, and contradictory as to what they might entail in terms of everyday practice. They also imply that these subjectivities are Indonesia-wide phenomena, nonethnolocalized and bearing some kind of "family resemblance" to gay and lesbian subjectivities outside Indonesia. From their beginnings to the present, these media have "exposed" not a fully articulated discourse of homosexuality, but a series of incomplete and contradictory references, in translation, sometimes openly denigrating and hostile. It is not a transmission of self-understanding so much as a fractured set of cultural logics

reconfigured within Indonesia. Yet from "translations" of this intermittent reportage come subjectivities by which myriad Indonesians live out their lives. In the 1980s an Indonesian might encounter such reportage a few times a year at most, if an avid reader; in the 1990s and 2000s it became more frequent but still minimal given the universe of topics appearing in the mass media. The question, then, is how modes of subjectivation become established when the social field in which they arise establishes them neither as discourses nor as reverse discourses. Indonesian mass media certainly do not intend to set forth the possibility of gay and lesbi subject positions, nor do the imported programs they frequently rebroadcast; in fact, they rarely take a negative stance on gay and lesbi subject positions. Yet it is these mass media that, in a very real sense, make gay and lesbi subjectivities possible, just as the national imagined communities that are so socially efficacious worldwide could not have existed before Gutenberg struck type to page.

## THE "PROBLEM" OF DUBBING

Eros and language mesh at every point. Intercourse and discourse, copula and copulation, are subclasses of the dominant fact of communication…. Sex is a profoundly semantic act … human sexuality and speech [together] generate … the process … whereby we have hammered out the notion of self and otherness. —George Steiner, After Babel: Aspects of Languageand Translation

Mass media were important in the archipelago long before gay and lesbi subjectivities. From the late nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth, print media played a central role in the formation of nationalism among the diverse and far-flung peoples of the Netherlands East Indies. Print media were also important in the establishment of Indonesian (a dialect of Malay formerly used as a lingua franca of trade) as the language of this new imagined community, a language that could permit communication among a populace speaking about 550 languages, or approximately "one-tenth of all the languages in the world" (Sneddon 2003:5).24 Electronic media have become increasingly significant: by the late 1990s each of Indonesia’s then-five private television stations was importing approximately seven thousand shows per year, many of which originated in the United States (Republika 1996), and beginning in the 1990s dubbing became an increasingly popular way of presenting these broadcasts to Indonesian audiences (Lindsay 2005).25

It was in this context that, in a joint news conference on April 4, 1996, one year after one of Indonesia’s private television stations went national for the first time, Minister of Information Harmoko and Minister of Education and Culture Wardiman Djojonegoro announced that "foreign films on television should no longer be broadcast in their original language version with Indonesian summaries or subtitles but were to be dubbed into Indonesian" (Lindsay 2005). This regulation on dubbing (dubbing, sulih suara [to substitute sound]) was to take effect by August 16, in accordance with a soon-to-be-passed broadcasting law, which included the first set of broadcasting regulations to be issued in eighteen years.26 This bill, which had been debated in Parliament for several months at that point, was to become one of the most contentious legal documents of the New Order’s twilight years. The requirement that all programs be dubbed into Indonesian was greeted with little fanfare: as the public relations manager of TPI noted, many of the programs imported each year by private television stations were already dubbed in response to viewer demand. Acquiescing to the state’s long-standing goal of building nationalism through language planning, the public relations manager of RCTI added that the requirement was "a good policy that will help build Indonesian skills in society" (Republika 1996).

Within a month of the announcement, however, Aisyah Aminy, a spokesperson from the House of Representatives, suggested "this problem of dubbing is going to be discussed in more depth" (Suara Pembaruan Daily 1996). Revealing dissent within the state apparatus, Aminy expressed concern that "at present, foreign films on television are not dubbed selectively and show many things that do not fit well with the culture of our people" (Suara Pembaruan Daily 1996). The influential armed forces faction also weighed in against the measure, but the House forged ahead, incorporating the dubbing requirement in its draft broadcast law of December 6, 1996.

