# PART TWO: Opening to Gay and Lesbi Worlds

This page intentionally blank.

# CHAPTER FOUR: Islands of Desire

## TOWARD AN ANTHROPOLOGY OF SIMILITUDE

We do not know whether two things are to be regarded as the same or not unless we are told the context in which the question arises. However much we may be tempted to think otherwise, there is no absolute unchanging sense to the words "the same." —Peter Winch, The Idea of a Social Science

If becoming gay or lesbi typically begins with mass media, how is a whole gay or lesbi life forged from this first moment of dubbing culture?

Many gay and lesbi Indonesians express the idea of a gay or lesbi life by speaking of a gay world and lesbi world (dunia gay, dunia lesbi), partially overlapping worlds they distinguish from the normal world (dunia normal). As Howard notes in his study of gay men in Jakarta, "the use of the term ‘normal’ is telling, as normal life (kehidupan normal) is also recognized in national political rhetoric as a recognition of social stability and order" (1996:177). Gay and lesbi sexuality have no place in the normal world, and during the time of my fieldwork gay and lesbi Indonesians overwhelmingly had no interest in a Western-style politics seeking a place in that world. Less contiguous spaces than distributed archipelagos, the gay and lesbi worlds were the primary "sites" of my fieldwork. Part 2 of this book delves into these worlds to gain a better understanding of how gay and lesbi subjectivities are lived. This chapter explores sex, desire, love, and relationships, including "heterosexual" marriage. It may seem strange to discuss "heterosexual" marriage in a chapter on homosexual erotics, but the importance of marriage to gay men and lesbi women offers important clues about the relationship between sexuality and nation for all those living in the postcolonial nation-state of Indonesia.

Most "homosexualities" in Indonesia and elsewhere in Southeast Asia share with dominant Western "homosexualities" an assumption that sexuality and gender overlap. While "race" is sexualized in the United States, I do not know of any case where, for instance, sex between one African American and another, regardless of their gender, is labeled "homosexual"

while sex between an African American and an Asian American, regardless of their gender, is labeled "heterosexual." Nor do I know of a case where an older person having sex with a younger person is seen as "heterosexual" while sex between two younger people or two older people (regardless of the genders involved) is seen as "homosexual." "Homo" and "hetero," as terms of sexuality, are assumed to index gender; thus, what is referred to as gender is more accurately glossed "heteronormative gender." The partial fusion of sexuality and gender appears universal, an apparent similitude that invites biologizing or the search for counterexamples. Another possibility is to reconceptualize the grid of similitude and difference itself, asking how conceptions of gender and sexuality are forged and sustained in specific contexts.

Gay and lesbi desires are unique in Indonesia in that they are erotics within, not between, sexual subject positions. Both gay men and lesbi women speak of their sexualities as a "desire for the same." This contrasts with the desire for difference characterizing the desire of normal women for normal men, normal men for normal women, warias for normal men, and normal men for warias. Even when gay or lesbi erotics are articulated across a heterogendered divide—between effeminate and masculine gay men, or between tombois and ceweks—this is seen to take place within a field of homosexual desire.

Similitude is the style (gaya, cara) of gay and lesbi desire, revealed in phrases like sama jenis (same type) or sejenis (one type) in distinction to normal desire, which is for lain jenis (different type). Sama is a common word for "same"; in gay language it can be transformed into sémong "gay man." Sama can also mean "together, with." Suka means "joy, pleasure, desire," and the phrase suka sama suka, roughly "desire with desire," is a colloquialism meaning "by mutual agreement, especially with regard to sex and marriage" (Echols and Shadily 1997:530).1 Gay and lesbi Indonesians often use suka sama suka to describe their desires. Their gay or lesbi sexual relationships are never arranged by their families; they are always chosen, like the "love marriages" that have become the ideal in contemporary Indonesia. Later I discuss how marriage based on love and choice has long been linked to modernity and national belonging, and how this rhetoric of similitude intersects with gay and lesbi views of having a difference or deviance (kelainan, from the root word lain, "other") in regard to Indonesian society. Here I wish to linger over gay and lesbi desire—a desire for the same (suka sama) realized through choice (suka sama suka)—and the complexities hinted at in sama’s polysemy.

This polysemy recalls how gay and lesbi Indonesians often say they are the "same" across Indonesia. It also recalls the common view that they are the "same" as gay and lesbian Westerners, as indexed by the terms gay and lesbi themselves, even if their understanding of these Westerners’

lives is unclear. The gay and lesbi subject positions confront us with questions of similitude in reference to both scale and desire.

Westerners have advanced theoretical tools—feminist, psychoanalytic, deconstructionist—for analyzing difference, but only a handful of clichés for theorizing similitude. The focus on difference is not misguided or unproductive; it is incomplete without an equally thoroughgoing theorization of the similitude it implicitly evokes. In anthropology, difference is seen to be our contribution to social theory. It is expected: unproblematic, obvious, and authentic. It asks nothing more than to be recorded, typologized, interpreted, and rhetorically deployed. Similitude, however, awakens disturbing contradictions. On the one hand, similitude is uninteresting: if you study the Other and they are the same, what is there to say? Are they a proper Other at all? At the same time, there is discomfort: similitude cries out for explanation and modeling. It must have a reason: is it diffusion or convergent evolution? There is a sense that contamination has occurred and authenticity compromised. The tendency for ethnographic work to structure itself around difference renders gay, lesbi, and other nonethnolocalized aspects of Indonesian culture invisible to Western observers.

The lifeworlds of gay and lesbi Indonesians demand an anthropology of similitude—of the sama. Not only do they employ a problematic of similitude in understanding their desires, but much of their daily lives seems familiar. Gay men hang out in parks and shopping malls, perform in drag shows at discos, and engage in sexual practices that recall those of many gay Westerners. Lesbi women meet in each other’s homes, listen to American lesbian folksingers, and appear to identify in terms recalling "butch" and "femme." Difference has often stood as the default paradigm for understanding sexuality, gender, and globalization. A "homo" approach may prove productive: "Can similarities encode difference, and differences similarities?" (Weston 1995:92). In an already globalized world, an anthropology of similitude can illuminate how what appear to be Western ways of being are transformed through dubbing culture.

## DESIRE

How do gay men conceptualize their desire for men? One clue is offered by the term orang sakit (sick person), which can be used with reference to any man who desires men. There is certainly an element of self-hate in the phrase "sick person," and some politically minded gay men have called for its abolition. But when I have heard gay men use the phrase, the connotation has been more specific and neutral: gayness is like a chronic illness, something for which accommodations must be made on

an ongoing basis. It is something important but not necessarily central to one’s sense of self, and it can be "transmitted to susceptible individuals" (Howard 1996:8).

From the evidence of my interlocutors, other researchers, and narratives published in zines and mass media, it appears most gay men start thinking of themselves as gay in their late teens to early twenties. Some gay men recall feeling same-gender attractions while boys—toward another young boy or an adult man in the neighborhood, or toward someone on television (Indonesian or not; one gay men was attracted to the actor Lee Majors on the 1970s’ show The Six Million Dollar Man). However, a frequent pattern is for gay men to emphasize the agency of others. A common view is that to be gay is willed by God. Same-gender desire may be viewed as innate, "carried from birth"; as one man put it, "my instinct calls me to men, not women." This can also take the form of a belief one is biologically gay, a notion reinforced by reportage some gay men have encountered concerning "gay gene" research in the West. These are all essentialist understandings of becoming gay, recalling the penchant of Westerners for understanding sexuality in terms of immutability (Halley 1994).

However, environmental, constructionist explanations are the most popular etiology for gay subjectivity, phrased in terms of addiction (ketagihan) or habit (kebiasaan), recalling Sucipto’s 1920s claim that "life is following habits."2 Such an addition can permanently alter the self as surely as one cannot forget one’s mother-tongue. Sammy, a man from Sumatra, mused on how his life could have been different: "I think that if I’d never left my village, it’s possible that I wouldn’t have become gay. Because every time I go back to the village, my feelings are different than my feelings here: I can have feelings for women. I hang out with my father and brothers, I talk about girl problems and stuff like that. And it’s normal life, it’s no problem! So from that I think there’s a big possibility that if I’d never left my village, I’d have a house by now, children, a family. Maybe I’d just have a little bit of feelings for men."

Environmental explanations rarely cite effeminacy: few gay men crossdressed regularly as children or thought they might be warias. When I asked one Balinese man if he ever thought he might be waria, he said that "No, I didn’t think of myself as waria. I just knew that if I looked at a man I wanted [suka] him." Another kind of environmental explanation is the claim that someone became gay because his heart was broken by a woman. Above all the language of addiction and habit usually refers to being seduced by another male while a child or adolescent.3 Often the seducer does not see himself as gay, indeed does not know of the term, so it is more accurate to say such seduction makes gay subjectivity more possible. The seducer is often an older male neighbor, uncle, or cousin, but seduction can also take place away from home:

I used to live in the pesantren, from the last year of junior high school until the end of high school. About four years … it was at that time that I started to understand same-gender relations [hubungan sejenis] because I was seduced by my Koranic recitation teacher…. I was 18 or 19 years old at the time and he was 25 years old. The first time we were together I didn’t have any emotions [belum rasa]…. When we were sleeping together he liked to hold me and he’d ejaculate…. [At] the beginning I felt very uncomfortable. I didn’t like feeling the sperm in his sarung … but he started asking me to hold his penis … eventually I started to like it…. He had his own room, so we could do it easily. He was always very helpful to me in my studies; perhaps at the beginning he was only sympathetic and eventually there arose desire [suka]. I don’t know about him for sure, but there arose love in me for him as well. Eventually his own studies at the pesantren were finished and so he had to return to his home province. And I was sad half to death, because he got married at that point; he was pushed to get married by his parents. I was so sad that I fled here to the city.