What made the broadcasting bill such a topic of discussion was the way in which it was debated and revised, extraordinary even for the arcane machinations of the New Order bureaucracy. A first draft of the bill was completed by a legislative committee early in 1996 and sent to Parliament for approval. As usual in the New Order, the bill had been essentially crafted by the president and even bore his initials (McBeth 1997:24). In December 1996 Parliament duly rubber-stamped the bill, returning it to Soeharto for his signature. After seven months, however, on July 11, 1997, Soeharto dropped a bombshell: in an official letter he refused to sign the draft broadcast law and returned it to Parliament for revision, claiming that "several articles will be too difficult to implement from a technical standpoint" (Kompas 1997; Soeharto 1997). This unconstitutional act was the first time in national history a president refused to sign

a draft law already passed by the House, a refusal made all the more perplexing by his approval of the original bill (Kompas 1997). House debate on the president’s proposed revisions began on September 18, 1997, and was marked by unusual (for the Soeharto era) interruptions from Parliament members and heated argument over executive–legislative relations.

In the wake of the president’s refusal, government sources gave conflicting accounts of the issues at stake. One issue, however, stood out above the others for its cultural, rather than directly economic, emphasis: the edict on dubbing. What was notable was the total reversal that occurred during parliamentary revisions: when the dust cleared in December 1997, Article 25 of the draft law, concerning dubbing, "had been completely reversed. All non-English language foreign films henceforth had to be dubbed into English, and all foreign films shown with Indonesian subtitles" (Lindsay 2005). Why this sea change? As one apologist later explained:

Dubbing can create gaps in family communication. It can ruin the self-image of family members as a result of adopting foreign values that are "Indonesianized" [diindonesiakan]…. This can cause feelings of becoming "another person" to arise in family members, who are in actuality not foreigners … whenever Indonesians view television, films, or other broadcasts where the original language has been changed into our national language, those Indonesians will think that the performances in those media constitute a part of themselves. As if the culture behind those performances is also the culture of our people. (N. Ali 1997:341–342, emphasis added)

In the end, the final version of the bill indeed forbids dubbing most foreign programs into the Indonesian language. What is of interest for our purposes here, however, is the debate itself. Why, at this prescient moment in 1997—as if foreshadowing the New Order’s collapse the following year—did translation become a focal point of political and cultural anxiety? What made the ability of Sharon Stone or Tom Cruise to "speak Indonesian" no longer a welcome opportunity to foster linguistic competency but rather a sinister force threatening the good citizen’s ability to differentiate self from Other? Why, even with widespread discontent in many parts of the archipelago, was the state’s fear suddenly recentered, not on religious, regional, or ethnic affiliation overwhelming national loyalty, but on transnational affiliation superseding nationalism and rendering it secondary? And what might be the hidden linkages between this dubbing controversy and the crucial role mass media play in gay and lesbi subjectivities?

## DUBBING CULTURE

An error, a misreading initiates the modern history of our subject. Romance languages derive their terms for "translation" from traducere because Leonardo Bruni misinterpreted a sentence in the Noctes of Aulus Gellius in which the Latin actually signifies "to introduce, to lead into." The point is trivial but symbolic. Often, in the records of translation, a fortunate misreading is the source of new life. —George Steiner, After Babel:Aspects of Language in Translation

We now have two problems centering on mass media. First: how do Indonesians come to see themselves as gay or lesbi through the fragmentary reception of mass mediated messages? Second: why would the question of dubbing foreign television shows into the Indonesian language provoke one of the greatest constitutional crises in Indonesia’s history? I suggest that the first problem can be addressed through the second. In effect, these two sets of social facts can be "dubbed," throwing up striking convergences and unexpected resonances. Both of these problems raise issues of translation and authenticity in an already globalized world. This conjuncture of translation and authenticity is powerfully gendered and sexualized in the Western tradition, which "suggests that in the original abides what is natural, truthful, and lawful, in the copy, what is artificial, false, and treasonous … like women, the adage goes, translations should be either beautiful or faithful" (Chamberlain 2000:315). The "authentic" originary is masculinized, the "inauthentic" translation is feminized, and the process of translation heterosexualized. From this dominant perspective both dubbing and homosexual sex appear sterile, failed, unfaithful. The gay and lesbi subject positions demand a queer take on translation: How long before a word is no longer a "loanword"?