This environmental understanding of same-gender desire can be a source of confusion because many gay men prefer sex and even romantic relationships with normal men. Gay men often call such persons authentic (asli, tulen) men: on one occasion a gay man asked me, "Have you ever had sex with a normal man, with an asli normal man [lelaki normal asli]?" Normal men are desired for a variety of reasons: they are (it is assumed) never effeminate, and they are also better at keeping relationships secret because they do not like to hang out and gossip like gay men do. Most gay men believe that all men are capable of same-gender arousal and love given the opportunity, but they insist that these normal men could not become gay themselves: as one gay man put it, "That’s not possible. If a hetero becomes gay temporarily [jadi gay sementara], he’ll go back to being hetero." Another gay man described how gay men seduced normal men by saying "we insert our selves [pribadi] into the other person." In this view a normal man can be seduced into desiring a gay man, but these temporarily acquired desires do not persist: one persona is "inserted" into another. Relationships with normal men can make the distinguishing character of being gay unclear:

We can’t be hypocrites: if a man likes a man that means he’s gay, right? That’s the opinion of all people, right? But in my own view, what I’ve experienced, it’s not always that way—there are certain men who like gay men from a certain structure, a certain form. He wants to be with me, but it’s not for certain that he wants to be with another gay person…. But what’s strange is that there’s a feeling of jealousy and anger on his part if I’m with someone else. Now, from that we can know from a psychological perspective he’s already started to enter, to feel the gay life [merasakan kehidupan gay].

 

Figure 4–1. The fatherly modern male. Office of State Minister for Population (1999):25.

Most gay men prefer men who are masculine—using terms like macho, maskulin, and, most frequently, "fatherly" (kebapakan). Effeminate gay men attracted to masculine men thus have somewhat heterogendered desires. Desirable masculine men (normal or gay) ideally have an absence of effeminacy and a quiet, assertive demeanor; height and a mustache are pluses, as is employment as a policeman or military man. This is a narrow notion of acceptable masculinity. Historians and anthropologists have noted how across the archipelago the range of masculinities has been much broader; for instance, "‘Pure’ Javanese tradition … regards a very wide range of behavior, from he-man to rather … ‘effeminate,’ as properly masculine" (Peacock 1968:204). The more restricted conception of masculinity prevalent in contemporary Indonesia, the conception gay men draw upon in their views of the ideal lover, is linked to idealized images of the modern middle-class male (fig. 4–1). This notion of the fatherly modern male took form during Soeharto’s New Order and was promulgated by state discourse, particularly the state’s powerful family planning program. Soeharto, after all, called himself "father" (Bapak Soeharto) in opposition to his predecessor’s moniker "brother" (Bung Karno). Gay desire is colored by national discourse.

For lesbi desire a heterogendered form predominates: it is considered unusual for a tomboi to desire another tomboi, or for a cewek to desire another cewek. Lesbi women who do not experience their desires through a heterogendered lens tend to reject the tomboi/cewek binarism altogether. While this could be seen as evidence of influence from Western notions of butch and femme, it seems to originate in the fact that no female-to-male analogue to the waria subject position existed as "gay" and "lesbian" translocated to Indonesia, so that both female homosexuality and female-to-male transgenderism have been taken up within the scope of lesbi. Waria preexisted gay, but they now form a binarism making thinkable a noneffeminate male homosexuality (cf. Jackson 1999a). The tomboi subject position, however, appears not to have had a separate existence before the lesbi subject position; it tends to form a subtype within lesbi, troubling the distinction between homosexuality and transgenderism under the sign of "female."

Many tombois speak of themselves as the pursuer of women—as indicated by the term hunter, used by tombois in southern Sulawesi and supposedly in parts of Java as well. To be a hunter is to hunt women, be they cewek or normal. Hen, the protagonist of the tomboi autobiography Menguak Duniaku, explains how he seduces women in terms tombois across Indonesia would find familiar (cf. Blackwood 1999; Graham 2001):

I begin by trying to fathom her feelings. I treat her like a beloved by protecting and helping her, taking her wherever she wants to go without being asked to do so. I go to her house every few days. If in the end she can sense that my attitude towards her is more than that of a friend, slowly I’ll tell her who I really am. And if she can accept [menerima] my love, I’ll give her all I own and I’ll do anything for her happiness … just like how any normal man would act towards their beloved. (Prawirakusumah and Ramadhan 1988:206)

Clearly Hen assumes his beloved cannot be another tomboi. This understanding of lesbi desire occasionally crosses over into popular culture, as in figure 4–2, from a 1996 article entitled "Lesbians and Lifestyle." This cartoon from the newspaper Kompas depicts a tomboi and cewek couple, figures dimly familiar to the Indonesian public since the wedding of Jossie and Bonnie. A tomboi fails to connect with a man (possibly because he is effeminate); Cupid’s arrow strikes the tomboi instead and the tomboi’s desire is misdirected toward a woman, who does not reciprocate that desire but is only a object to be pursued. It is not clear from the image whether the pursued woman is supposed to be a normal woman or a cewek: the distinction is irrelevant from the cartoon’s perspective, which assumes desire is always of masculine for feminine.

 

Figure 4–2. Image accompanying article on "Lesbians and Lifestyle." Kompas, January 13, 1996.

This understanding of lesbi desire as one of masculinity for femininity fits the widespread pattern of devaluing women’s sexuality (Blackwood and Wieringa 1999:55). But it does not tell the whole story, for ceweks do sometimes "hunt" tombois: in the words of one tomboi, ceweks are "far the most aggressive partners, they are always the first to ask for sex" (Graham 2001:fn9).4 Some tombois even say they became tomboi because a cewek seduced them (Graham 2001:21). While some lovers of tombois do identify as normal, others see themselves as a kind of lesbi woman.5

In Menguak Duniaku, Hen views desire between a tomboi and cewek as a kind of homosexuality: "I’m not normal because I love someone of the same kind as me [sejenisku]"; later he adds, "I have the soul of a man not because of my strength, bravery, or firmness, but because the objects of my love are women" (Prawirakusumah and Ramadhan 1988:12, 280). Many tombois would agree with Hen that what they see as homosexual desire is more foundational than their masculine gendering: the tombois "wanted to love women, and they had noticed that persons with male bodies had much less trouble in finding women partners than they had" (S. Wieringa 1999a:218). In other cases it appears that a desire for women

follows from a prior sense of being masculine and having a man’s soul that begins in childhood (Blackwood 1999). Two dominant viewpoints concerning etiology exist among warias: someone is waria because they (1) have a woman’s soul or (2) dress like women. It appears that having a man’s soul or dressing like a man can make one tomboi, but so can sexual desire for women—a multiplicity of possible understandings of "desire for the same" reflecting the lesbi subject position’s complexity.

For both gay and lesbi Indonesians, another common element of their sexual subjectivities is a lack of desire for difference. Many gay men talk about not feeling a desire for women—and lesbi women of not feeling a desire for men—as important to their sense of self. In the West as well, a lack of desire often plays a central role in gay and lesbian subjectivities, distinguishing them from bisexual subjectivities. While most gay and lesbi Indonesians marry "heterosexually," they tend not to see themselves as bisexual, not only because biseks is still a rather academic term in Indonesian but because they see marriage as, so to speak, another island of desire.

## SEX, IDENTITY, AND BEHAVIOR

I did not conduct a survey of sexual practices during my research, since subject positions are my primary interest. Sexual practices are neither necessary nor sufficient conditions for gay subjectivity; there are both gay virgins and men sexually active with other men who do not think of themselves as gay. However, through my ethnographic and HIV prevention work I gained familiarity with the range of sexual practices in which gay men engage. As a male researcher it was more difficult to talk with lesbi women about sex practices, but particularly through HIV prevention work I was able to broach this topic.