It was long after becoming aware of the link between mass media and gay and lesbi subjectivities that I learned of the dubbing controversy. I had been struggling with the question of gay and lesbi subjectivities for some time without a clear conclusion, particularly concerning questions of agency. Were gay and lesbi Indonesians simply mimicking the West? Were they severed from their traditions once they occupied the subject positions gay or lesbi? Alternatively, were these Indonesians queering global capitalism, subverting its heteronormativity and building a movement dedicated to human rights? Were they deploying the terms gay and lesbi tactically, as a veneer over a deeper indigenousness?

A notion of "dubbing culture" allowed me to move beyond this impasse of "puppets of globalization" versus "veneer over tradition." Through individual encounters with mass media—like reading one’s mother’s magazines or an advice column in the local newspaper, or viewing television coverage of a gay pride march in Australia—Indonesians construct subjectivities and communities. Construct is the wrong word; it connotes a self who plans and consciously shapes something.27 Better to say that these Indonesians "come to" gay and lesbi subjectivity through these entanglements with mass media; their constructive agency, and the gay and lesbi subject positions themselves, are constructed through the encounter. This is not a solely individual process; although the originary encounters with magazines or newspapers are typically solitary, as soon as the person begins to interact with other gay- or lesbi-identified Indonesians, he or she reworks these mass-mediated understandings of sexuality. Romance, for instance, is a crucial element of gay and lesbi subjectivities but rarely appears in media treatments of homosexuality.

A set of fragmented cultural elements from mass media is transformed in unexpected ways in the Indonesian context, transforming that context itself in the process. In other words, gay and lesbi Indonesians "dub" ostensibly Western sexual subjectivities. Like a dub, the fusion remains a juxtaposition; the seams show. "Speech" and "gesture" never perfectly match; being gay or lesbi and being Indonesian never perfectly match. For gay and lesbi Indonesians, as in dubbing culture more generally, this tension is irresolvable; there is no "real" version underneath, where everything fits. You can close your eyes and hear perfect speech or mute the sound and see perfect gesture, but no original unites the two in the dubbed production. This may not present the self with an unlivable contradiction, however, since in dubbing one is invested not in the originary, but rather in the awkward fusion. Disjuncture is at the heart of the dub; there is no prior state of pure synchrony, and no simple conversion to another way of being. Where traditional translation is haunted by its inevitable failure, dubbing rejoices in the good-enough and the forever incomplete. Dubbing is not definitive but heuristic, interpretative—like many understandings of the ethnographic project.

It is this dimension of dubbing that transcends the apparent dilemma of "puppets of globalization" versus "veneer over tradition." The idea of dubbing culture indicates that the root of the problem is the notion of authenticity itself, the colonialist paradigm that valorizes the "civilized" colonizer over the "traditional" colonized. In line with the observation that postcolonial nationalisms usually invert, rather than disavow, colonial categories of thought (inter alia, Gupta 1998:169), the Indonesian state simply flips the colonial binary, placing tradition over modernity as the ultimate justification for the nation. To the obvious problem of justifying

a recently formed nation in terms of tradition, the Indonesian state (like all national states) has worked ever since to inculcate a sense of national culture (kebudayaan nasional). This is built on the pillar of the Indonesian language and propagated via mass media. Through mass media, citizens are to come to recognize themselves as authentic Indonesians, carriers of an oxymoronic "national tradition" that will guide the body politic through the travails of modernity. By speaking in one "Indonesian" voice, a hierarchy of tradition over modernity can be sustained and reconciled with statehood.