The greatest difficulty in discussing the place of sex in gay and lesbi subjectivities is not a lack of data but the identity-behavior binarism that still dominates discussions of sexuality. This binarism is of limited value because it entails a behaviorist approach that assumes behavior precedes and determines identity (and often valorizes a vague notion of "fluidity"). The concept of "men who have sex with men" or MSM illustrates this process. This term (which by the early 2000s had been dubbed in Indonesia as LSL (lelaki suka lelaki)) was invented in HIV prevention circles to refer to men who had sex with other men but did not identify as gay (as the saying goes, it’s not who you are, it’s what you do). "MSM" is to "gay man" as "behavior" is to "identity." This assumption that one could label behavior without identity failed to take into account how what we do (our "behaviors") always shapes how we think about ourselves (our "identities"). Through many channels, including the program planning

requirements of organizations that fund HIV prevention and treatment, the distinction between "identity" and "behavior" that the MSM category was to stabilize has broken down. Despite the fact that HIV prevention discourse intended "MSM" to label behavior without identity, there soon emerged talk of the "MSM community," "self-identified MSM," and "MSM peers." The most remarkable term in this regard—one I have heard used in international HIV/AIDS conferences—must be "male partners of MSM." A moment’s reflection should convince that, by definition, the male partner of an MSM is himself an MSM. Yet this term exists and can make sense because "identity" versus "behavior" is a false dichotomy (Elliston 1995): "identity" is not simply a cognitive map but also a set of embodied practices, and "behavior" is always culturally mediated through self-narrative.6

While many cultures of the Indonesian archipelago have had well-developed erotic vocabularies, in contemporary Indonesia sex is also shaped by the "family principle." The common word for "sex," seks, is itself a loanword, and a widespread circumlocution is hubungan suami-istri or "husband-wife relations." One result of this is that many gay men gloss the practices they engage in with other men as main-main (playing around) rather than "sex," which is often understood to be something that occurs between men and women, involving penile-vaginal penetration and the possibility of pregnancy. This is reinforced by religious norms that define sex in terms of adultery or premarital relations between women and men. For some gay men, one thing that distinguishes them from normal men is that they recognize what they do with other men as "sex" at all. This is often linked to the complaint that normal men are passive (pasif); they just want to ejaculate and "lie there" as the gay man fellates them or sits on their penis, while a gay lover will engage in kissing and foreplay. One gay man asserted that "It’s much nicer having sex with a gay man. There’s more give and take. With a regular man it’s just an act of devotion. I’m active, he’s just quiet. After he ejaculates he doesn’t pay attention to me!" Gay men often claim that Western men are more romantic and active than normal or gay Indonesian men, based on mass media images, Western gay pornography they have seen, or a sexual experience they or a friend has had with a Westerner. With the rise of video technology and growing Internet access, Western gay pornography has become more common, though still somewhat difficult to obtain and even more difficult to find a place to watch it without the knowledge of family members.

Since most gay men come to gay subjectivity via mass media, sex with other gay men usually begins in the late teens or early twenties. Gay men who have had sex with men earlier in life usually see those experiences as distinct. They fall into two main categories: sex with childhood peers and

sex with older men. Gay men sometimes talk of the latter in terms of their being a victim (korban) and see it as sexual abuse. For example, "It was first by my uncle, when I was in the fourth or fifth grade of elementary school. He put his penis between my thighs. I rejected being anally penetrated, but my uncle wanted to try it. It was very painful and was a kind of trauma that made me not want to be given it like that."

Adult gay men engage in a range of sexual practices roughly familiar to most gay Westerners. Kissing and hugging are considered erotic and things normal men are less likely to agree to do. Oral sex is very common and there are many slang terms for it: karaoke, oral, ngésong, even gaya 69 "69 style" for mutual oral sex (the symbolism of "69" for this practice is suggested by the way the digits 6 and 9 wrap around each other). All of these terms can take active or passive grammatical forms in Indonesian (for instance, (me)ngesong or diesong); for oral sex the active form always refers to the man using his mouth. Some gay men enjoy swallowing semen when they have oral sex. Rimming (oral-anal contact) is probably less common but by no means unknown; a widespread gay term for it is "cleaning the toilet" (cuci WC). Interfemoral sex (placing one man’s penis between the thighs of another) is a much more familiar sexual practice than in the West and is known in gay language as jépong from jepit (pinching, in this case pinching the thighs together). Mutual masturbation is also widely practiced; anal penetration with fingers is well known, with dildos less so. Anal sex itself, while perhaps not having the symbolic centrality it often possesses in the West for understandings of male homosexuality, is significant for many gay men. Gay men who penetrate (and normal men who go to male, female, or waria sex workers) often say that they prefer anal sex over vaginal sex because the anus is drier and thus "tighter." This reflects a preference for "dry sex" in much of Indonesia; women, for instance, sometimes take traditional medicines (jamu) or insert alum wands into their vaginas to dry them out. Terms for anal sex can also have passive or active grammatical markers. For instance, one of the most widespread gay language terms for anal sex, tempong, can be rendered (me)nempong (to penetrate another man anally with one’s penis) or ditempong (to be penetrated anally by other man’s penis). This division is so clear that the prefixes can be used in isolation; gay men sometimes ask if a person prefers "me-" or "di-" or can say they don’t like anal sex "baik diatau me-" ("whether penetrated or penetrator").

Beyond kissing and hugging, the most popular sexual practices in which lesbi women engage, in order, appear to be oral-vaginal contact, rubbing vaginas together (referred to in Makassar as pompa kosong or "empty [gas] pump"), vaginal penetration with fingers, and more rarely, vaginal penetration with dildos. I have not heard of oral-anal contact or anal penetration as recognized forms of lesbi sexuality but assume they take

place. In Menguak Duniaku, one of Hen’s lovers loses her virginity to Hen’s finger and they find blood on the sheets afterwards; when the lover asks how Hen learned to be so good in bed, Hen replies that she learned from books about sex between men and women (Prawirakusumah and Ramadhan 1988:489). Across Indonesia there seems to be an understanding that when desire is structured across a tomboi/cewek divide, it is the tomboi who penetrates the cewek, not the other way around.

## LOVE AND MARRIAGE: CHOOSING TO BELONG

To the extent normal Indonesians know of gay and lesbi Indonesians, they assume them to be interested only in sex. But while sex is certainly important to gay and lesbi Indonesians, they consistently valorize same-gender love as more consequential; through it, sex gains meaning and social significance. Gay and lesbi Indonesians across the archipelago emphasize that they fall in love with persons of the same gender: nowhere in Indonesia is there a predominant belief that gay and lesbi desire is limited to sex alone. Love (cinta, less often kasih sayang or kasih) is extremely important to gay and lesbi Indonesians, and it is a key way in which their sexualities are linked to national discourse. What is distinctive about being gay or lesbi is not same-gender sex (it is usually taken for granted that both men and women will engage in it, given the chance) but love. Like most tombois, Sukma insisted that "sex has to be based on love. I must date a woman first and start to care about her and love her before I want to have sex with her." Love is the epitome of being gay or lesbi. Gay and lesbi Indonesians even speak of their love as greater than the love between normal men and women. The distinction between authentic (asli) and inauthentic or false (palsu) is crucial: gay and lesbi Indonesians speak of love as asli or caution against palsu love.

There are no models for gay and lesbi love; like all aspects of gay and lesbi life, one cannot learn about this from family, tradition, religion, or state. Gay and lesbi Indonesians instead dub dominant heterosexual models of love that in the contemporary period are shaped by the state’s family principle. The meanings of gay and lesbi love track assumptions about marriage in the normal world; this is one reason why most gay and lesbi Indonesians marry "heterosexually." The resonances between same-gender love and "heterosexual" marriage in gay and lesbi life speak to how these subject positions are formed at the conjuncture of globalization and postcoloniality.

The expectation in Indonesia that adults will marry (barring some special circumstance, like being a Catholic priest or waria) is well documented (G. Jones 1994:61); across Indonesia, "individuals, whether male

or female, are not considered adult until they have married heterosexually" (Blackwood 1999:191) and "notions of celibacy or single life styles are virtually unknown" (Hoskins 1998:17).7 But if sexual desire is (arguably) a human universal, there is nothing natural about why it should take particular forms of marriage. The apparent universality of the marriage imperative compels a critical response that appreciates the varied meanings "marriage" takes in different historical and cultural contexts, particularly how marriage has come to link coupledom, national belonging, and the consumerist self of capitalism (Abelove 1992; Collier 1988; Collier, Rosaldo, and Yanagisako 1997; Engels 1972; Freeman 2002; Rubin 1975; Zaretsky 1976).

As is the case elsewhere, marriage in Indonesia is in the midst of enormous change (Ahearn 2001; Castells 1997:221–235). In comments regarding Spain that are appropriate for Indonesia as well, Jane Collier notes a shift in the latter part of the twentieth century toward a notion of marriage based on love, a shift often understood as being from "following social conventions" to "thinking for oneself," but in fact shaped by larger cultural forces including the rise of wage labor (so that the inheritance of property from one’s parents was no longer central to one’s class status) (1997:45 and passim). Collier concludes that "television and opportunities for urban employment did not simply offer villagers exposure to different ways of behaving…. people taking advantage of new opportunities changed the wider socioeconomic context for everyone, transforming the consequences of individual action" (47). In Indonesia as well, social transformations have led to new dubbed understandings of marriage, desire, and selfhood that are not simply the direct product of globalization.

With a growing degree of socialization between the sexes (even among adolescents) has come a steady increase in the age of marriage in Indonesia. Between 1971 and 1990, overall age at marriage rose from 19.3 to 21.6 years for women; between 1970 and 1990 it rose from 23.8 to 25.4 years for men (G. Jones 1994:80, 104). During the social upheavals of the late colonial period, World War II, and the independence struggle, there were no detectable changes in age of marriage in Indonesia (G. Jones 1994:68–69); these marriage trends are associated with persons born since the early 1960s, just like gay and lesbi subjectivities. One apparent constant is that "the proxy data (percentage of women single at ages 45–49) … give no evidence that [not marrying] is becoming any more than an aberration in a resolutely family-centered Malay world" (G. Jones 1994:63). A triply compulsory heterosexuality makes marriage in contemporary Indonesia appear as the overdetermined imperative of tradition, religion, and nation. Mainline doctrines in Islam, Christianity, and Balinese Hinduism view marriage as essential. The great ethnolocalized variation in adat or "local tradition" across Indonesia seems to evaporate

in the face of marriage. The postcolonial state takes great interest in redeploying such "tradition." Historically marriage has been a key institution shaping statecraft within the archipelago (Pemberton 1994:71, 142, 215) and elsewhere, but attention to marriage was largely limited to royal circles and the ritual event of the wedding itself, with little provision for officialized marriage among commoners. With the rise of modern forms of governmentality that view societies in terms of national "populations" (Foucault 1991), interest has shifted to the proper and successful marriage of each citizen: "no modern nation-state can ignore marriage forms, because of their direct impact on reproducing and composing the population" (Cott 2000:5).