Dubbing, an inevitably and openly unfaithful translation since words and lips never match, threatens this hierarchy: it is lateral, rhizomatic (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). The authoritative voice is at odds with the visual presentation. Dubbing culture sets two elements side by side, blurred yet distinct. It is a performative act that, in linking persons to subject positions, creates subjectivities (Butler 1990); but this dubbing link is profoundly not one of suture, a term originating in film studies regarding "the procedures by means of which cinematic texts confer subjectivity upon their viewers" (Silverman 1983:195). In dubbing culture, subjectivity is constituted not through suture but through collage. Yet this productively partial incorporation of the self into discourse is not a failed performance: in its iteration, its holding together of two ostensibly incompatible cultural logics without conflating them, a space for subjectivity—a subject position—appears.

I have described dubbing in terms of a disjuncture between image and voice, and many Indonesians see it that way, but another way to conceptualize dubbing is as the substitution of one voice for another, as indicated by the phrase sulih suara, a common term alongside dubbing. Early twentieth-century Russian linguists like Bakhtin (1981) and Vološinov (1973) became interested in "reported speech," a topic that has also gained the attention of current scholars of language and culture (e.g., Gal 1998; Rumsey 1990; Silverstein 1993). Reported speech, which in Indonesian as in English can take the form of direct or indirect discourse ("She said, ‘I’m exhausted’" versus "She said that she was exhausted"), typically operates as what Bakhtin termed authoritative discourse, which works "to determine the very bases of our ideological interactions with the world" (Bakhtin 1981:342). For Bakhtin, "authoritative discourse … remains sharply demarcated, compact and inert … it enters our verbal consciousness as a compact and indivisible mass; one must either totally affirm it, or totally reject it" (343).

Dubbing destabilizes the very notion of reported speech. It is highly indirect discourse—not just paraphrasing speech but rendering it into a different language—yet it is hemmed in by a double authority: the original dialogue it reworks, and the image of moving lips with which it must

attempt to unify. Yet the attempt is intended (not doomed) to fail; a dub rejects the binarism of "totally affirming" or "totally rejecting" the discourse it transforms, just like gay and lesbi Indonesians are neither imitating Western homosexualities nor utterly distinct from them. Dubbing demands a new grid of similitude and difference, one appropriate to an already globalized world.

The original television show or movie may preexist its Indonesian dub temporally, but to the interpreting audience neither voice nor image is prior. They happen together; neither dominates. Agamben, citing Benjamin’s concern with the relationship between quotation and the new "transmissibility of culture" made possible by mass media, notes that quotation "alienat[es] by force a fragment of the past … mak[ing] it lose its authentic power" (1999:104). But dubbing culture (in a literal sense as well as the metaphorical sense I develop here) is more than just quotation; it adds a step, first alienating something but then reworking it in a new context. The power of the dub comes not by erasing authenticity but by inaugurating new authenticities not dependent on tradition or translation. It is a form of reported speech that disrupts the apparent seamlessness of the predubbed original, showing that it too is a dub, that its "traditions" are the product of social contexts with their own assumptions and inequalities. Thus it is not the case that gay and lesbi subjectivities in Indonesia are disjunctive and heuristic while Western sexual subjectivities (queer or otherwise) are seamless. What we can learn from the Indonesian case is that the apparent coherence of all subjectivities is a cultural effect, and the inevitable "failure" of coherence does not mean that subjectivity is flawed or inauthentic.

The Indonesian authorities were keenly aware of these disruptive implications during the dubbing controversy. For decades, Indonesian had been the vehicle allowing Indonesians to speak with one voice. But now the possibility that Sharon Stone could "speak Indonesian" meant that this vehicle was spinning beyond state control—into the control of globalizing forces, but also into an interzone between languages and cultures, a zone with no controlling authority: "the Indonesian dubbing was so successful in making the language familiar that viewers lost any idea that it was strange for foreigners to speak Indonesian…. The language was too familiar, too much like real speech, too colloquial, and therefore the speech was too dangerous" (Lindsay 2005:11).