This national vision of marriage is shaped by and promulgated through family planning discourse (Dwyer 2000; Robinson 1989; Warren 1993) and based upon the state’s family principle, which stipulates that the nation is made up not of citizens but of families. The marriage envisioned by the state involves a single husband and wife where the husband is head of household, but increasingly the wife is to have a career in addition to her domestic duties. It assumes a middle-class conception of the self organized around responsibility, consumerism, and career, even if one is not middle class oneself. For instance, when one gay man said that "in Indonesia if you’re not married you’re not seen as mature in your thinking. Because you don’t shoulder any responsibility … you can just go wherever you want," it is this national rhetoric of marriage "in Indonesia" that he referenced.

One day in Makassar when I was discussing marriage with Umar and Hasan, gay men who had been friends for years, Umar tried to sum up what he saw as the prevailing attitude by saying, "Here in Indonesia you have to marry to prove you can make a small, harmonious family." Almost every term in Umar’s statement—"Indonesia" (rather than "Makassar" or "among the Bugis"), "small, harmonious family"—comes from the state’s family principle. I then asked: Why is it that I’ve never seen a case anywhere in Indonesia of a gay man and lesbi woman marrying each other? Wouldn’t that solve all the problems? Hasan eyed me resignedly and shook his head: clearly I didn’t understand. "The most important reason why that doesn’t happen is that it wouldn’t be a real marriage. Marriage isn’t just for show, it isn’t to hide who we are. It’s something that you must take seriously." The model of love gay and lesbi Indonesians internalize from childhood pivots around this ideal of authentic heterosexual marriage actualized through love and choice.

The meanings of marriage that circulate in Indonesian popular culture are strongly shaped by the state and mass media. Many scholars have commented on the decline of arranged marriages in Indonesia.8 While a

range of marriage practices still exists, and there are claims that polygamy is on the rise due to Islamic revivalism, the dominant model of marriage is based on monogamous love and choice. The importance of this to gay and lesbi subjectivities cannot be overstated. In Indonesian and many ethnolocalized languages, the verb "to marry" can take active or passive forms: one can "be married off" or "marry someone." For decades the latter has been eclipsing the former, a process linked to conceptions of nationalism and modernity that also draws from Western models of romantic love transmitted through mass media (Robinson 1989). It strongly emphasizes notions of authenticity and choice; love should be true and freely chosen by individuals, not families (E. Wieringa 2003).

Late colonial literature brought together nation, people, and language through the power of love, particularly around the conflict over "arranged" marriages, associated with tradition, versus "love" marriages, associated with modernity and nationalism. Such conflicts figure centrally in nationalist literature, condensing debates over tradition, modernity, and collective identity.9 Love and choice imply democracy, equality, and a horizon beyond the family and locality. This literature frames love as selfless when directed toward either the nation or the hoped-for spouse: "nationalism and love are linked because through it, peoples are mixed and a new authority is created" (Siegel 1998:16). This is a love that "demands recognition" and is "inseparable from the struggle for progress" (Siegel 1997:140); by definition it breaks from ethnolocalized custom (adat). Properly chosen love makes you a proper citizen. It is for this reason that the failure of national-love is not barrenness, but sickness (sakit), an unnational love that can kill:

What would the cure for love sickness be if not proper recognition, that is, recognizing cinta [love] for what it is: the power to compel recognition. More precisely, it is the power to compel recognition of desire transformed into idealism. That idealism is directed towards the advancement of the Indonesian people. At that time [in the 1920s and 1930s], this meant not independence and not equality. It meant rather the possibility of having a certain identity. One which marked one as progressive. A progressive person was in touch with the modern world outside the Indies. (Siegel 1997:146, emphasis mine)

Thanks to a love performed through choice rather than arrangement, Indonesian national literature enacts a "twin approach to constructing a modern self and imagining a modern society," whereby "in gaining a modern self, [Indonesians] gain a modern vision of the world, and vice versa. Selfhood becomes permeated with political meaning" (Rodgers 1995:44).10 Thus, in the decades before independence, love, choice, modernity, and national belonging became interlinked. While there are still arranged marriages, and many that fall between arrangement and choice, the ideal of chosen marriage now dominates images of the proper Indonesian citizen; purely arranged marriages are

viewed as unsophisticated, and women and men are increasingly assumed to play an active role in choosing their future spouses (Hatley 1997; Hull 2002). This is a love that does not just happen to you through arrangement but is performed through choice. (One possible reason for the popularity of the film Titanic in Indonesia was its dramatization of a triumph, beyond the grave, of choice over arrangement.) It is based on a paradox of modernity that crops up in contexts beyond Indonesia: love enables choice but is not chosen. Thus, one cannot choose not to choose love. As Ahearn notes in the case of Nepal, "while love empowers lovers in non-romantic realms, people do not have any control over love itself" (2001:150); and as Collier notes in the case of Spain, "‘modern’ courtship customs were as culturally constructed, and socially enforced, as ‘traditional’ ones" (1997:101). Another paradox is that love overcomes difference and creates sameness—as the editors of the zine GAYa Nusantara once wrote, "with love we can learn to overcome differences between all people." 11 Ideally, gay and lesbi love should make gay and lesbi Indonesians equal to normal ones (fig. 4–3), but their "desire for the same" is not recognized as having this ability to overcome difference.



Figure 4–3. Love should make gay and lesbi Indonesians equal to normal ones. GAYa Nusantara 59 (February 1999):36.

Performatives depend on cultural context: only an umpire can declare "strike!" and only a judge or jury can pronounce someone "innocent" in a court of law. The ability of love to compel national recognition depends on a modern conception of heterosexual desire (termed, after all, with transformed English terms [normal or hetero] just like gay and lesbi). Gay

or lesbi love does not get you national belonging: heteronormativity lies at the heart of national love.12 Indonesians who term themselves gay or lesbi mark themselves as in touch with the modern world outside the archipelago, but in terms of a love that receives no recognition. It does not belong.

The pivotal cultural logic is that when marriage is arranged, sexual orientation is secondary, but sexual orientation comes to the foreground—to some extent, comes into being—through a language of choice. The failure to "be married off" is a failure of the family to see one of their members properly married. However, when marriage hinges on choice—on a relational, choosing self animated by love—that self and that love fail if not heterosexual. It is a failure of the self and a failure of citizenship. As one married gay man put it when advising unmarried gay men, "marriage is up to us." The shift from arranged to chosen has not implied a parallel shift from public to private; this "choice" remains a highly public act. To be national and modern, this choice must be heterosexual choice. It is through heterosexuality that self and nation articulate.

A heteronormative worldview can dismiss same-gender sex as devoid of deeper implication, but same-gender love leans dangerously close to kinship. Since many gay and lesbi Indonesians see their capacity for loving people of the same gender as their distinguishing characteristic, more than same-gender attraction (which is seen as ubiquitous), this hegemony can bring incredible pain and desperation. Many gay and lesbi Indonesians love their partners passionately: wed them in unrecognized ceremonies in the dead of night at the homes of sympathetic preachers, sleep cuddled in their arms, trade rings, go to the photographer’s shop for portraits that are carried in wallets until faded and scarred by creases. It is this love, far more than the actual sexual acts themselves, which is prohibited by dominant discourses of national belonging.

## GAY AND LESBI RELATIONSHIPS

Within the gay and lesbi worlds, love thus ideally leads to an ongoing same-gender relationship. The common Indonesian term for a boyfriend or girlfriend is pacar and the relationship pacaran, and these terms are sometimes used by gay and lesbi Indonesians to refer to their same-gender relationships. Other terms used are jodoh—"marriage partner, future spouse" (Idrus 2003)—and even husband (suami) or wife (isteri). However, many gay and lesbi Indonesians avoid using these terms in the gay or lesbi world; as a gay man from Central Java put it, "if we say ‘suami’ or ‘isteri’ it means marriage." Most gay men have girlfriends in addition

to any love relationships in the gay world, and the question "Do you have a pacar?" is typically interpreted to mean "Do you have a girlfriend?" One term less linked to the normal world is join: "Do you have a join?"

Regardless of the term used, gay and lesbi Indonesians see themselves as "joined" to their lovers within the gay or lesbi world. These relationships can persist for decades and involve great fidelity, devotion, and passion. Most gay and lesbi Indonesians see no benefit in having their same-gender relationships known to the normal world. When I once told one gay man that some gay Westerners adopted children, he replied that the idea horrified him because if with two men "people can assume they’re just friends," but a child would make the relationship visible to the normal world. The "marriage" of Jossie and Bonnie in 1981 was influential because it was atypical (see chapter 3).

Most sexual relationships in the gay and lesbi worlds are with other Indonesians, not Westerners, since there are relatively few Westerners in Indonesia and they travel mostly in expatriate circles. However, in all three of my major field sites I met gay men in relationships with Western men. Early in my fieldwork I hypothesized that these relationships might represent a significant modality by which Western conceptions of homosexuality translocate to Indonesia. This now appears unlikely. Such relationships are fairly rare, and language barriers often impede communication. Additionally, since a Western lover offers prestige, money, and sometimes travel to the West, gay men who find a Western lover often try to keep that Westerner from meeting other gay men, curtailing the couple’s involvement in the gay world. As a result, gay or lesbian Westerners with Indonesian partners do not affect the gay and lesbi worlds as often as might be expected. I have knowledge of only a handful of lesbi relationships with Western women; two reasons for this beyond my own status as a man are the smaller number of Western women expatriates and the greater difficulty lesbi women face in meeting Westerners, given restrictions on women’s movement.

A constant threat to gay relationships is for one member to have sex outside the relationship, a practice most often termed selingkuh, which normally means "dishonest, corrupt" (Echols and Shadily 1989:494). Selingkuh refers to sexual dalliances within the gay world; many gay men have girlfriends or wives, but I have never heard them term sex with women selingkuh. Selingkuh is a concern in the lesbi world as well; many tombois say one reason they do not spend more time socializing with each other is the fear that another tomboi will "hunt" their own girlfriend. While lesbi sexuality has a strong erotic component that should not be underestimated, lesbi women, like gay men, consistently rank romance and the goal of a long-term relationship as important priorities.

## MARRIAGE AND SELFHOOD

### The Mystery of Marriage

One night in a park I met Andy and four of his friends. Andy identified as gay, explaining that his boyfriend of ten years was married with two children. When I asked if the boyfriend should get divorced he stared in shock: "Of course not. He needs descendants and a wife. I want to get married in five years—I already have a girlfriend. You mean you won’t marry as long as you live?" When I nodded, the other men confronted me in astonishment: "How could you not want to get married? You’ll be lonely when you get old! Everyone must have descendants. According to Islam, if you don’t yet have children, you haven’t yet entered the society of the Prophet Muhammad."

In this story gay men implicate me in their world while discussing marriage in terms of the triple compulsion of religion, tradition, and nation. The story is from Surabaya and involves primarily Muslim men, but Hindu and Christian men speak in similar terms. When I told a Hindu gay man in Bali that gay men in Surabaya tended to speak of marriage as their number-one problem, he replied, "Here it’s the same. Most of my friends who are the same age as me, around thirty, have already started to think: am I going to get married or not?" In Makassar, Michael talked about how his lover Arief already had a fiancée and would probably marry next year; Arief’s younger sibling had married, increasing the pressure on Arief. Michael also expected to marry someday, in response to his own desires and pressure from his aunt and grandmother, yet he hoped to sustain his relationship with Arief. A Bugis Muslim from Makassar, who unlike most gay men had told his family he was gay and moved away from the parental home, nevertheless said that "I’m one hundred percent sure I’m going to get married. I’m sure that my family will demand it…. The problem is, in Indonesia—maybe outside it’s different—everyone has to get married. Lots of gay people get married. Even if [your family] knows that you’re gay they want you to marry." In Howard’s study of gay men in Jakarta, marriage was viewed as "an essential step in becoming a whole person" regardless of religion, ethnicity, or class (1996:246).

While the stereotypical response of Western parents to a son’s coming out is "I’ll never have grandchildren," Indonesian parents who learn a son is gay sometimes say they can accept this so long as he marries a woman. This parental sentiment may sound contradictory to Western ears, but it reflects a cultural logic shared with most gay men and most lesbi women, as revealed in their "heterosexual" marriages and their assumption that that gay and lesbian Westerners marry "heterosexually." During my 1997–1998 fieldwork I always placed on my desk a picture of

my partner that shows him standing with a female colleague. Gay men and lesbi women who saw this picture would invariably point it out and say, "Your partner is already married," or "His wife is taller than he is!" My explanation that she was a friend and that neither my partner nor I wanted to marry a woman was be met with disbelief and pity. In their eyes we were deviants, transgressing what they understood gay subjectivity to entail.

During my Surabaya fieldwork I conducted three focus groups bringing together approximately ten gay men for an evening in a neutral environment. Toward the end of one focus group a debate broke out between the members of the group and Faisal, a gay man who assisted me in moderating the groups. We were discussing marriage when the focus group members asked if Faisal or I would ever marry. My negative reply brought surprised looks, but it was Faisal’s firm contention that he would never marry ("because I am gay after all") that brought an air of distress to the room. No one was more upset than Ikbal, a friend of Andy who was married to a woman. "Maybe you are more modern and liberal, Faisal. I am absolutely in disagreement and unhappy with your decision. I’m sure you could do it with a woman if you tried."

"Ikbal, I think you are biseks," Faisal said, using a term unfamiliar to most gay men that reflected his work in HIV prevention.

"But I only became able to have sex with a woman after I got married. You’ve already condemned yourself to be gay," Ikbal replied.

Murmurs broke out around the room. One person said, "I think that Faisal is really waria, not gay, because he never plans to marry."

Ikbal leapt on the statement: "Faisal, the problem with you is that you don’t want to take any steps toward being normal. You’re being shallow." Then, in exasperation, Ikbal turned to me: "I just can’t imagine you not getting married, Tom. I’m trying to understand it, but my mind just can’t believe it. I’ve always assumed that all men get married, even warias, even gay men."

For the Western observer, the starkest difference between gay and lesbi Indonesians and gay and lesbian Westerners is probably that the former usually choose to marry "heterosexually," have children, and see this as part of a complete gay or lesbi life (Boellstorff 1999).13 Across the archipelago unmarried gay men and lesbi women cite marriage as the most important issue in their lives. Most gay men past their early thirties have married, and most lesbi women, particularly ceweks, marry before turning thirty. Cases of gay men or lesbi women forced into marriage certainly exist. For some, marriage is a traumatic event: people have committed suicide rather than be compelled to marry, or at the news that their longterm lover has decided to marry. However, such cases are easy to explain in terms of oppression.

What poses the greater theoretical challenge is that unmarried gay men and lesbi women can look forward to their wedding day with all the anticipation of any normal Indonesian. This is a compromise between homosexual desire and social norms concerning marriage, but it is not just an external imposition: for many gay and lesbi Indonesians, it is a source of meaning and pleasure allowing them to enjoy homosexual relationships while pleasing their parents, carrying on the family name, minimizing sin, raising dearly loved children who can care for them in old age, and becoming full members of national society. For both gay men and lesbi women, the causality of marriage is complex, and my analysis is predicated on taking seriously the meaningfulness of their marriages. Because marriage brings together in such stark relief sexuality and belonging, it is crucial to how gay and lesbi Indonesians see their place in national culture.

### The Marriage Imperative

During the time period of my fieldwork (1992–2004) it was considered acceptable for a man to stay unmarried until about twenty-five or so. But while Western models of homosexual identity presume that the pivotal emotional crisis takes place during adolescence (see chapter 7 and Howard 1996:125), for gay men the key predicament typically takes place in one’s twenties as the pressure for marriage increases. To not marry by thirty represents a crisis, requiring excuses of not having a good enough job to support a new household or not having found the right woman, and age thirty-five is what one interlocutor called the "peak" (puncak) where the pressure to marry is nearly overwhelming. While age of marriage for women is rising, it has been difficult for a young woman to remain single past twenty-five, even when engaging in forms of white-collar work identified as a "career." For gay men and lesbi women, the marriage of a younger sibling frequently increases the pressure to wed; across Indonesia there is often an assumption that members of a sibling set should marry in order. These dynamics were remarkably uniform across all of my field sites (as well as in Howard’s study of gay men in Jakarta) and did not appear to vary systematically by ethnicity or religion. Like gay and lesbi Indonesians’ relationship to mass media and other aspects of their worlds, what begs explanation is not ethnolocalized difference but national similarity.

Across Indonesia gay and lesbi Indonesians identify marriage as something of a mystery. For instance, married gay men sometimes talk about marriage to a woman as one of the greatest joys of life, something they could not imagine living without. They almost always want their lovers to marry women as well, because the lover will be happy and successful

and also less likely to have sex with other men. Yet they also complain about the strictures marriage brings. If a husband finds it difficult to go out at night once married, it can drastically curtail involvement in the gay world:

We were lovers for seventeen years, until 1996 when he married, and now I am so sad. I cry every night. He lives with his wife now. Sometimes at night I go walking past his house and see him and his wife inside. I don’t even say hello; I just look on him from afar. It just causes me too much stress to go in…. Even his parents knew about us. They didn’t have any problem with it; they thought of me as one of their own children…. Then one day his parents came to me: "Our child wants to marry. And we beg permission of you, please let him marry." Oh, it was so hard! I didn’t want that at all. I said, "Go right ahead," but I felt as if I’d died. He was pushed into marriage by his parents. So I just told him, "From now on, just think of me as a father to you." Even his new wife calls me "father." She doesn’t know a thing!