The sudden shift during the dubbing controversy—from an insistence that all foreign television programs be dubbed into the Indonesian language to an insistence that none of them could be so dubbed—reveals a tectonic shift in the position of mass media in Indonesian society. For the first time, fear of this juxtaposition, of Westerners "speaking" the national tongue, tipped the scales against a historically privileged concern

with propagating Indonesian as national unifier. Now the ability of dubbing (and the Indonesian language itself) to explode the national imagined community—to show that one can be Indonesian and translate ideas from outside—presented a danger greater than the potential benefit of drawing more sharply the nation’s archipelagic edges.

Dubbing itself is clearly not how Indonesians come to gay and lesbi subjectivity; I have never heard them specifically mention dubbing, and dubbing did not become ubiquitous until the 1990s. This is why the dubbing controversy took place in 1997, not 1981, 1961, or 1861. However, the controversy was about more than the technique of dubbing or even mass media generally: it concretized a sense that the relationship among scale, selfhood, and belonging had been cast into what for some was a disturbing state of flux. The trajectory of this process stretches back over one hundred years, for "the path by which recognition became centered in the Indonesian nation … is indissociable from the history of ‘communication’ … the history of the nation is made not from autochthonous sources and not from foreign borrowings but from the effects of these connections." Not similitude, nor difference, but the dubbing of these two, so that the originary moment of Indonesian national culture lies in "the history of hearing and overhearing that went on between groups of the Indies and between the Indies and the world" (Siegel 1997:7, 6).

What does it mean when what you overhear is a dub?

Dubbing culture is about a new kind of cultural formation in an already globalized world, one for which the idiom of translation is no longer sufficient. It questions the relationship between translation and belonging, asserting that the binarisms of import–export and authentic–inauthentic are insufficient to explain how globalizing mass media play a role in gay and lesbi subject positions but do not determine them outright. For queer studies, one lesson is that binarisms of rupture versus indigenity do not capture the possibility of subject positions with more nuanced and conjunctural relationships to the West, ones that may stand outside usual definitions of identity politics. In a metaphorical sense, one could say that gay and lesbi Indonesians dub Western sexual subject positions: they overwrite the deterministic "voice of the West," yet they cannot compose any script they please; their bricolage remains shaped by a discourse originating in the West and filtered through a nationalistic lens. This process of dubbing allows gay and lesbi individuals to see themselves as part of a global community, but also as authentically Indonesian. Unlike warias, they never ask, "Are there people like me outside Indonesia?" because it is already obvious—"built into" the dubbed subjectivities—that there are such people. These Indonesians imagine themselves as one national element in a global patchwork of gay and lesbian national subjectivities, not as "traditional," because gay and lesbi have a national spatial scale.

More broadly, dubbing culture as a metaphor speaks to the nonteleological, transformative dimensions of globalizing processes. It is useful for questioning the ability of globalizing mass media to project uniform ideologies. Contemporary mass media have enormous power, but this power is not absolute; it can lead to unexpected results—like gay and lesbi subject positions themselves. The metaphorical use of dubbing culture fleshes out theories linking ideological apparatuses with Althusser’s thesis that "ideology interpellates individuals as subjects" (1971:160–162). By this, Althusser meant that ideology forms the subject positions by which individuals come to represent their conditions of existence to themselves and to others. Althusser terms this function of ideology interpellation or hailing and illustrates it in terms of a person on the street responding to the hail, "Hey, you there!" When the person turns around to respond to the hail, "he becomes a subject. Why? Because he has recognized that the hail was ‘really’ addressed to him" (Althusser 1971:163). Many social theorists, particularly those interested in mass media, have found this a useful analytical starting point. The question most commonly posed to this framework by these theorists concerns the issue of structure versus agency: "How and why does the subject turn? … What kind of relation already binds these two such that the subject knows to turn, knows that something is to be gained from such a turn" (Butler 1997:107)?

Part and parcel of this dilemma of agency is the question: how to explain the circumstance when people "recognize" something an ideology does not intend? Indonesian mass media never meant to create the conditions of possibility for national gay and lesbi subject positions. One way to address this problem might be through the dubbing culture concept, where what is recognized in the hail is itself a product of transformation. This does not entail compliance with state ideology. Yet neither does it imply a freewheeling, presocial, self-assembling of an identity from elements presented by mass media, independent of social context.