Some gay men complain about the difficulties of the marital bedroom: one gay man advised that those who couldn’t get an erection with their wife should note how their penis had spontaneous erections several times during the day and that they should call their wives and have sex with them right away. Others insist they enjoy sex with their wives because they find them attractive or that the sex demonstrates their love and care for their wife. Unmarried gay men sometimes say they wish they did not have to marry, or they plot how to delay it (a common phrase is they will marry "in five years"). Lesbi women speak of marriage as a necessity for full social womanhood yet fear the male domination and severe limits on participation in the lesbi world that almost always follow marriage. The role of social pressure channeled through family dictate is crucial for both gay and lesbi Indonesians: parents, siblings, even cousins hound them about their single status as they age. Such pressure is strongest for ceweks and gay men (as opposed to tombois and warias) because their same-gender desire is not unambiguously embodied; they appear normal. Nira, a Javanese cewek, said, "I will probably get married, but I’ll keep having my relationship with Ati and it will be the most important thing to me. My parents will push me to marry because I’m the oldest child." Ati added, "Ceweks always get married." When I asked Karim what led him to decide he should marry, he employed reported speech in his reply, citing the authoritative voice of social expectation: "I couldn’t stand all that pressure, especially the pressure from home, from my mother. I worried she would start saying that if I didn’t get married people would say, quote, ‘maybe you’re impotent’ or ‘maybe you’re a béncong’ [waria]." For Karim "the outside pressure [tekanan luar] became an inside pressure [tekanan batin]," but many married gay men state emphatically that they

were not pressured into marrying by family, religious leaders, traditional authorities, or anyone other than themselves. Gay men across Indonesia appear not to "recognize a distinction between being a man and being a husband, for they believe that the only way to become recognized adult members of society is by getting married and eventually having children" (Howard 1996:156).

### Lesbi Women and Marriage

Across Indonesia there are no socially sanctioned life narratives for Indonesian women that do not result in marriage (Blackwood 1999). As for men, this is shaped by the triple compulsion of religion, ethnolocalized tradition, and state discourse. State ideologies of womanhood, which under Soeharto took the form of a "State Ibuism" (State Momism), "define women as appendages and companions to their husbands, as procreators of the nation, as mothers and educators of children, as housekeepers, and as members of Indonesian society—in that order" (Suryakusuma 1996:101). As in many postcolonial nations, women’s sexuality becomes the site of "tradition" and authenticity, and controlling women’s sexuality the symbolic equivalent of resisting colonial oppression (Chatterjee 1993). This offers little conceptual space for the "career woman," even as women are increasingly exhorted to work outside the home in addition to their domestic duties (Anderson 1996). While the notion of the affluent career woman has become a favored image of Indonesian femininity (Sen 1998), she is still presumed to marry a man and bear children. This new woman has a dual role (peran ganda)—career and parent; the career is additive rather than supplanting. The choices lesbi women make to marry or delay marrying, to divorce or to stick with a husband, take place within the horizon of these discourses of femininity and belonging. Many lesbi women thus struggle with the limits imposed by conceptions of normative heterosexuality: as repeated obsessively by Paria, the lesbi protagonist of Garis Tepi Seorang Lesbian, "I am a normal woman who can do what’s normal" (aku perempuan biasa yang terbiasa bisa) (Herlinatiens 2003).

Marriage to a man does not necessarily end same-gender relations or lesbi subjectivity (A. Murray 1999:141). However, while marriage does not usually place insurmountable barriers to a man’s involvement in the gay world, it makes it much harder for lesbi women to participate in the lesbi world. Marriage presents Indonesian women with a set of time-consuming activities that make privacy nearly impossible: not only caring for the husband and any children, but also economic responsibility for maintaining the household. Nonetheless, many married lesbi women find a way to participate in the lesbi world in some fashion.

One way in which some tombois say they are like warias is that they do not wish to marry. Unlike warias, however, tombois are not typically released from the marriage imperative, even if their appearance is highly masculine, because tomboi subjectivity is so poorly recognized. As a result it appears that many tombois marry, divorce, and do not remarry. The divorce can take place within weeks of the wedding or even sooner, as in the case of one tomboi in Makassar who was married for a single day.14 In another case from Makassar, a tomboi reportedly married a man, but the tomboi’s cewek girlfriend slept between the bride and groom on their wedding night, and the two women ran away the following day. Another common pattern is for tombois to marry (and often bear children) but then separate from their husbands, remaining formally married but independent in daily life, with their children under the care of other family members. Because tombois are typically visible as gender nonconforming, they, like warias, say that the idea of living in two worlds (as most gay men and feminine lesbi women do) is impossible and undesirable.

It appears that the husbands of lesbi women rarely know of their wives’ former (and ongoing) sexual relationships with women. Before moving to Surabaya, Rita, a tomboi, was involved for five years with Anti, a woman in her early forties who was married with three children. Rita was known by Anti’s family as Anti’s "close friend" and was on good terms with Anti’s husband and three children, who Rita claims never knew of the sexual relationship he shared with Anti. Interlocutors with married lesbi friends often said that since married lesbi women find it difficult to leave the home unaccompanied, especially if they have children, these lesbi women often have their partners come to their home while the husband is away, either in the evening or especially during the day while he is at work. Even if other family members are around, the women can often steal a few moments together. The ability for lesbi women to continue same-gender relations after marriage is aided by a variety of factors, including that female-female sex is even more unfamiliar to Indonesian public culture than male-male sex, the greater emphasis on male homosexuality in Islam and Christianity, and the lack of a well-known female analogue to warias.

### The Wives of Gay Men

For a woman to marry a gay man, knowingly or not, presents issues not completely foreign to those faced by other Indonesian women in their marriages. Many wives know of their husband’s gay subjectivity to some extent and sometimes even befriend their husband’s male lover. In one of my field sites a gay man lived with his wife and three children in a two-story house that also contained his salon. The man’s wife lived on the top

floor with a male lover, while the husband lived on the bottom floor with his male lover, and a peaceable arrangement was reached. In another of many examples, one young gay man’s wife invited his male lover to live at home with them, preferring this arrangement to having her husband absent on evenings and weekends. While I find the gender politics of this disturbing, it is important to recognize the situated rationality at play in the production of these new inequalities, and why it is the case that although some wives divorce gay husbands, many "choose" to remain married even if they know their husband pursues sexual relationships with other men.

Across Indonesia a double standard of masculinity is common. On one hand, men are seen as possessing more rationality (akal) than women, who are driven by desire (nafsu) (Siegel 1969). At the same time, women are seen as more rational than men, particularly in matters of household finances, while men are naughty and mischievous like children, apt to be carried away by sexual desire, which is tricky to control (cf. Peletz 1996). As a result of this second view, "many women tolerate, and even expect, a certain amount of sexual infidelity from their husbands, although they certainly do not encourage it" (Brenner 1998:151).15 As Brenner notes, the crucial issue is not the existence of such affairs, but the potential for such affairs to (1) siphon financial resources away from the home in the forms of gifts or cash support to the illicit partner; (2) lead to a pregnancy out of wedlock, which would entail financial drain and social shame; (3) lead to a second wife being taken by the husband (if he is Muslim), which many Indonesians find improper and which could affect inheritance and property rights; and (4) bring shame to the family through public knowledge of the affair. The acceptance of many Indonesian women for the same-gender affairs of their husbands must be placed in this context: (1) a male lover is more likely to have his own income, (2) pregnancy is impossible, (3) a male lover cannot become a second wife, and (4) it is far easier to hide a sexual relationship between two men than between a man and a woman. Male friends routinely move about alone at night, sleep over in each other’s houses—even bathe together—without arousing suspicion, since it is unclear to many Indonesians if activities between men (and even more, between two women) count as sex or are just "playing around." One married gay man summed up this state of affairs, animating the voices of wives through reported speech:

Because I provide for the family, because I strive to become, what’s the word for it, the head of the family, then as I see it how could [my wife] know I was gay? Even if she knew, I’m sure she’d just say "Oh, that’s probably just seeking variety." It’s like the waria Cindy’s boyfriend. He has a wife and the wife knows her husband is Cindy’s partner. The wife says "it’s no big deal if it’s a waria,

it’s not competition. Cindy won’t become a second wife, right? There won’t be polygamy." And the wife sees lots of benefits. Because the husband gets money from Cindy. It’s always like that, right? So rather than have him having sex with women, spending lots of money, whatever, it’s better this way. He can get sexual satisfaction and money.

### Marriage and Hegemony

I examine the overall linkages between the gay and lesbi subject positions and national discourse in chapter 7; at this point I wish to explore how these linkages shape the archipelago-wide pattern of "heterosexual" marriage. In particular, I am interested in how this discourse shapes not a single stance on marriage, but a complex and contradictory range of desires—a desire to marry and a desire not to marry, an understanding of selfhood as unitary and an understanding of selfhood as multiple. The great power of hegemonies lies in this ability to define a "horizon of the taken for granted" (Hall 1988a:44) that informs a spectrum of viewpoints, desires, and practices. The mystery of "heterosexual" marriage speaks to the existence of oppressive heterosexist norms, but it also indicates how ostensibly Western sexual subject positions have been dubbed: this "homosexual" self can desire marriage. Gay and lesbi persons are self-reflexive but not self-congruent. Amin, a Muslim gay man from Surabaya, expressed this when he noted that "one of the benefits of being gay is that you can enjoy two worlds." The benefit lies not in an integrated self, out of its closet and always the same, but in the ability to maintain distinct worlds keyed to distinct subjectivities. Could gay and lesbi Indonesians become poster children for the ultimate postmodern subject? The mystery is more complex.

Ikbal was a friend of Andy, who earlier reacted in shock when I told him I did not plan on marrying a woman. Like Andy’s boyfriend, Ikbal was already married; his wife lived in a nearby village with their child while he cohabited in Surabaya with Dodi, his male lover for over ten years. Hand in hand with Dodi at the parks almost every night, Ikbal frequently lectured other gay men on the obligation to marry and the joys it brought. It was a point of pride that his wife and parents "knew about him" and that he and Dodi had married cousins so they would never be separated. One day Ikbal insisted that I come to the village to meet his wife. Once there, however, we would stay in a nearby town with his parents until Sunday; he would end up spending only two hours with his wife before we had to return to Surabaya. En route to the meeting, Ikbal told me about the months of sexual frustration he and his wife had experienced: they had been able to consummate their marriage only by admitting Dodi to their bed, where he lay alongside Ikbal and, as Ikbal’s wife

sobbed, stimulated him so that penetration could take place. On this Sunday, when he could delay his visit with his wife no longer, Ikbal warned me to be extra macho: "Now is the time to begin ‘playacting.’" Apparently his family’s knowledge of him was more fractured than I had suspected. Later that day he would comment, "This life is theater." As our little minibus, adrift in a green flowing sea of rice paddies, approached the village and a tense afternoon of silent squabbles and awkward smiles, Ikbal looked out the dusty window and almost whispered: "These parts of my life cannot be unified."

Theoretical physicists may believe in God’s creation; social constructionists may believe that they were born gay or lesbian. The mystery of "heterosexual" marriage is that most gay men and lesbi women evince—simultaneously, within a single subjectivity—a multiple self for which marriage is not only compatible but pleasurable and a self for which it stymies a desire to "unify" one’s spheres of life into a single narrative trajectory. This is a mystery not only to the "external," non-Indonesian observer, but also to the gay men themselves; many of them, like Ikbal, experience it as a contradiction. Ceweks also appear to experience this contradiction, as do those tombois who wish to marry. The source of this mystery lies in the origins of the imperative to marry itself. While marriage is a powerful norm throughout Indonesia, the particular form of this imperative certainly does not stem from a primordial localism: it is an imperative to choose marriage that is deeply bound up with nationalist conceptions of marriage as symbol and exemplar of proper citizenship.

In modern societies, forms of kinship and forms of governmentality shape each other. A key element of Indonesian state ideology is the "family principle," which holds that the family is the fundamental unit of the nation. Crucially, this is not the extended family but the nuclear family, whose ubiquitous smiles illuminate television ads and government posters: husband, wife, and two children, with a car, a home with smooth white tile floors, a television set, and other paraphernalia of the new middle class. It is this "public domesticity" that the state equates with citizen subjectivity and summons into being through a range of development practices (cf. Morris 1997). For the most part the influence of nationalist rhetoric is implicit: when gay men and lesbi women speak about the imperative to marry, they emphasize parental pressure. Parents’ hopes that their children marry reflect not just nationalist discourse but ethnolocalized beliefs about kinship. My interlocutors were mostly twenty to thirty years old, and their parents are thus of the generation born around the time of independence. Their expectations about marriage incorporate understandings of marriage as social duty; visions of the romantic couple tended to play a subordinate role. In this regard there is a generational divide in beliefs about marriage. Yet it is crucial not to portray the imperative

to marry as more traditional than gay and lesbi subjectivities. Both gay men and lesbi women can have their marriages "arranged" to some degree by their families, but the norm for them, as for most contemporary Indonesians, is a marriage actualized through choice and love. However, their love, sick in its desire for the same, forever estranges them from truly choosing marriage and thus disqualifies them from truly belonging as proper citizens of the postcolonial nation-state.

Since both postcolonial thought and capitalism orient themselves toward modernity, it is understandable that rhetorics of economic globalization converge with ideals of the modern Indonesian (Weber 1994). While a considerable body of work has pointed out the gender inequalities of the new international division of labor, less attention has been paid to its foundation in the naturalization of the couple formed though heterosexual love and choice as the basic unit of the postcolonial nation. More effectively than Henry Ford’s fabled management of his workers’ lives ever could, the heterosexualization of the labor force constitutes the domains of public and private, locates the family as the unit of consumption, and naturalizes gender inequalities. Heterosexuality made real through love and choice (associated with independence, democracy, and modernity), not arrangement (associated with dependency, colonialism, and tradition), provides a critical bridge between capitalist ideologies of production and nationalist ideologies of reproduction. Voting and marriage: proper choice is to underlie both sex and citizenship, and the nuclear, middle-class family is to stand as metonym for the nation. As constituted by this moral economy, the unmarried self is an incomplete economic and national subject. It has not "chosen" to marry; its love is inauthentic, a miscast vote for national belonging. It is this context, not ethnolocalized tradition, that explains most gay and lesbi Indonesians’ assumption not just that they will "marry," but that they will choose marriage through heterosexual love and form a nuclear family.

State rhetoric claims that the prosperous family produced by chosen heterosexual marriage will be middle class. This notion of the family is strongly influenced by shifting economic rationalities. In 1982, following the oil boom, Soeharto’s technocratic ministers gained ground and enacted economic and fiscal reforms that resulted in massive inflows of capital, which accelerated a shift away from agriculture and toward the service and industrial sectors (Hill 1996; Winters 1996). This shift led to the rise of a substantial middle class for the first time in Indonesian history (Robison 1996:79). Daniel Lev dates its consumerist and self-reflexive consciousness to a special edition of the magazine Prisma on the "new middle class" in 1984, during the same period in which gay and lesbi subjectivities first became national phenomena (1990:26).

These economic changes did not affect gay and lesbi subjectivities in a determinist manner; gay and lesbi Indonesians were not suddenly wealthy, able to travel to the West, or obtain Western gay and lesbian publications. Like other Indonesians, many of them are members of the "populist lower middle classes," "a much-neglected and underresearched category of the middle class [in Indonesia]" (Robison 1996:88). Anthropological studies of new middle classes, however, have emphasized how "the middle class’s position is determined less directly by its relations to the ‘means of production’ … than by its relations to the market, that is, by its ability to consume" (Liechty 2003:16; see also Pinches 1999:8). In Indonesia as well, it has long been realized that middle-class consciousness thus cannot be "read off" raw income (H. Geertz 1963:37). Many observers identify the Indonesian middle class in terms of aspiration and "mode of consumption": "among the rakyat [lower classes], consumer durables are shared: it is anti-social to restrict the access of one’s neighbors. Middle class households, by contrast, confine the enjoyment of such goods to members of the household…. In other words, there is ‘privatization of the means of consumption’" (Dick 1990:64). Another important theme of the Indonesian middle class is equality (Dick 1985, 1990:66)—a kind of desire for the same, but one that unlike homosexuality engenders national belonging through "assumptions of kinship in the place of the assumptions of difference … giving [the middle class] the recognition that they too [are] part of the Indonesian family no matter what their regional origins" (Siegel 2002:209).

Like middle-class subjectivities, gay and lesbi subjectivities are not passed down through "tradition." With this consumerist ethic comes a modernist, narrative self defined in terms of autobiography. While far from universal, the notion of the self as something constructed is hardly new. What is at issue in the Indonesian context is the conjunction of a fashioned self with middle-class consumerism. It is not a fantasy of the sultan or the super-rich cosmopolitan who selects at will from the world’s bounty. It is a circumscribed personhood-as-career in which, given limited resources, one budgets one’s life trajectory within a marketplace logic that guides the crafting of choices. The self becomes the self’s profession: this middle-class subjectivity is a story that the self tells to itself about itself, rather than a story passed down primarily through religious or ethnolocalized background, as the stories of lower and upper classes historically were in Indonesia and elsewhere (Appadurai 1996:53). Like middle-class subjectivities, gay and lesbi subjectivities are not passed down through "tradition"; they become their own stories, and the telling of those stories becomes a problem. A palette of possible lives spreads out before the subject, whose only prohibition is not to choose heterosexual love. One self-consumes, struggling to forge one’s self-story. Like M. C. Escher’s image of two disembodied hands gripping pens, conjuring each other into existence on a drawing pad, the self and the self’s story form a loop of personhood. As Escher’s loop breaks down without the pens with which to draw, so heterosexual love and the commodity represent the conduits by which the middle-class self writes its story. In this sense, the gay person is self-contingent. Is this the same old liberal, bourgeois subject that has received such scholarly attention (Collier, Maurer, and Suárez-Navaz 1995; Macpherson 1962)? The mystery is more complex.



 Figure 4–4. "A poor hetero family that does not follow Family Planning. In the end they create not heaven but a ‘hell’ on earth. How far can this husband and wife guarantee that their children will become successful children later on?" Maengkom (1997:44).

### The Desire Not to Marry

Given the overdetermined character of the marriage imperative, it is remarkable that any gay and lesbi Indonesian would ever reject marriage. Yet such Indonesians exist (including about 10 percent of my interlocutors). In "choosing" not to marry, however, these Indonesians have not stepped outside Indonesian culture into a realm of purely globalized homosexuality.

On rare occasions gay men critique the conjunction of class, nation, and the imperative to marry, as the following examples from a manifesto published in Jakarta in 1997 show. Figure 4–4 shows "a poor hetero family that does not follow Family Planning." Utensils and toys are strewn about a dirt floor; a mother, weighed down by an infant, screams over a gas stove, while the father is incapacitated in bed by the fighting of the other four children. One child is urinating on the floor; curtains hang precariously from unhinged shutters. The line-drawing format of the picture recalls those that have appeared in Family Planning brochures since the 1970s.