Gay and lesbi Indonesians often playfully employ the notion of authenticity (asli)—I have often heard gay men describe themselves as asli gay. In doing so, they implicitly challenge the state’s monopoly on designating what will count as tradition in Indonesia. Authenticity is crucial for mass media studies as well. For Benjamin, the very concept of authenticity is put under erasure by mass media. Because mass media depend on mechanical reproduction (no mass media circulate as a series of handcrafted originals), and for Benjamin "the presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity," it follows that "the whole sphere of authenticity is outside technical … reproducibility." Benjamin sees the most significant aspect of this reproducibility to be that of movement: "above all, [technical reproduction] enables the original to meet the beholder halfway….

[The] cathedral leaves its locale to be received in the studio of a lover of art; the choral production, performed in an auditorium or in the open air, resounds in the drawing room" (1955:220–221).

Gay and lesbi subjectivities are not moved from one place to another, as Benjamin saw mechanical reproduction, but are the dubbing of cultural logics in new ways. Dubbing culture is thus articulation in both senses of the term, an interaction of elements that remain distinct—like the image of speech and the dubbed voice—and also the "speaking" of a (dubbed) subjectivity.28 This lets us "queery" globalization without posing either an oppositionally authentic "native" or globalization as simple movement.

Dubbing culture also speaks to conceptions of translation in the age of mechanical production. As Benjamin notes with reference to magazines, "For the first time, captions have become obligatory. And it is clear that they have an altogether different character than the title of a painting" (1955:226). This is because captions are a guide to interpretation, juxtaposed to the work of art yet at a slight remove. They serve as "signposts" that "demand a specific kind of approach; free-floating contemplation is not appropriate to them" (Benjamin 1955:226). They are a mediation internal to mass media, a translation within.

Dubbing, far more than a subtitle, is a caption fused to the thing being described. It comes from the mouth of imagic characters yet is never quite in synch. The moving lips never match the speech; the moment of fusion is always deferred, as dubbed voice, translation-never-quite-complete, bridges two sets of representations.29 Gay and lesbi Indonesians dub culture as they live a subjectivity linked to people and places far away. They are completely Indonesian, but to be "completely Indonesian" requires thinking of one’s position in a transnational world. In speaking of translation, Benjamin wrote that "unlike a work of literature, translation does not find itself in the center of the language forest but on the outside facing the wooded ridge; it calls into it without entering, aiming at that single spot where the echo is able to give, in its own language, the reverberation of the work in the alien one" (1955:76). Gay and lesbi Indonesians have made of that echo subject positions that bespeak subjectivity and community even under conditions of oppression. They live in the echo, in the mass-mediated margin of incomplete translation, and find there authenticity, meaning, sex, friendship, and love.

The concept of dubbing culture has a reflexive dimension for ethnography in an already globalized world. To the extent that translation is a structuralist enterprise framing movement between languages and cultures in terms of grammar and meaning, many contemporary ethnographers engage in dubbing culture when they employ poststructuralist frameworks that question received understandings of the relationship among signifiers, and between signifiers and signifieds. One reason dubbing

culture profoundly challenges established frameworks for anthropological analysis is that in it the act of interpretation precedes the anthropological encounter, so the analytical moment is not external to the ethnographic moment.

Contemporary ethnography, then, can be said to be engaging in dubbing culture when it brings together parts and wholes, data and theory. Gay and lesbi Indonesians engage in dubbing culture as they come to sexual subjectivity; they show not that "authentic Indonesian tradition" is a lie but that this authenticity is processual, constructed through active engagement with an unequal world. And if tradition and belonging are not given but constructed, they can be contested and transformed. The playing field is certainly not even—gay and lesbi Indonesians are not about to become fully accepted members of Indonesian society—but it is a playing field nonetheless, and there is space for change. Similarly, even in an already globalized world, non-Western cultures are not doomed to the status of reruns, even when confronted by Western hegemony.