 

Figure 4–5. "A lesbi couple who are professionals. They can live together comfortably, with greater plenty, greater prosperity, and … fewer problems on average than hetero families." Maengkom (1997:45a).

By contrast, figures 4–5 and 4–6 show "a lesbi couple who are professionals" and "can live together comfortably" and "a young gay couple who, besides being happy, also can enjoy life optimally": the author notes that the lesbi couple can live "with … fewer problems on average than hetero families" and asks, if the gay couple "were each married in the hetero manner, could it be guaranteed that they would live as comfortably as shown above? Only if they were descended from wealth."

What is shown in figures 4–5 and 4–6 are beautifully coiffed hair, upholstered furniture, clean clothes, smooth white tile floors, television sets, automobiles, two servants (men for the gay couple, women for the lesbi couple), gardens being watered, and the calm aura of leisure. The message is clear: gay and lesbi couples can "outfamily" the family. But what constitutes the ideal family is not challenged: it remains the modern middle-class, professional household. When the author compares marriage unfavorably with gay and lesbi couples, it is a particular vision of marriage and heterosexuality in mind, one oriented around the nuclear family made modern through family planning, consumer goods, a notion of the home as private leisure space, and ethnolocality confined to the television set. The author argues that gay and lesbi Indonesians achieve this national ideal better than hetero couples can, but without questioning the vision of national couplehood: their actions "bring benefit to others, without regard to race, religion, line of work, education, or status" (Maengkom 1997:9).

While direct denunciations of marriage like these cartoons are uncommon, traces of their sentiment emerge in the words of other gay and lesbi Indonesians who reject marriage. Some gay men base a desire not to marry on a sense that gay men marry to "hide who they are," solely due to social pressure, and also that marriage is unjust: "In Indonesia many men hide themselves by having a girlfriend. I think they’re hypocrites! They don’t want to accept themselves as gay. I feel sorry for the woman. She gets toyed with. I have a friend who has a girlfriend. He’s an authentic gay [gay asli]. Eventually they got married. But they were married only for one week and then they got divorced because he couldn’t have sex with her. He was only looking for status by marrying."

 

Figure 4–6. "A young gay couple who, besides being happy, also can enjoy life optimally. If they each married in the hetero manner, could it be guaranteed that they would live as comfortably as shown above? Only if they descended from wealth." Maengkom (1997:45b).

Another gay man said, "I’m afraid that I’d break the heart of the woman…. All the women that I’ve ever been with want me to stop being gay, and I don’t think I could do that." A third said, "So many gay men do that; they just marry a woman to close themselves [menutupi diri sendiri], and then as soon as they’re married they run off and have sex with men…. It’s unfair to the woman." Sometimes an unmarried relative provides a precedent. Michael, a gay man in Makassar, had an older uncle who never married; the uncle knew about Michael, but since he and his uncle were the same (sama) they could "close each other" (saling menutupi).

In north Bali, the lesbi woman Ita noted that "Another reason my parents accept me is because I have an aunt in the village who never married and has always lived by herself. So I can point to her and say ‘I’m like that,’ even though that aunt doesn’t have sex with women. There are actually a couple other women in my family who didn’t marry. But there’s no one like that in Tuti’s family, and that makes things harder for her."

Choosing not to marry usually has enormous social and economic repercussions, even in urban areas; like other Indonesians, gay men and lesbi women usually say they have "not yet" married (belum nikah) rather than say they are not married at all (tidak nikah), regardless of age. While a few of my older gay interlocutors in their forties and fifties had never married, most of my interlocutors were in their twenties and thirties; absent a future longitudinal study, it is not possible to predict how many of them will "choose" marriage as they age. Despite the pressures to marry, those who say they will not marry can find cultural rationales for coping with this choice. To not marry for life certainly presents challenges, but some gay and lesbi Indonesians find ways to live with them, particularly if they are upper class (cf. Howard 1996:247). In response to the need for children, gay men and lesbi women say that they will adopt the children of siblings, cousins, or other relatives (or have already done so), or will pay for their schooling to build bonds of reciprocity. Most reconcile their religious beliefs with not marrying (see chapter 6).

Paradoxically, another way to avoid marriage is to marry and divorce, a solution that seems to be especially popular amongst tombois. Across Indonesia seeing one’s child married is often seen as the ultimate duty of parenthood. The transition from arranged to chosen marriage has not obviated this; parents should ensure that their children "choose" marriage, and the parents should provide a wedding appropriate to the family’s status. However, whether or not a divorcee remarries tends to be seen as a more individual decision.

The question is why so few gay and lesbi Indonesians "choose" not to marry and why this "choice" does not appear to be gaining popularity. That Islam or tradition demands marriage does not explain the particular form the marriage imperative takes, or its similitude across religion and ethnolocalized difference. The answer seems to lie in intersections between the gay and lesbi subject positions and national discourse. My goal is not to adjudicate between apparently contradictory notions of personhood, the multiple (where "heterosexual" marriage is not problematic) or the congruent (where "heterosexual" marriage is problematic). I wish to hold them in tension, as a mystery I attempt to solve in chapter 7, because it is precisely in such a multiply mediated contact zone that gay and lesbi subjectivities exist.

### Marriage, Similitude, and the Nation

Some coverage of Jossie and Bonnie’s 1981 wedding mentioned Western homosexual rights legislation, and since the mid-1990s rumors of gay and lesbian marriage in the West have fascinated gay and lesbi Indonesians. The topic is interesting because gay and lesbi Indonesians usually assume that gay and lesbian Westerners marry "heterosexually" as they do and are confused as to whether such same-sex marriages are acknowledged in the normal world or are limited to the gay world. One tomboi concluded after speaking with me about the West that he was more like Western gay men than Indonesian gay men because he did not plan on marrying. In a few cases gay men told me that were gay marriage legal in Indonesia, they would not marry women, but most find this inconceivable and imagine an ideal life in which there would be a normal marriage for the normal world and a formalized gay relationship for the gay world. Marriage links gay and lesbi subjectivities to the normal world; gay men, for instance, often believe that through marriage they can become "real men" (laki-laki asli; cf. Howard 1996).

The following episode from The Perfect Path (introduced in chapter 2) suggests how these spatial scales of homosexual desire in Indonesia are not the direct product of globalization. The year is 1926, and Sucipto, young and homeless in Surabaya, has been walking along the river at night. He pauses to rest on a bridge near the Gubeng train station, near one site where gay men hang out in the contemporary period. Lost in thought, he hears a voice call out to him. It is a Dutchman, who invites Sucipto to his house and pays Sucipto to have sex with him. After leaving the house, Sucipto returns to the bridge, "thinking about what had just happened…. It was completely impossible that a Dutch person could desire things like that…. He was of a different race than myself. Apparently my assumptions had been turned upside down…. How did he know that I like this kind of thing? This was what astonished me" (Budiman 1992:111–114).

The Westerner of Sucipto’s imagination did not have same-gender desires prior to this encounter. Even after learning that a colonial Westerner could have these desires, Sucipto does not identify with him; he sees the Westerner as interested only in commodified sex, incapable of the love that Sucipto shares with other Javanese men. Sucipto sees his homosexuality in the 1920s as a local, Javanese phenomenon; he also sees it as incompatible with marriage and discourages his Javanese friends from marrying. Living at the high point of Dutch colonialism, he does not imagine himself as part of a national or transnational community, but in some ways his subjectivity is closer to Western gay subjectivity than to contemporary Indonesian gay subjectivity, since normative gay Indonesians marry and normative

gay Westerners do not. Clearly, a theory of globalization that holds that things become more similar as time marches on is insufficient. Contemporary gay and lesbi subjectivities are not just the evolutionary end points of Sucipto’s subjectivity. They represent a dubbing culture, a reterritorialization of Western discourses of homosexuality.

While gay and lesbi Indonesians’ homosexual "desire for the same" and their desire to marry "heterosexually" may seem worlds apart—one the core of identity and the other imposed by society—these desires are part of gay, lesbi, and normal worlds all shaped by Indonesian national culture. Sexual desire is the source of great pleasure and meaning for most gay Indonesians (even if sometimes lived only in fantasy and also the source of sorrow and heartbreak), but it is not always central to selfhood. In Western thought sexuality has become seen as a psychic Prime Mover that radiates outward into every aspect of one’s life. Foucault (1978) identified this as the rise of "confessional" discourse and noted that modern gay and lesbian sexualities retain this view of sexuality, as revealed in the concept of "coming out."

Gay and lesbi Indonesians have dubbed national discourse with concepts of homosexuality originating outside Indonesia. This is why the gay and lesbi subject positions are not ethnolocalized, why belonging to society is so important, and why issues of love and marriage take the particular forms they do. Gay and lesbi desire typically appears as an island of desire among others, keyed to a gay or lesbi world rather than seeking to "come out" to the whole world. Recalling again the polysemy of sama, gay and lesbi love is a "desire for the same" and a desire to be "together with" others in the gay or lesbi world. In marrying heterosexually, gay and lesbi Indonesians desire to be the "same" as normal Indonesians, "together with" them in the national culture they epitomize.